



# Religion and Folk Cosmology: Scenarios of the Visible and Invisible in Rural Egypt

*el-Sayed el-Aswad*

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## **Religion and Folk Cosmology: Scenarios of the Visible and Invisible in Rural Egypt** el-Sayed el-Aswad

This study refutes both the Western dominant paradigm of modernity and the Eurocentric stereotype of traditional Muslim culture, and demonstrates that rural Egyptians have their own paradigm of secular modernism that does not negate religious or sacred orientations. Islam is associated with ongoing attempts at religious purification and cultural unification and is inimical to cultural homogenization encouraged by Western globalization.

Provides a holistic interpretation of the interplay between religion and folk cosmology, challenging the stereotypes that relegate traditional people to backwardness and a peripheral space or locality. Within this Muslim society the global/local nexus is one of ongoing creative integration, not separation. The cosmology can best be understood in the context of its totality, encompassing both visible and invisible zones.

Muslims articulate personal or private order as well as social order within their cosmology. This cosmological view, endowing people with a unique imaginative sense of engagement with a supraphenomenal reality, accentuates the belief that divine cosmic invisible higher power surpasses any other power. Such a belief represents an inexhaustible source of spiritual and emotional empowerment that may be politically mobilized in certain critical moments and depicted as a religious, holy struggle, or *jihad*.

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