

**BREAD, DIGNITY, JUSTICE AND... RETALIATION:
THE CONCEPT OF QIŞAŞ AND THE VALUES
OF THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION**

1. Introduction

‘Bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity’ (*‘ayş, hurriya, ‘adāla ijtimā‘iya, karāma insāniya*)¹ – was one of the most popular slogans of the 2011 Egyptian revolution, probably, the most one cited by media including, notably, the international one². The first item on this list, in fact, is often omitted. Meanwhile, the January 25 revolution as such was and often still is referred to as *ṭawrat al-karāma* (the revolution of dignity) pointing to the final among this set of concepts as the most important one.

Yet, from the onset of the Egyptian revolution of 2011, the call for QIŞAŞ (RETALIATION) also was among the slogans that brought out huge crowds onto the streets of Cairo. One of the earlier examples of such rallies was a *milyūniya* (a million-strong demonstration) under the heading *jum‘at al-qişāş* that occurred on Friday, July 8, 2011. The fact that thousands of people would come out to demand QIŞAŞ in media commentaries was presented as a sign of strength and proof that ‘the Egyptian people is capable of protecting its revolution’ (*an-nahu qādir ‘alā ḥimāyat ṭawratihī*)³. The deposed Egyptian president Muhammad Mursi, who clearly saw his presidency as an accomplishment, if not the completion, of the revolution, was also thematizing

¹ In this paper we adhere to one of the most popular Standard Arabic transcription conventions, as most of the material that we use appear in Standard rather than colloquial Egyptian Arabic; the revolutionary slogan as cited here contains only one colloquial word ‘*ayş* (bread), whose phonetic representation would be ‘*ēš*.

² Cf. H. A. Hellyer. Egypt’s growing tolerance of harassment towards women. Al Arabia News. 24 March 2014 – <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2014/03/24/Egypt-s-growing-tolerance-of-harassment-towards-women.html>

³ Cf. a media report on the event <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/pages/20882564-dbf-44c5-bca1-29806a436c60>

QIṢĀṢ in his public discourse⁴. A critically-minded local observer describing the Egyptian popular uprising of 2011 noted: *ata 'ajjib kaṭīran min ḥāl miṣr - awwal marra fī ta 'rīḥ ajid ṭawra mubniya 'alā al-qīṣāṣ* (I am very much surprised at the state/situation of Egypt: [it is] the first time in my life that I find a revolution built on retaliation)⁵. The phrase *ṭawrat al-qīṣāṣ* was used occasionally in a positive sense as early as October 2011, but not as an alternative tag to the Revolution of Dignity but in reference only to series of events that used QIṢĀṢ as their motto⁶. Later, when the military deposed president Mursi, the pro-Mursi camp started using the phrase *ṭawrat al-qīṣāṣ* (revolution of retaliation) in reference to the growing anti-coup protest movement⁷.

At the face of it, it may appear that there is hardly any meaningful connection between the two slogans as described above. It may also appear that the extensive use of QIṢĀṢ as a motto to rally support for the revolution may have resulted merely from the specific circumstances of the revolutionary turmoil, as demonstrators were repeatedly attacked and many were killed by the police or the pro-governmental irregulars, known as *balṭagiya*⁸. While the frequency of occurrence of QIṢĀṢ as the heading of various mass rallies did indeed correlate

⁴ Cf. a characteristic media article of 2 June, 2012 titled 'Mursi committing to retaliate for the martyrs of the revolution' (mursī yata'ahhad bi-l-qīṣāṣ li-ṣuhadā' aṭ-ṭawra) on Al-Jazeera.net – <http://www.aljazeera.net/mob/f6451603-4dff-4ca1-9c10-122741d17432/ee5af389-1dbb-4835-b696-6146cdd70af7>

⁵ The phrase is cited in an article titled Culture of Retaliation and Revenge (*ṭaqāfat al-qīṣāṣ wa l-intiqām*) by an Egyptian journalist Rola Kharsa published by an electronic publication *al-Miṣrī al-Yawm*, 14.2.2012 and is attributed to an unidentified 'socialist, friend' of the author – <http://m.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/52941>

⁶ Cf. a media article title on al-Miṣr al-Yawm *ḥalīd sa'īd min ḍahiyat ta 'ḍīb ilā mufajjir ṭawrat al-qīṣāṣ min ad-dāḥiliya* (Khaled Said: from the victim of torture to the exploder of the revolution of retaliation against the [Ministry of] Interior) – <http://m.almasryalyoum.com/news/details/121627>

⁷ For some graphic imagery advertising August 2014 events tagged as Revolution of Retaliation see <http://goo.gl/txoNuR>.

⁸ Lit. *ax-holders*, often translated as thugs in English. In the discourse of the recent Egyptian revolution this terms is used mainly in reference to irregulars employed by the Mubarak regime to harass participants of the anti-government rallies.

with the growing violence against the protesters, the present paper, however, will attempt to demonstrate the existence of some deeper underlying semantic structures that may be linking QIṢĀṢ to the other concepts often described as the goals (*ahdāf*) of the Revolution, namely: ḤURRIYA (Freedom), ‘ADĀLA (justice) and KARĀMA (Dignity).

2. RETALIATION and JUSTICE

QIṢĀṢ often occurs in collocation with an attributive ‘*ādil* (just). This is particularly characteristic for news items describing rallies demanding *qiṣāṣ li-š-šuhadā’* (retaliation for the martyrs), cf.:

lam tamurr siwā sā‘āt ‘alā al-ḥukm ḥattā ḥarajat masīra fī al-qāhira wa talathā ba‘d yawm wāhid muḏāhara fī al-iskandariya tunaddid bi-tahāwun wa tuṭālib bi-qiṣāṣ ‘ādil yuṣaddid ‘uqūbat šurtīyeyn qatalā muwāṭinan dūna ḍanb⁹

[a few] hours had not passed since the verdict until a procession came out in Cairo and a demonstration followed it a day after in Alexandria denouncing complacency and demanding a just QIṢĀṢ [that would] strengthen punishment of the two policemen [who] killed an innocent (lit. without guilt) citizen

While Google search has returned 31,600 results for *al-qiṣāṣ al-‘ādil* (the just retaliation) and 3,570 results for the indefinite form *qiṣāṣ ‘ādil* ([a] just retaliation)¹⁰, the phrase does not accept negation except for a very specific set of contexts. The Google search for standard negation *al-qiṣāṣ ḡayr al-‘ādil* has returned no results, while for the indefinite form *qiṣāṣ ḡayr ‘ādil* it showed only 8 results. Syntactically, the definite form in Arabic most often functions as direct object, subject, or attribute (e.g. *jum ‘at al-qiṣāṣ al-‘ādil* – Friday of just retaliation), while the indefinite one as (part of) predicate. In the latter case, the sentences most often may be structured as *X [is] a just retaliation for Y*, less frequent are more complicated cases with indefinite *qiṣāṣ* featuring in oblique case, e.g. 90 % *min jarā‘im al-qatlal-mumanhaj li-s-suhufiyīn dūna qiṣāṣ* (90 % of systematic murder crimes of journalists [are] without retaliation)¹¹. Syntactic limitation on the use of

⁹ <http://m.almazryaloum.com/news/details/121627>

¹⁰ We have limited our search to Egyptian web resources only.

¹¹ A news article title on al-Yawm as-Sābi‘ newspaper – <http://goo.gl/m6A5c6>

negation with the phrase does not appear to be the only one. The contexts where negation occurs are pragmatically limited to ironic and polemic ones. These facts lead us to two conclusions: (1) the notion of JUSTICE is part of the semantic structure of QIṢĀṢ and the adjective 'ādil (just) is used as attributive with *qiṣāṣ* only to reinforce this meaning component; (2) pragmatically, QIṢĀṢ features about ten times more often as a subject of demand compared to factual statements, i.e. to put it simple, speakers are ten times more likely to ask for QIṢĀṢ then to assert that it has actually been performed.

Contexts could be found, where nominations *qiṣāṣ* and 'ādāla (justice) feature as fully synonyms. Cf. the following two items, one of which represents a news article title and the other the body of the news item both referring to the same event¹²:

(1) 90 % min jarā'im al-qatl al-mumanhaj li-s-ṣuḥufiyīn dūna qiṣāṣ – 90 % of systematic murder crimes of journalists [are left] without retaliation;

(2) ...inna al-amr al-akṭar itāratan li-l-qalaq yakmun fī al-iḥṣā'iyāt aṣ-ṣādira 'an al-lajna ad-duwaliya li-ḥimāyat aṣ-ṣuḥufiyīn bi-anna 90 % min al-qatala lam yatimm taqdīmuhum li-l-'ādāla
...the most troubling matter lies in statistics issued by the International Committee for the protection of journalists [which say] that 90 % of killers have not been brought to justice.

It is obvious that nominations *taqdīm li-l-'ādāla* (bringing to justice) and *qiṣāṣ* in the two segments refer to the same event, and, hence, 'ādāla and *qiṣāṣ* in this context are treated by the author as fully synonymous. The cited news article is largely based on an English original, which allows to match Arabic to source-language nominations: *dūna qiṣāṣ* matches the phrase 'get away with it', '90 % min al-qatala lam yatimm taqdīmuhum li-l-'ādāla' corresponds to the English phrase '90 % of murderers walking free', while the English segment '370 journalists have been murdered in direct retaliation for their work' has been translated as '370 ṣuḥufiyan qutilū (...) fī-intiqām

¹² Here and in the paragraph that follows, we cite a news article by Rīm Abd-al-Ḥamīd published on 3 November 2014 on electronic newspaper al-Yawm as-Sābi' under the heading 'taqrīr duwalī: 90 % min jarā'im al-qatl al-mumanhaj li-s-ṣuḥufiyīn dūna qiṣāṣ' – <http://m2.youm7.com> + on-site search or <http://goo.gl/kZrUp0>

*mubāšir li-qiyāmihim bi-‘amalihim*¹³. In the latter segment, an apparent negative evaluation embedded in the English word *retaliation* has prompted the Arab journalist to refrain from translating it as *qiṣāṣ*, and to use Arabic *intiqām* (revenge) instead¹⁴.

In the following paragraph QIṢĀṢ is not only counterposed to the notion of (in)JUSTICE expressed as *ẓulm*¹⁵, but appears to be somewhat superior to *‘adāla*, which in this context seems to be used in a more narrow sense (*criminal prosecution*), cf.:

‘indamā yaṭgā aẓ-ẓulm wa tata’ahḥar al-‘adāla, hīnamā yaḡīb mabda’ al-qiṣāṣ li-yatalāšī aš-šu‘ūr bi-l-amn hīnamā yatakarrar al-ḥādīt wa lā yataḥarrak aḥad lā tandahiṣ hīnamā tarā al-muwāṭinīn wa qad taḥawwalū li-quḍāt wa jallādīn fī al-waqt nafsīhi li-tasūd šarī‘at al-ḡāb bayn an-nās¹⁶

When the injustice is excessive, and justice is late, when the law disappears, and the principle of QIṢĀṢ is obliterated so that the feeling of security vanishes, when the incident is repeated and no one moves, don’t be surprised when you see citizens having turned into judges and executioners at the same time, so that the law of the jungle prevails among the people.

QIṢĀṢ here comes at the conclusion of a list of nominations representing various aspects of JUSTICE and is even elevated to the status of an overarching principle of some sort. The author of the article then goes on describing in much detail the lynching by villagers of two thugs (*balṭagiya*)¹⁷, who came from outside and settled in the village and had been then engaged in criminal activities and harassed

¹³ For the original English text see article ‘90% of journalists’ murderers across the world get away with it – report’, The Guardian, 28 October 2014 – <http://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2014/oct/28/journalist-safety-press-freedom>

¹⁴ Note also the rendition of *qiṣāṣ* as ‘legal retribution’ in the pious English translation of the Quran (Saheeh – <http://quran.com/2>).

¹⁵ There are several nominations in Arabic that express this idea with *ẓulm* being perhaps the most comprehensive one and very common in the religious discourse.

¹⁶ A feature article titled *intiqām al-ahālī min al-balṭagiya* (people’s revenge against thugs) published on al-Ahrām al-Yawmī on 8 September 2012 – <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=1122056&eid=837>

¹⁷ See footnote 8 above.

the locals for a long time, ‘which has raised the ire and wrath of the people so that they issued a summary verdict on QIŞĀŞ’ (*mimmā zāda min ḥanaq al-ahālī wa ḡadabihim fa-aşdarū ḥukmahum al-jamā’ī bi-l-qişāş*¹⁸). The villagers repeatedly attempted to seek redress from local authorities and alert police, but to no avail. The wrath of the villagers is described as a *just* one, while the act of punishment, however barbaric and unlawful it may appear¹⁹, is described as an act of QIŞĀŞ, which is framed as the right episode to make the story complete, just like a long story about sickness would be best completed by an episode of death or recovery. The author’s criticism is aimed not at the purport of the act but the manner, in which it was performed, particularly, the fact that the citizens had to perform their retaliation *li-anfusihim* (for themselves) or *bi-aydhim* (by their own hands), not through the agency of a public institution. The journalist is also displeased with the public manner of the execution – ‘*alā mar’ā wa masma’ al-jamī’ ḥāaşşatan al-atfāl alladīna iştaffū li-ru’yat ḥādā al-maşhad ad-damayī wa şārak fihi al-ba’d minhum* (on the hearing and sight of all, including, children, who lined up to see the bloody scene and some of them participated in it). The latter phrase is attributed to a local female teacher, who has also described this act of retaliation as *jarīma* (crime). The local security chief, while commenting on the event warned the villagers, that –

‘*inda tammakunihim min al-qabḍ ‘alā ayy baltagī ḡarūrat at-tamahhul wa taqḡimihī li-l-‘adāla li-taḡbīq al-qişāş al-‘ādil wa infāḡ al-qānūn badlan min an-nayl min ḥā’ulā’ al-baltagiya wa al-fatḡ bihim ḡattā lā yataḡawwal al-mujtama’ ilā ḡāba*²⁰

if they manage to capture any thug, it is necessary for them (lit. the necessity is) to take respite and bring him to justice for the performance of the *just* QIŞĀŞ and the enforcement of the law instead of harming and killing these thugs so that the society does not transform into a jungle

All actors featuring in the article, including *villagers*, who committed the act of QIŞĀŞ, the *local teacher* and the *law enforcement*

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The two thugs were dragged along the streets of the village, slaughtered with knives, their arms and legs cut and, finally, hanged on the street light pillars.

²⁰ Ibid.

officer, and, notably, the *author* of the article appear to be in agreement about one thing, namely, that in situations as described in the article, QIŞĀŞ just *has* to be performed. Situations that call for QIŞĀŞ to be performed are the ones that involve violence. All actors appeared to be in agreement that such situation had indeed taken place. Yet, the teacher described the incident as a *crime* and the law enforcement officer's comment, although presupposing that QIŞĀŞ is a necessity, argues for a different manner, in which it has to be performed in the future, namely, through the formal institutions of justice. Although the villagers in this feature article do not speak for themselves, their presumed line of argument is reflected in the manner of the author's account of the incident. It hinges on the idea that justice system had either been too slow to react or simply failed, which prompted the villagers to perform QIŞĀŞ *with their own hands*. Characteristically, the law enforcement officer also shows concern over the time factor: he is insisting on the necessity of *tamah-hul* (respite, delay) for the JUSTICE to be achieved. The word '*adāla*' in this segment features in two senses: instrumental one, referring to the institutions of justice (criminal prosecution, courts) and a broader ethical one. For, the phrase *al-qīṣāṣ al-'ādil* (just retaliation) is not necessarily interpreted as 'performed through the agency of the formal justice system'. Although the law enforcement officer might have preferred precisely this interpretation, the villagers probably would argue that, as the formal justice system had failed them, their act of retaliation was also *just*. Consequently, among the two closely related concept QIŞĀŞ and 'ADĀLA it is the former one that appears to be beyond any argument, while the latter depends on contingencies such as time, the availability of means etc., which may also be a matter of individual opinion and interpretation. QIŞĀŞ, hence, functions as a stronger *moral imperative*, a *value* whose validity all concerned parties, despite their disagreement, do not dare question.

In frame semantics terms, QIŞĀŞ evokes situations with a set of frame elements similar to those included in the description of Revenge frame on the Framenet²¹, including the core elements – Offender,

²¹ FrameNet is a web-based corpus based on the ideas of Charles J. Fillmore's frame semantics that contains description of the internal structure of various semantic frames that refer to situations, actions, events – cf. <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/home> Cf. *Revenge* on the Framenet Frame Index – <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/index.php?q=frameIndex>

Injury, Injured Party, Avenger and Punishment. The frame refers to situations that happen at what could be described as social micro level, i.e. the level that involves only the immediate participants. The inclusion of the ‘ADĀLA concept expands the scope of discussion to a social macro level – that of the society at large, including the role of public institutions such as law enforcement and courts, allowing for the discussion of issues of broader public concern, such as *legality* vs. *societal disorder* (cf. the notion of the *law of jungle*)²². The projection of ‘ADĀLA on the situation as discussed in the cited text changes nothing in the core structure of QIṢĀṢ as described above. It incorporates it, builds on it, while elaborating on some of the non-core elements of the frame, namely, Instrument and Manner, in the language of the cited Framenet description²³.

3. RETALIATION and DIGNITY

The idea that justice can only be delivered through the secular justice system is contested vehemently in the Islamist discourse, cf.:

wa raġma anna aḷḷaha ta‘ālā yaqūl fī muḥkam ayātihi: “wa lakum fī al-*qiṣāṣi* ḥayātun yā ūlī al-albāb” fa-qad darajat al-qawānīn al-waḍ‘īya fī al-bilād al-islāmiya wa al-‘arabiya fī al-jumla fī majāl al-‘iqāb an tuhmil taṭbīq šarī‘at al-*qiṣāṣ* wa bi-raġm ziyādat *jarā’im al-qatl wa al-i‘tidā’ ‘alā an-nafs bi-mā dūnahu* fa-lam yastašrif ‘ulamā’ al-qānūn al-waḍ‘ī al-ma‘ānī as-sāmiya allatī awjazathā al-āya al-*karīma* wa lam yuṭabbaq naṣṣuhā al-muḥkam *ḥattā tazhar ḥikmatuhu* wa-ktafā al-mušarri‘ūn fī majāl al-‘iqāb al-jinā’ī bi-‘uqūbāt as-sijn aw al-ḥabs aw al-ġarāma jazā’an ‘alā al-i‘tidā’ ‘alā an-nafs ‘amdan bi-mā dūna al-qatl. bal wa arhafū asmā‘ahum kaḍālika ilā *ṣayḥāt wa da‘awāt ḥabīṭa waradat min al-ġarb wa tasallalat ilā afkārīhim wa nufūsīhim* tad‘ū ilā tarḥ šarī‘at al-*qiṣāṣ* wa *tuzayyin li-n-nās a‘mālahum* – wa

²² The scope of ‘ADĀLA of course is of course much wider than that of QIṢĀṢ, as aside from situations related to violent crimes, it is applicable to any situation that may presuppose judgment of right and wrong, e.g. the distribution of goods or expenses (cf. *ḥiṣṣa ‘ādila*, *qiṣṭ ‘ādil* – a fair share, *taqṣīm ‘ādil* – a fair/just distribution).

²³ We do not propose to treat Revenge frame description as fully corresponding to the frame structure of QIṢĀṢ; while some non-core elements of Revenge frame may appear to be extra-thematic or non-relevant altogether for QIṢĀṢ, the whole set of core elements and some non-core elements, including notably, Instrument and Manner, appear to be similar.

give no mind to KARĀMA (dignity) of the human soul – demonstrate a pretense of concern over the society and compassion with the people and anxiety over the punishment of QIṢĀṢ, although the communities that the owners of these calls belong to, as states and governments – do not stop shedding the blood of humans without differentiation between man and woman and child and continue to foment (lit. incinerate) wars and FITAN (pl. of *fitna* – intraethnic or intraconfessional strife²⁷), in whose fire burn the innocent and the guilty [alike].

The proposed segment counterposes the correct Muslim way of doing justice that is based on a divine law to the wrong, Western inspired, ways, driven by insincere motives, that are meant to outwardly appear as humane but in fact pursue a malicious purpose of undermining peace inside the Muslim community. The opposition between the two, constructed as that between something noble in both the form and purpose and mean, is expressed through a standard orientational metaphor GOOD is HIGH (something to be looked up to) and BAD is LOW. Instead of looking *up* at the *high* meaning of the holy verses, the secular legislators listen to what *tasallala* (*penetrated, spread*, which reflects a movement on a flat surface) to their minds²⁸. QIṢĀṢ hence appears as part of high, benevolent divine Providence that proposes to save human LIFE. Meanwhile, the Western inspired laws, counterposed to QIṢĀṢ, show disregard to KARĀMA (dignity). The reversal of the latter argument points to a presupposed positive link between the concepts of QIṢĀṢ and KARĀMA: the adherence to QIṢĀṢ as a divine principle means respecting KARĀMA, the prevention of further criminal killing and violence and avoidance of unjust deaths of the innocent. KARĀMA, hence, appears to be the linchpin of the entire argument. Disrespectful to human dignity as it is, Western justice, or by extension the whole Western system, appears also to be indiscriminate as it punishes guilty and innocent, men and women and children alike. By way of contrast QIṢĀṢ is all about measuring punishment in terms of *like for the like*, mindful also of the social status and familial relations of both the victim and the perpetrator. For instance, QIṢĀṢ cannot be

²⁷ A Sharia concept describing conflict within the Muslim community.

²⁸ Notably, *qawānīn waḍ'īya* (manmade laws) are the ones that come into existence through an act expressed by the verb *waḍa'a* (to put down).

performed in respect to a parent, who killed his/her child, or a Muslim if the victim was an infidel, *šurūt* al-QIŠĀŠ (conditions of retaliation) also take account of whether the victim or the perpetrator were freemen or slaves, etc. While pardoning the perpetrator is generally appreciated, killer of an imam should not be pardoned. The *lex talionis* principle of *eye for an eye* is specified in the Islamic legal discussion down to such details as for the *right* hand the *right* hand of the perpetrator should be taken, the *left* hand for the *left* hand, the *upper* lip for the *upper* lip, and so forth. In sum, the underlying principle is a very close qualitative equivalence between the injury and punishment, which covers not only the nature of the physical loss but also its social circumstances, including the respective statuses of the parties²⁹.

KARĀMA, as perhaps the most salient among the value concepts that shape the discourse of the Egyptian revolution, deserves a special place in this paper. For all its significance, there appears to be quite a limited list of collocations with the word KARĀMA in Arabic, mainly various nominations that refer to *people* as groups or as individuals³⁰. It is the latter context that appears to be the most specified, as it includes a whole set of nominations that refer to various aspects of Person as reflected in the naïve worldview encoded in the language. A particularly frequent among them appears to be *karāmat an-nafs* (lit. dignity of the soul/self), which often occurs in the context of the Islamic discussion of QIŠĀŠ³¹. But KARĀMA may also appear in collocation with BODY in a similar context, cf.:

ammā ūlā'ika allađīna yatazāharūna bi-l-‘atf ‘alā al-junāt wa yađkarūna al-aydī aw al-aṭrāf allatī tuqṭa‘ qišāšan aw an-nufūs allatī qad tađhab qišāšan fa-awlā bihim an aytadakkārū anna al-jasad al-insānī –

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of these and other Sharia norms on QIŠĀŠ see Šāliḥ bin Fawzān bin ‘Abdullah al-Fawzān. Al-Mulahḥaš al-Fiqhī. Dār al-‘Āšima. ar-Riyāḍ. 1423 h., part 2, p. 471–489 – an electronic version can be found at <http://islamport.com/w/hnb/Web/94/539.htm> (page numbering differs from the print version).

³⁰ Google search for *karāmat aš-ša‘b* (dignity of the people) has returned 104,000 results and 228,000 results for *karāmat al-insān* (dignity of human being), which suggests that the concept of KARĀMA is more often invoked in an individual, albeit generic, perspective, rather than a collective one.

³¹ See the above cited example in section 3.

fī karāmatihī allatī aršadanā al-lahu ilayhā lā yumass fī šarī‘at al-qīṣāṣ illā bi-ḥaqq³²

as for those who pretend [to show] compassion to perpetrators and mention arms and limbs that are cut in retaliation or souls that may go in retaliation, [it would be] more appropriate for them to recall that the human body – in its KARĀMA – that Allah has guided us to – is not touched (abused, infringed upon) in the Sharia of QIŞĀŞ but rightfully...

The following two segments show that the concept of NAFS is in fact broader in meaning than the notion of SOUL, which is supposedly its closest match according to most standard European dictionaries of Arabic. In the context of KARĀMA, the relationship of JASAD (BODY) and NAFS is not either or. When paired with KARĀMA as a genitive attribute, NAFS appears to cover *both* BODY and SOUL, which only in some contexts, is specified as *karāmat ar-rūḥ* or *karāmat al-jasad*³³:

a) ...wa min ajl takrīm al-islām li-n-nafs al-bašariya wa ṣiyānat ar-rūḥ wa al-jasad min an yamussuhā insān bi-ḡayr ḥaqq kānat šarī‘at al-qīṣāṣ allatī katabahā al-lah ‘alā ‘ibādihī...³⁴

...and for ensuring KARĀMA of human NAFS [on the part of] Islam and the maintenance/preservation of SOUL and BODY from being touched (i.e. abused, impinged/infringed upon) by a human being without right (i.e. in a lawless, illicit manner) Sharia of QIŞĀŞ was [established] which Allah prescribed upon His slaves...

b) ...wa qad adraka al-‘arab ḥattā qabl al-islām mīzat al-qīṣāṣ fa-jarā qawluhum bi-anna *al-qatla anfā li-l-qatl* wa nazala al-qur‘ān al-karīm mu‘akkidan ḥādā al-ma‘nā wa ḡayrahu mim mā ṣtamalat ‘alayhi al-āya al-karīma *wa lakum fī al-qīṣāṣi ḥayātun yā ulī al-albāb* (al-baqara 179); fa-inna al-qātil ‘amdan aw al-jāriḥ ‘amdan law ‘arifa maḡabbat ‘amalihi annahā **dahāb nafsihī qīṣāṣan** la-aḥjama ‘an al-qatl fa-**ṣāna ḥayātahu** wa **ḥayāta** man yahimm bi-qatlihi...³⁵

...and Arabs have realized even before Islam the characteristic feature of QIŞĀŞ, and their saying spread that ‘the killing annihilated

³² <http://www.daawa-info.net/Printarticle.php?id=808>

³³ Interestingly, BODY occurs almost twice as often as SOUL: Google search for *karāmat ar-rū* has returned 1020 results, while for *karāmat al-jasad* – 1770 results.

³⁴ <http://www.daawa-info.net/Printarticle.php?id=808>

³⁵ <http://www.daawa-info.net/Printarticle.php?id=808>

the killing’, and the Holy Quran was sent (lit. came down) ascertaining this meaning and the rest of it of what the holy verse comprised ‘and [there is] for you in QIṢĀṢ life, o owners of minds (i.e. intelligent or reasonable people. – O. B.) (al-Baqara: 179); and the premeditated killer or premeditated injurer should [he] know the outcome of his deed that it [would be] the passing of his NAFS in retaliation (QIṢĀṢ), [would] refrain from killing and [would] maintain/preserve his **life** and the **life** of he, who [he] intended to kill...

In example (a), the phrase ‘maintenance of SOUL and BODY...’ explains the meaning of *takrīm an-naḥs al-bašariya* by specifying it, in a manner similar to dictionary interpretations. Within this interpretation SOUL and BODY correspond to NAFS, i.e. the two concepts combined, consequently, have the same scope as NAFS. The segment (b) shows a close relationship between NAFS (and by extension KARĀMA) and LIFE: they function in the segment as almost synonyms. It is through this connection that the concept of ‘AYŠ (BREAD) – the initial, but often omitted part in the quadripartite revolutionary slogan cited in the Introduction to this paper, may be linked to the whole set of revolutionary value concepts: ‘ayš’ – the colloquial Egyptian for ‘bread’ reflects an idea similar to the proverbial ‘daily bread’ as it stems from the verb ‘āš (live). To sum up, the meaning of NAFS (with which KARĀMA is associated) overlaps with LIFE, SELF, BODY and SOUL, and in plain language it may be described as ‘living individual comprised of two substances body and soul’.

Interestingly, as KARĀMA appears to combine with many representations of human person, it does not combine with all of them. Notably, the concept that represents the emotional side of human psyche – QALB (HEART) is excluded from its scope. Here is a segment that places KARĀMA in a contrastive context of various scenario frames, acts, mental or physical states that are seen as *posing a threat* to KARĀMA. The text describes a moral dilemma resulting from the conflict between the *need to preserve* KARĀMA of one’s self (*iḥtifāz karāmatinā or karāmat an-naḥs* – lit. *retainment of our dignity or the dignity of one’s soul*) and the urges of one’s QALB (HEART), which may put KARĀMA in the harm’s way or even ruin it. Cf.:

li-kull minnā karāma wa fī nafs al-waqt lahu qalb fa-ayy min-hum³⁶ ahamm bi-ḥayātika qalbuka am karāmatuka? hal min al-ma‘qūl an nastagnt ‘an qulūbinā li-l-iḥtifāz bi-karāmatinā fī sabīl dālika. (...) ṣaḥīḥ annahu lā budda an takūn karāmat an-nafs fawq kull i‘tibār wa lakinna limādā wulidat at-taḍḥiya idā kānat karāmat an-nafs hiya al-muntaṣira ḡālīban. am hiya mujarrad kalimāt nu‘ayyid maḍmūnahā wa lakinna bi-dūn al-‘amal bi-hā? li-naqif laḥzatan ‘alā ba‘ḍ al-jumal hiya mawjūda fī ḥayātinā wa dā‘īman nuraddiduhā fī mawqif mu‘ayyan: ḥidā‘, ḥiyāna, karāhiya, kaḍīb, ḍu‘f, ḥazīma. qālū man bā‘nā bi‘nāhu, illī hawāk ihwāh wa illī nasāk insāh, alladī lā ya‘tabiruka ribḥan lā ta‘tabiruhu ḥasāra³⁷

Everyone of us has KARĀMA and, at the same time, he has a heart, so which of them [is] more important in your life – your heart or your KARĀMA? Is it reasonable to dispense with our hearts to retain our KARĀMA? True that KARĀMA of [one’s] self (lit. *soul*) should be above all else (lit. *every consideration*), but why has sacrifice come into being (lit. *was born*) if KARĀMA of [one’s] self is mostly the winner? Or are these merely words, whose content we approve but without acting by them? Let us stop, for a moment, at some phrases that exist in our lives and we always repeat them in a certain situation: *deceit, betrayal, hatred, lie, weakness, defeat*. They say (lit. *said*) *whoever sold us – we sold him, whoever loves you – love him, whoever doesn’t consider you a profit – don’t you consider him a loss*.

In as much as HEART is perceived as part of the same psyche, giving too much sway to it would, as the reviewed segment implies, be tantamount to sacrificing the KARĀMA of one’s SELF altogether. In force-dynamic terms, KARĀMA and QALB, hence, appear as parts of what Leonard Talmy describes as *self divided* with a ‘desiring part’ characterized by a tendency toward movement respresented as QALB (Agonist) and KARĀMA appearing as part (or essential

³⁶ The text does not follow the rules of standard Arabic too strictly; the correct form would be dual *min-humā* (from the two of them). The idea of SELF is expressed here by other nominations, e.g. the phrase *li-kull minnā karāma* (everyone of us has KARĀMA) represents nothing but an emphatic paraphrase of *karāmat an-nafs* as analyzed above.

³⁷ According to Google, this text has been reposted no less than 566 times on Egyptian blogs, for one such occurrence of it see: <http://saly.ahlamontada.net/t2500-topic>

quality) of SELF with the tendency toward rest (Antagonist)³⁸. While the tendency toward rest – i.e. toward the preservation of KARĀMA – is presented as the dominant one, a conflicting moral imperative, that of a selfless sacrifice (TADĤIYA), may be working against it. Apparently, such a clear opposition between KARĀMA and QALB as is implied in this segment, places the former outside of what could be described as the domain of emotions.

Now let us consider the list of threats to KARĀMA (*deceit, betrayal, hatred, lie, weakness, defeat*). Although belonging to a few distinct semantic types these words do have a common semantic denominator. Just as easily as all these words combine with predicate *suffer* in English, their Arabic equivalents combine with the matching Arabic predicates *ta'arraḍ* (*li-*) and *'ānā* (*min*). The frame structures that most of these words evoke share a common semantic constituent, namely, a passive experiencer of an act, mental or physical state (in the case of *weakness*) associated with a significant moral damage, best described as Victim³⁹. HEART is conceived of as an entity bringing SELF into a wrong type of association with other human agents, unpredictable and potentially damaging to SELF. *Preservation* (iḥtifāz) of KARĀMA, which is presented as a moral imperative (*above all else*), presupposes resistance to influences external to SELF that operate through HEART. The notion of Victim is sharply contrasted to the part of SELF associated with KARĀMA: to preserve KARĀMA means to avoid being a Victim. KARĀMA effectively appears as a positive characteristic of the *social part* of SELF as opposed to the *psychological SELF*, which is seen as prone to weakness.

While other derivatives of the root *k-r-m* are abundant in the Quran, the word *karāma* itself does not occur in it. The most quoted Quranic segment in relation to KARĀMA is *wa li-llāhi al-'izza wa li-rasūlihi wa li-l-mu'minīn* (and to Allah belongs [all] honor, and to

³⁸ Cf. Leonard Talmy, Force Dynamics in Language and Cognition, Cognitive Science 12, 49–100 (1968), p. 69.

³⁹ Cf. Deception_scenario frame on the Framenet (<https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/index.php?q=frameIndex>), we have found no other relevant frames on the Framenet.

His Messenger, and to the believers) (63:8)⁴⁰, pointing to ‘izza (honor, pride) as a synonym of *karāma*. Another well cited text in relation to KARĀMA is the hadith: *uṭlubū al-ḥawā’ija bi-‘izzat al-anfus fa-inna al-umūra tajrī bi-maqādīri llāh* (ask for [your] needs with honor of souls, for things occur according to the God’s scales)⁴¹. Notably, the root ‘zz conveys the idea of *strength*⁴², which is quite probably its source meaning.

It is this, social aspect of KARĀMA that is reflected in the idea of the (re)birth of dignity, one of the common places of the secular strand of the Egyptian revolutionary discourse, cf. *iḥsās al-karāma allaḍī tawallada fī maydān at-tahrīr*⁴³ (the feeling of KARĀMA that was born in the Independence Square), *mīlād al-ḥurriya wa al-karāma li-š-ša‘b al-miṣrī ba‘d ‘uqūd min ad-dīktātūrīya*⁴⁴ (the birth of freedom and KARĀMA of the Egyptian people after decades of dictatorship).

4. RETALIATION and FREEDOM

The link to ḤURRIYA is not so obvious, it is rather indirect one, mediated by a series of other concepts closely linked to the concept of QIṢĀṢ, particularly DAM (blood) and ŠAHĀDA/TADḤIYA (martyrdom, sacrifice), cf.:

ammā al-qatala wa as-saffāḥīn fa-innā nas’alu aḷḷaha ‘azza wa jalla an yaj’ala ḥāḍiḥi **ad-damā’ az-zakiya min aš-šuhadā’** wa al-jurḥā wa al-muṣābīn wa al-maḥrūqīn la‘natan ‘alayhim wa ‘alā kull man šārahakum wa law bi-ṣaṭr kalimatin ilā yawm al-qiyāma ḥattā yuktab bayn ‘aynayhim “āyis (*sic. the correct form would be ay’asu*) min raḥmati-llahi” kamā nas’alu tabāraka wa ta‘ālā **an yaj’ala kull**

⁴⁰ The Saheeh International Qur’an Translation – <http://quran.com/63>

⁴¹ For the manner in which it may be cited see <http://www.ahram.org.eg/NewsQ/296559.aspx> The article does not refer to *karāma* directly, but uses a synonymous idiomatic expression *mā’ al-wajh* (lit. water of the face).

⁴² E.g. a characteristic interpretation of the adjective ‘*azīz* in *Lisan al-‘Arab* as *mumtani’ lā yaḡlabuhu šay’* (forbearing, [which] nothing prevails upon it) – Ibn Manẓūr. *Lisān al-‘Arab*. Beirut: Dār Šādir, 1955–1956, 15 vols.

⁴³ Article titled ‘*Taman al-Karāma*’ in the Egyptian newspaper at-Tahrīr, 30 November, 2011 – <http://www.masress.com/tahrirnews/86541>

⁴⁴ ‘Alī Abd-ar-Ra’ūf. At-Tahrīr Maydān wa aš-Ša‘b... ad-Dawḥa, Feb. 2013: <http://Goo.Gl/Ayuaqz>

at-taḍḥiyāt wa al-mawāqif wa al-qurubāt wa ad-da'wāt min kull al-muslimīn wa al-muslimāt hiya **ḍarībatan tuḥarrir** al-umma min kull 'ubūdiya illā li-llah wa [tu'ammin?] ḥuṣūlahā 'alā kull ḥuqū-qihā al-mašrū'a⁴⁵...

As for the murderers and slaughterers, we ask Allah Almighty to make this **pure blood of the martyrs** and the wounded and the injured and the burned [ones] a curse upon them and upon everyone who joined them and helped them if even by half a word until the Doomsday to be written between their eyes: 'I despare in the mercy of Allah', as we ask the Most Blessed and the Highest to **make all sacrifices** and the positions and the supplications and the calls of all Muslims (masc. form) and Muslims (fem. form) a **tax** [that would] **liberate** the nation from all bondage but that of Allah and [ensure] its attainment of all its legal rights...

The author has linked the MARTYRDOM/SACRIFICE to FREEDOM following an entailment of the concept of QIṢĀṢ, which presupposes that no BLOOD of innocent victims should be spilled in vain⁴⁶. The fiscal term *tax* projected on *sacrifice*, which is another way of referring to the BLOOD spilled by the martyrs, reflects the latter's role as some sort of currency in the moral economy scheme that regulates the relations between the Victim, Victim's next of kin (here expanded to *Muslims*, the *nation*) and the Murderers (in this context, a byword for the tyrannical leaders of the country). The God is called upon to interfere in this scheme by depriving the murderers of his grace and granting it to the Victim's blood guardians by giving them FREEDOM. It merits to be mentioned here that the nature of semantic relationship between the concepts here is different from what we discussed in sections 2 and 3 above. The link to FREEDOM is not encoded in the semantic structures of the concepts of QIṢĀṢ and TAḌḤIYA (SACRIFICE), neither on the *linguistic frame* nor on

⁴⁵Ummatal-ahdāfas-sāmiya wat-taḍḥiyāt al-ḡāliya. Risālamīn Muḥammad al-Baḍī', al-muršid al-'ām li-l-iḥwān al-muslimīn. 20.08.2013 (possibly the last epistle penned by Muhammad Badi' before his incarceration) – <http://www.daawa-info.net/letter.php?id=437>.

⁴⁶Ideally, blood must be repaid through a retaliatory act to *awliyā' ad-dam* (blood guardians, next of kin) of the martyrs, victims of violent death, injuries compensated by injuring the perpetrator. Once such repayment does not occur the blood is considered *spilled in vain*.

the *cognitive frame* level in Fillmoreian sense of these terms⁴⁷. The author of the segment has constructed a rhetorical device that links MARTYRDOM/SACRIFICE to FREEDOM by projecting the cognitive frame associated with the concept of QIŞĀŞ on these two prominent themes in his polemical description of the post-revolutionary struggle⁴⁸.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As we have seen, value concepts applied to make sense of the recent Egyptian revolution represent a rather neatly linked conceptual cluster. This is true not only in respect to the officially cited quadripartite slogan ‘Bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity’, but also to another value concept QIŞĀŞ (RETALIATION), whose prominence in the language of the Egyptian revolution prompted some Egyptian commentators to dub the latter a Revolution of Retaliation. KARĀMA (DIGNITY) and QIŞĀŞ (RETALIATION) appear to form the core of the entire set of value concepts. The links inside the set are of different nature with many of them encoded in language and embedded in culture and others (such as the link between QIŞĀŞ and HURRIYA (FREEDOM)) – newly constructed.

While KARĀMA appears to be the centerpiece of the set, the significance of QIŞĀŞ is that it operates as cipher key for reading/ascribing meanings to the whole set. There are several reasons why it

⁴⁷ Cf. Jozsef Andor. Discussing the frame semantics: The state of the art. An interview with Charles J. Fillmore. *Review of Cognitive Semantics* 8:1 2010, p. 158.

⁴⁸ FREEDOM has become an important concept in the Islamist strand of the Egyptian revolutionary discourse. It is notable that while the name of the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood was obviously modeled on the name of the Turkish ruling Islamist party, it is the word *hurriya* (freedom) that the Egyptians chose to distinguish between the two (cf. *hizb al-hurriya wa al-'adala* (Freedom and Justice Party) vs. *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (Justice and Development Party)). The concept of HURRIYA, however differently it may be understood by the leftists and the liberals, at least during the early phase of the Egyptian revolution, could have served as a unifying symbol for a broad political spectrum of groups and individual figures who contributed to toppling the Mubarak regime. The discussion of the rhetoric of FREEDOM in the Islamist and secular political discourses in Egypt would, however, require a separate chapter.

may function this way: it is the only dynamic concept in the set linked to a clear-cut situational frame with roles and action scenario that may be projected upon the rest of the set as *means* on *goals*; it answers the question ‘what is to be done’ to achieve/ensure Dignity, Freedom, Justice etc. While other notions may be contested, the cognitive frame associated with QIṢĀṢ is so deeply embedded in cultural beliefs and so indisputable that it provides the minimal common ground needed for the communication to be sustained. As part of a belief system QIṢĀṢ also refers more to an ideal world i.e. to how things *should be* rather than to what they actually *are*, which partly explains its illocutionary force as a slogan.

The frequent occurrence of QIṢĀṢ, essentially a term of the Islamic normative vocabulary, outside of the Islamist strand of the Egyptian revolutionary discourse – e.g. in rally mottoes produced by the Egyptian Ultras and leftist revolutionaries – highlights the significance of the Islamic concepts as common terms of reference for both the religious and the secular parts of the Egyptian society.