

Protesting Salafi Spaces in Post - revolutionary Tunisia:

The construction of mythical identity

I studied the possible roles and significance of Islam in radicalisation in various guises, e.g. Islam as a radicalising ideology in itself, as a potential (ideological) justification or legitimation for violent attacks against others, including groups and entire cultures and ideologies. I investigated whether, how and to what extent Islam was instrumentalised for political pursuits. This required investigation of the evolution of religious fundamentalism in post-revolutionary Tunisia. I examined the contexts and dynamics of recruitment strategies and initiatives, including the motivations and receptiveness of targeted groups and individuals.

My case study was grounded in two axes; in the first I invested a number of facts/ a corpus of data that is well documented, especially the photographs that represent a number of events that took place between 2011 and the 2013, I have deciphered their symbolic system and I analyzed them through an approach that fused the semiological perspective with analytic explanation. The second axis was based on my meetings with active members of the Salafist group (Ansar Al-Sharia), especially those who contributed to the events explored in this article/work, namely the 'conquest of the clock', the attack against the American embassy, the aggression against the space of cultural activities at Africa ART, in addition to other events that I did not submit to a chronological sequence. I have rather tried to seek the symbolic sequence and the protest-oriented nature of the happenings associated with this group, I have also tried to undertake a close interpretation of such happenings through a focus on their iconic figures and their strategies to establish such mythical construction of Islamic/Islamist identity. It has to be noted in this context that I had spent an expanded period of time in my investigation during which I arranged for meetings (private and public), I visited various spaces, and followed theological courses in mosques and outside them, before starting to work on this article altogether.