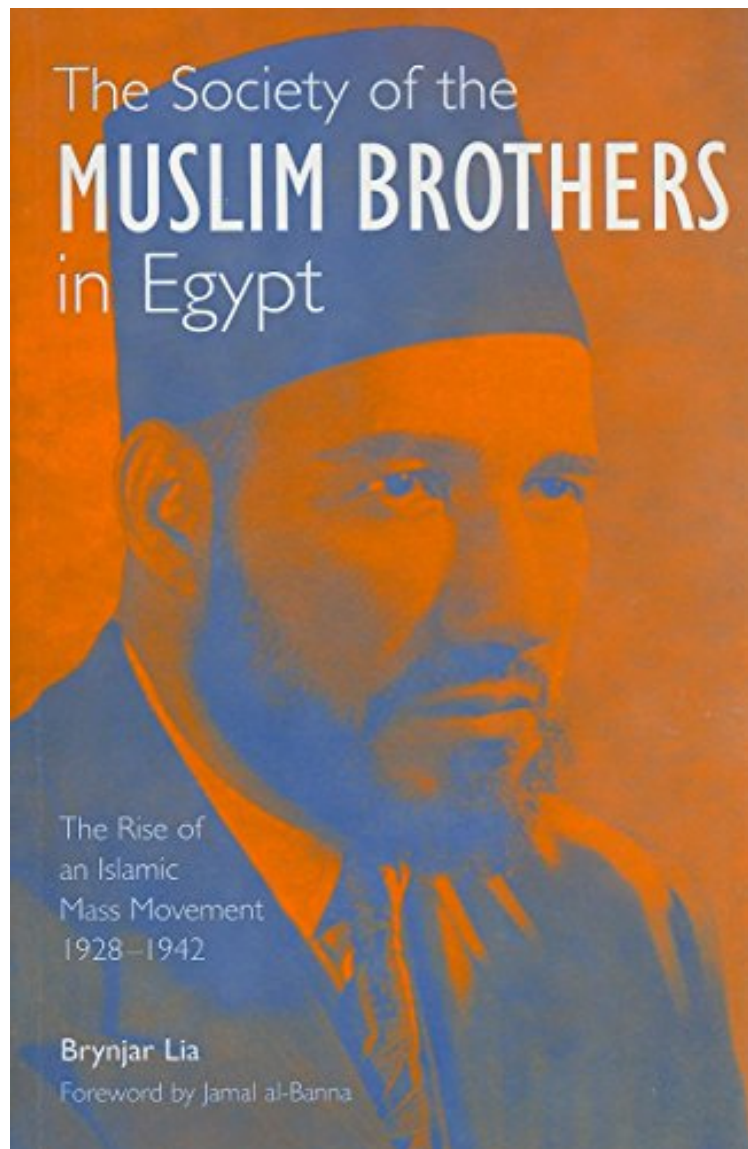


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## The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement 1928-1942

*Brynjar Lia*

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6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Book review in Jerusalem Post By A Customer Book review in Jerusalem Post "Lia's book provides a fresh reassessment of the growth of the Muslim Brothers. He does so by drawing on a wealth of recently discovered documents, including the Society's own internal publications from the 1930s and '40s, British intelligence reports and al-Banna's personal letters. While touching on issues of ideology and anti imperialism, Lia places great emphasis on the Society's structure and its activities within Egypt to explain its early phenomenal growth. Rather than a reaction to modernity, he argues that the Society itself was a modern organization, open to new technologies and ideas. (...) The violence and radicalism within the organization prove to be among the thorniest issues in the book. While the Muslim Brothers provided the organizational model for today's radical Islamic groups, to some extent they also provided the template of violence. Lia argues that the Society, while calling for an all-Islamic "struggle" on various occasions, was not inherently violent. The Muslim Brothers did have a military wing, the so-called Special Section, but this, he says, was a way to channel the radical energies of the more energetic younger members. This element of violence can be traced back to a split within the Muslim Brothers in 1939. As a reaction to al-Banna's accommodationist political activity, a group calling itself the Society of Our Master Muhammad's Youth split off from the main organization. Throughout the next decades, this group would continue to splinter, creating the network of violent Islamic groups which plagued Egypt today (...) Lia argues that the growing radicalism resulted from government efforts to shut these Islamic groups out of the Egyptian political system. Lacking a legitimate outlet for their energies, he argues, these groups can easily turn to the option of terrorism." "The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt 1928-1942" is an important contribution to our understanding. If any complaint can be leveled it is at the circumscription of the book's time frame. Lia limits his study from the beginning of the Society until 1942 (...) Numerous issues of interest arose in the Society's history after this period from the involvement of the Muslim Brothers in the 1948 war against Israel to the 1949 assassination of al-Banna and Nasser's eventual outlawing of the Society. A wider study would further consider the development of violence within the Muslim Brothers and its splinter groups and offshoots. One can only hope that Lia has plans for a companion volume" Book review by Shai Tsur in Jerusalem Post December 1998

Following the remarkable resurgence of Islamic political activism in recent decades, radical Islamic movements now have a presence in almost every Muslim country and form the major opposition forces to the established regimes in the Middle East. This important book deepens our understanding of the influence of contemporary Islam by providing a definitive history of the meteoric rise of the mother organization of all modern Islamic movements—the Society of the Muslim Brothers. Founded in 1928 by a young primary schoolteacher, Hasan al-Banna, the Society rose to become the largest mass movement in modern Egyptian history in less than two decades, clashing with the ruling elite on a wide range of issues. Drawing on a wealth of sources which include material by the Society's veterans and dissidents, the Society's internal publications from the 1930s and early 1940s, a collection of Hasan al-Banna's letters to his father, and security files from the Egyptian National Archives, the author examines the socio-economic and cultural factors which facilitated the movement's expansion and analyzes the keys to its success.

'a very impressive research effort into the early years of the Muslim Brothers, Lia relies on new sources and deep knowledge of his subjects.' Middle East Quarterly "Because the author, more so than previous studies, has researched a great variety of documents on the Muslim Brotherhood...he has achieved an analysis of the period 1928-1936 hitherto not available in this depth...provides new knowledge not only on the rise of Islam, but also on its ability to persist in spite of massive repression.' Edition Wuqf 'a careful and scholarly account which contains much information not available to early writers...the historical rather than the ideological fully emerges for the first time.' World without

Frontiers (BBC Radio Arabic Programme) 'a fresh reassessment of the growth of the Muslim Brothers, drawing on a wealth of recently discovered documents.' Jerusalem Post  
About the Author  
Brynjar Lia is a research professor at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI). A former Visiting Fulbright Scholar at Harvard University, he is the author of several books on Islamism and terrorism.