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***Tahyā Maṣr* songs and their message... messages?****Abstract**

The Arab Republic of Egypt – the most important Middle Eastern Arabic country, is one of the oldest countries in the world, believed by some to be the cradle of civilization. Patriotic songs are very popular in it. They can be heard in times of peace and when the country may be facing some difficulties. They are shown on television, played on the radio, broadcast during official ceremonies, and used in social media, coffee shops, and weddings. In recent years, there has been something of a phenomenon around songs titled *Tahyā Maṣr*. Notwithstanding the main messages – for Egypt to “live long” and show the artist’s love for their country – other messages and differences in how the singer expresses their love can be found. An analysis of six songs released in the years 2013–2018 under the same title, *Tahyā Maṣr*, will be presented in this article. Any clear distinctions between them and the reasons for their being made under the same title will be shown.

**Keywords:** Egypt, patriotic song, *Tahyā Maṣr*, Egyptian army, President ‘Abd al-Fattāh as-Sīsī, national unity, Muslims, Christians, Pharaonic Egypt

Everybody listens to music. Everybody likes different kinds of music, and we listen for fun, relax, or change our mood. Music can also play different roles in peoples’ lives. Sometimes roles that we are unaware of. Music can also create or strengthen attitudes or feelings of identity.



Professor Marek Jeziński claims<sup>1</sup>: “Music, including popular music, is a reflection of social relations prevailing in a given human group; at the same time, it performs enculturative functions in every culture – we are brought up to participate in culture also through the values that are brought by communing with the audiosphere.”<sup>2</sup> He also adds that music can be treated as a form of communication, where the artist is the sender and the listener is the receiver. For him, popular music is light and passively received by most of society.<sup>3</sup>

Maciej Białas, while presenting three social communication situations, talks about the political instrumentalisation of music, which he describes thus: “music is used to define and expose outlooks, ideological and political attitudes; artists and performers act as political activists; recipients are participants in political life.”<sup>4</sup>

Although popular music could be treated as a trivial kind of art, its power can be the complete opposite of what is expected. Moreover, the “trivial” character of this kind of music can be its power. In this article a few songs will be analysed (and they can all be categorised as “popular music”). The author of the article is not considering popular music from the perspective of a music specialist. For the author, popular music is well received by society and is light and catchy (she does not treat rap, jazz, rock, etc. as popular music). The common thread between all the songs is their title – *Tahyā Maşr*<sup>5</sup> (“Long live Egypt”). It has to be clearly explained that the songs chosen were unquestionably called only *Tahyā Maşr*. Others with similar titles but with one or more different words were not presented here. This is very important because the words *Tahyā Maşr* are a popular motif in many songs. Some of them have some other words added to the title<sup>6</sup>, with others it is difficult to be sure what their proper title is. Sometimes, on YouTube for example, the title given is only *Tahyā Maşr*, or the same song exists with different titles<sup>7</sup>. That is why for this analysis, only songs with, according to the

<sup>1</sup> All translations in this article are done by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Marek Jeziński, *Muzyka popularna i jej odbiorcy w poszukiwaniu autorytetu*, Toruń 2017, p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, pp. 107 and 125–126.

<sup>4</sup> Maciej Białas, ‘O specyficie muzyki politycznej’, in: *Sztuka i polityka. Muzyka popularna*, ed. Marek Jeziński, Łukasz Wojtkowski, Toruń 2012, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> All the names originally from Arabic or Egyptian dialect were written in the article according to ISO (International Standardization Organization) rules.

<sup>6</sup> An example can be the song *Tahyā Maşr*. ‘*aẓīma bilādī*. The title is not clear on the YouTube page of the TV station DMC [source: ‘*Tahyā Maşr*. ‘*aẓīma bilādī*... ‘*alaşān taḥyā dah šī*’ miş ‘*ādī*’, Viewed 1 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZOWtLH2oW0>>], but is clarified in another article to the one mentioned [source: Maḥmūd Al-Badawī, “‘*Tahyā Maşr* ‘*aẓīma bilādī*’... Uġniyya ġadīda li-aş-şurṭa fi ‘*īdhum al-68*’, *Al-Waṭan*, 21 January 2020, <<https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4537692>>].

<sup>7</sup> A good example is that this song was presented at one of the National Youth Conferences. On some YouTube channels the same song is called: *Tahyā Maşr* [source: ‘*Tagṭiyya ḥaşa – Uġniyyat “Tahyā Maşr” ḥilāl al-ġalsa al-ḥitāmiyya li-al-mu’tamar al-waṭanī li-aş-şabāb*’, Viewed 1 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3thdQX-zjM>>] or *Bīnā taḥyā Maşr* [source: ‘*Uġniyyat Bīnā taḥyā Maşr (ūbrit) ḥilāl al-ġalsa al-ḥitāmiyya li-al-mu’tamar al-waṭanī li-aş-şabāb bi-al-Iskandiriyya*’, Viewed 1 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EL3MhC8vq-s>>]. Under its official video, the title is given as *Tahyā Maşr bīnā bīnā* [source: ‘*Uġniyyat Tahyā Maşr bīnā bīnā*’, Viewed 1 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZJ0oWpR0rU>>].

author's research, no doubts about their title were chosen. In choosing the songs she has, the author does not imply that there are no other works of art, songs or videos titled in the same way. Indeed, she is undoubtedly that such works can be found, as the motif *Tahyā Maşr* is so common.

The author of this research always underlines that Egypt is not a monolith. This is one of the oldest countries in the world – on the one hand it is home to the Pyramids at Giza, and on the other it is a country utilizing the newest technologies in everyday life (e.g. implementing electronic education, long before the Covid-19 pandemic, or electronic self-service machines that citizens can use to gain official documents, e.g. birth certificates). The country can be considered a mosaic of tradition (based on local, African, Arabic, Islamic: Sunni and Shia, Sufi and other heritages) and modernity. Egypt's Muslim population sits at 90%, whilst also being home to the biggest Middle Eastern Christian minority. It can also be said that it's variety continues in the range of languages and local dialects spoken, which differ from place to place and make the mosaic even more colourful, although perhaps also making it more difficult to find common points. A significant majority of Egyptians accept this mosaic and are proud of it alongside their centuries-old history. This Egyptian pride is visible every day, and in many different ways.

Difficult times and many problems in any country often lead to major questions about the country's allegiances, its place in citizens' hearts and minds and, most importantly: 'who am I and how do I see the future of my country?' Such moments can be called a time of union but also can cause fractures inside the nation. This is why strengthening any patriotic and national feeling is very sensitive.

### Egyptian patriotic songs

A characteristic element in Egyptian media is the steady flow of patriotic music. Of course, when the country faces some difficulties (for example protests, death of army officers, terrorist attacks) Egyptians see and hear much more patriotic productions. However, even on normal, quiet days, patriotic music is played. It can be heard during official ceremonies, pop concerts, weddings and family celebrations, the beginning of the school day, and many other occasions. This can be considered a kind of phenomenon in Egypt (maybe even in the whole Arab world).

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Most likely, the final title is *Tahyā bīnā*, as this is what was written by the composer 'Amrū Muştafā, on his FB profile when he posted the YouTube link to the song. Strangely, the link seems to have the wrong title – *Tahyā Maşr* [source: 'Tahyā bīnā <3 <3 <3', Facebook profile of Amr Mostafa, Viewed 27 July 2017, <<https://www.facebook.com/amrmostafa/posts/10155573468224297/>>]. The same song was presented at another National Youth Conference, the 7<sup>th</sup>, in its extended version. Both of them are lively and cheerful songs [source: 'Taġṭṭiyya ḥāṣṣa – Uġniyyat "Tahyā Maşr" ḍimn fa'āliyāt al-ġalsa al-ḥitāmiyya li-al-mu'tamar al-waṭanī as-sābi' li-aş-şabāb', Viewed 1 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7A6ufCu1GFc>>]. The same is true of the song mentioned in the previous footnote.

This phenomenon is nothing new and did not appear recently. “After the Second World War, Egyptian Radio was dominated by enthusiastic tendencies toward developing and linking these improvements to nationalistic and patriotic considerations.”<sup>8</sup>

Patriotic songs are mainly associated with poignant and serious art. Egyptian ones are very diverse. They can be, as expected, in very serious kinds of art or have very serious messages and topics that would make citizens cry and become emotional. On the other hand, other artists make more ‘everyday’ songs. What is more, they can be lively, catchy, folkloric and bring messages of hope, happiness, and unity during difficult times and in everyday life. Using different kinds of music, the end goal is to unite people – a useful tool at any time. It does not require a ‘proper’ occasion or time. Once it is available (even in different proportions) all the time, it appeals to society more. It seems that Joanna Zaniewicz agrees with this point of view by declaring that contemporary music can be helpful any time – when a threat appears and also in peacetime.<sup>9</sup>

### Research questions and methodology

The topic of contemporary Egyptian national songs is still not sufficiently researched. There are some interdisciplinary works concerning this issue or generally Arab contemporary popular music all over the world<sup>10</sup> and in Poland<sup>11</sup> but the author of this research did not find any scientific article about the *Tahyā Maṣr* songs.

To start and complete the research it was necessary to pose a few scientific questions:

1. Do all the analysed *Tahyā Maṣr* songs have very similar, almost indiscernible, messages? What is their content and main thematic topics?
2. What seems to be important for the authors of the songs? Do they describe Egypt or their love for Egypt?
3. What is the vision of Egypt presented in these songs?
4. Who is the recipient of the songs’ messages?

<sup>8</sup> Zein Nassar, ‘A History of Music and Singing on Egyptian Radio and Television’, in: *Music and Media in the Arab World*, ed. Michael Frishkopf, Cairo, New York 2010, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Joanna Ewa Zaniewicz, ‘O roli polskiej muzyki w kształtowaniu tożsamości narodowej’, *Sprawy narodowościowe. Seria nowa* 45 (2014), p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> For example: Munīra Sulaymān, ‘Qirā’a fi tāriḥ al-uḡniyya al-waṭaniyya al-‘arabiyya fi zill at-taqāfa aš-ša’abiyya ar-rā’iḡa’, *Alif. Journal of Comparative Poetics. No 35, New Paradigms in the Study of Middle Eastern Literatures* (2015), pp. 177–203; Mohamed Gameel, Salma ElGhetany, ‘Nationalism and the Use of Pop Music: A Discourse Analysis of the Song “Boshret Kheir”’, *Arab Media and Society. Issue 27, Winter/Spring 2019. Media & Identity* (2019), Viewed 1 May 2021, <[https://www.arabmediasociety.com/post\\_issue/winter-spring-2019/](https://www.arabmediasociety.com/post_issue/winter-spring-2019/)>; or works gathered in the book *Music and Media in the Arab World* edited by Michael Frishkopf.

<sup>11</sup> For example: Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska, *Muzułmańska kultura konsumpcyjna*, Warszawa 2011; Michał Moch, ‘Contemporary Arab music, politics and cultural change. The case of Arabic hip hop’, in: *Bliski Wschód w procesie przemian. The Middle East in a Process of Change, Volume 2*, ed. Agnieszka Bryc, Michał Dahl, Magdalena Lewicka, Toruń 2015, pp. 47–59; or works presented in the book *Kultura Popularna na Bliskim Wschodzie*, ed. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska and Katarzyna Pachniak.

5. What kind of music do the songs represent? Touching and serious, or catchy, pop music?
6. Are there music videos for these songs? If yes, what is their message? Are they compatible with the text of the songs or do they present different things?

And finally, all these questions will lead us to the most important one – what is the reason for creating so many songs with the same title in just six years? Purposes other than selfless love for the country are examined here.

The hypothesis is: “Songs under the title *Tahyā Maşr* do not send exactly the same message to Egyptian society, but all of them contain the most important factor – love of Egypt – and their main role is to strengthen patriotic feeling. Their variety is connected with the different usage of these songs – during different occasions and different situations in the country”.

Case studies were here presented. Research also required the use of inductive inference and qualitative analysis. To the analysis six songs and their video clips (if existent) were chosen. The lyrics were analysed in terms of the topics they address. After that the answer of the first four questions was given. Then any doubts concerning the genre of music were checked. All the results were compared with the video clips (if existent) to their songs. All of this finally led us to answer the most important question – the possible reason for creating these songs.

The songs will be presented chronologically, which may also help to reach some conclusions. All the analysed songs were released between 2013–2018.

### Analysis of songs entitled *Tahyā Maşr*

As was mentioned earlier, the words *Tahyā Maşr* mean “Long live Egypt”. Such words can be used during any special occasion (e.g. winning a battle or an international contest) or when somebody wishes the best for their homeland. It is believed that this expression was first used publicly during the Egyptian uprising in 1919.<sup>12</sup> In recent years these two words have gained a second meaning – they have started to be associated with President ‘Abd al-Fattāh as-Sīsī and his activities. He has repeated it at least 3 times in public speeches.<sup>13</sup> This slogan stayed a part of wider activities connected with the

<sup>12</sup> Maḥmūd as-Saqā, ‘Tahyā Maşr:.. Awwal man hataf bihā aš-ša‘b fi ʿawrat 19’, *Al-Wafd*, 24 March 2015, <<https://alwafd.news/%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%85%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%82%D8%A7/833444-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A3%D9%88%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%AA%D9%81-%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B9%D8%A8-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%AB%D9%88%D8%B1%D8%A9-19>>.

<sup>13</sup> For example, during the opening of national projects [see: ‘Kalimat ar-ra‘īs As-Sīsī fi iftitāh maḥaṭṭat mu‘ālaḡat miyāh aš-şarf bi-al-Maḡsama fi Al-Ismā‘īliyya’, Viewed 2 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh3rG0gz4WU>>] or during official speeches to nation concerning special, important issues [see: ‘Kalimat ar-ra‘īs al-maşrī ‘Abd al-Fattāh As-Sīsī ba‘d tafḡir al-‘Arīš’, Viewed 2 May 2020, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_JeRsPyeZl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_JeRsPyeZl)>].

current authorities. The good examples can be found here: *Tahya Miṣr*<sup>14</sup> Fund established in 2014 at the initiative of the President ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī<sup>15</sup> or giving the name to the world’s widest cable-stayed bridge, inaugurated in Cairo in 2019 *Taḥyā Miṣr*.<sup>16</sup> It may also be one of the reasons why artists (especially Egyptians) decided to name their songs using these words. It can be a kind of support for the policies of the president – support for himself and his vision of the country and his activities. That is why it is worth from the scientific point of view (but also cultural and political one!) analysing the content of the songs which are entitled *Tahya Miṣr*. It does not mean that the author of the article dismisses other patriotic songs. She takes the research about the wider range of patriotic songs released in the years 2013–2019 and from all them she isolated the group concerning the *Tahya Miṣr* topic. The article is therefore a fragmentary presentation of the research results.

The first song chosen to be analysed was released in 2013 on the occasion of national celebrations of the October War.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, it is the only one presented in the article to be sung by a non-Egyptian artist. Syrian singer, well-known across the Arab world, Assala [Aṣāla Naṣrī] was invited with other Egyptian and Arab singers to be one of the stars to sing during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the October War. It was an official celebration attended by the Egyptian authorities.<sup>18</sup> The lyrics were written by Bahā’ ad-Dīn Muḥammad and the music was composed by Walīd Sa’d.

The lyrics of the song are fully connected with the occasion for which she released the song. What is more, she always calls Egypt “her country”, so all Egyptians can identify with the message sent by the piece. She sings about the strong Egyptian army and the soldiers who are always ready to protect the country and its borders. They are compared to “lions” and the motif “soldiers as lions” is common in many Egyptian

<sup>14</sup> The differences in spelling – Maṣr and Miṣr are connected with the different way of reading the same word in Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian dialect of Arabic language. Actually it is the same word, written in Arabic: مصر.

<sup>15</sup> “Tahya Misr Fund was established to implement development projects aimed at making radical solutions to social issues and phenomena that affect the lives of large cohorts of Egyptians (...) The Fund provides its activities through six pivots (health care, social support, urban development, economic empowerment, education and training support, and disaster and crisis response) (...)” [source: State Information Service, ““Tahya Misr Fund” through 6 years of President Sisi”, 14 July 2020, Viewed 6 May 2021, <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/149089/%E2%80%9C9C%9D-through-6-years-of-President-Sisi?lang=en-us> ]; To know more visit the official website of *Tahya Misr Fund (Sundūq Taḥyā Miṣr)* – <https://tahyamisrfund.org/>.

<sup>16</sup> Aya Ali, ‘Egypt claims new record for widest cable-stayed bridge’, *Guinness World Records*, 27 June 2019, Viewed 6 May 2021, <<https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/commercial/2019/6/egypts-new-bridge-becomes-the-widest-cable-stayed-bridge-580736> >.

<sup>17</sup> “October War” is sometimes called “Ramadan war” or “Yom Kippur war” as it started on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Ramaḍān and in the time of the Jewish period Yom Kippur. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> war between Arabs and Israel and started on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1973 with a coordinated attack by Egyptian and Syrian armed forces. During this war, the Egyptian army broke the Bar-Leve Line, which was considered to be impregnable. Egypt officially celebrates the 6<sup>th</sup> October every year, and the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Ramadan without official celebrations.

<sup>18</sup> ‘Aṣāla – Taḥyā Maṣr / min iḥtifālāt 6 Uktūbir’, Viewed 6 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llGmvuFpkkY>>.



patriotic songs. She mentions 6<sup>th</sup> October as an important day in history. This is the day the army crossed the Suez Canal. All the soldiers who died during this time sacrificed their lives for all Egyptians. She also wishes Egypt a long life, an Egypt that is free and decides its own issues. She remembers that the army surprised the enemy and made the sunshine. And even if the times of greatest happiness have passed, whatever happened in Egypt in the past, now there is peace and security. She also invokes God. She claims that God created Egypt and gave it safety.

The main topic of her song is her appreciation of the Egyptian army, especially during the October War. She wishes *her* country all the best and she is sure that it will reach it with such an army. The song describes Egypt and its power. The emphasis is put more on the country than her personal feelings. The receivers of the music are the army, to whom she is thankful. The music is touching and serious, can be true during difficult times but also in times of peace while remembering important moments of the country's history.

There is no official video clip connected to this song. On Assala's YouTube profile we can find two "covers" for this song. The first video is the TV broadcast presenting the songs during the commemorations held at the Air Defence Stadium in Cairo.<sup>19</sup> In the background on the stage was a huge pyramid (it was seen during other artist's songs as well). During her songs – while she was almost standing without moving – dancers are wearing soldiers' uniforms. They are concentrated on marching, not dancing, they walk and while she is leaving the stage they salute her. Sometimes they put their hands up with the "V" for "victory" sign. Even though the authorities of Egypt were at the stadium during the song, the cameras did not show them. The audience should concentrate on the song and its message, which could be "catching Egyptian hearts". While watching the performance we can see the mixing of two motifs – the ancient (the pyramid) and the army, which can also have the message: thanks to the brave Egyptian army, the country has existed for so long.

The second video on YouTube presents only one image – a huge Egyptian flag.<sup>20</sup> On the red part of the flag is written *Maşr Tahyā*. On the white and black parts we see buildings: a mosque and a church, pyramids, the Cairo tower, an army tank and victorious, happy soldiers, some boats, etc. Across all three colours there is a photo of the artist. All these elements connect to one another.. all of them are parts of Egypt, which, with love and respect, Assala presents in her *Tahyā Maşr* song. In the opinion of the author of the article all of them are symbols of contemporary Egypt – mosque and church present two main religions (Islam and Christianity), pyramids and Cairo tower – the mosaic which was mentioned before (the past and present gather in current Egypt), army tent and victorious, happy soldiers – Egyptian army which always guards

<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> 'Aşāla – Tahyā Maşr / Assala – Tahia Masr', Viewed 6 May 2020, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fawxkksme\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fawxkksme_4)>.

the security of the citizens. It is clear that two available videos strengthen the message sent by the lyrics of the song.

The next song selected for analysis was released in 2014 by Egyptian artist, Anoushka [Anūškā is the pseudonym of Kartanios Garbis Slim]. The song was released exactly one year after Assala's song – on the occasion of the 41<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the October War.<sup>21</sup> The lyrics were written by Ḥamīd with music by Ḥālīd al-Bakrī.

The singer has herself admitted that she wanted to show the pride she has for her country and that when making the song she realised that the history of Egypt starts from the very beginning. In her opinion, Egyptians should be proud of themselves and should feel that they are strong.<sup>22</sup> She also wanted to honour the soldiers that sacrificed their lives to protect Egyptians and their homeland.<sup>23</sup> All her words are reflected in the song.<sup>24</sup> She first starts by repeating the word “Maṣr” (“Egypt”) a few times, then, while still addressing her words to her beloved homeland, she thanks God that he has protected it. She claims that the “most strong” and “most amazing” army can sacrifice itself so that other Egyptians may live. She also mentions the passing of the Suez Canal during the war. Finally, she addresses the army. She sings: “Watch my feelings when you are with me / I feel the power, security and the spirit of victory.”<sup>25</sup> She declares to the world that she is proud to be Egyptian. She describes the soldier behind her as her protection, brother and son. She not only wishes a long life for Egypt, but to the Egyptian army as well. The words *Tahyā Maṣr* are repeated many times.

She is aware that some people want to destroy her homeland, but that these people have forgotten about the lions – the Egyptian army. As mentioned above, this motif is popular and appears in this song. The enemy also does not know that God made Egyptians protectors of this land. Again, this singer shows the importance of Egypt according to religion and God. She declares that the army will undoubtedly “clean your [Egypt's] land from terrorists.”<sup>26</sup> This statement can be connected with the current policy of Egypt and can show Anoushka's support for the Egyptian president and government. And – of course – the Egyptian army, but in a contemporary perspective. It is totally clear that soldiers give her the feeling of safety. She is also proud of them and her country. She suggests that her homeland may experience difficult times, but she is sure that, with her army, the country will prevail.

<sup>21</sup> Gololy, ‘Anūškā tuḥliq uḡniyyat «Tahyā Maṣr».. Fīdyū’, *Gololy*, 8 October 2014, <<https://www.gololy.com/2014/10/08/148081/%D8%A3%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B4%D9%83%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%B7%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%A3%D8%BA%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88.html>>.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Asal abyad – al-fannāna Anūškā tarwī kayfa ḡā't laḥā uḡniyyat “Tahyā Maṣr” wa-al-iṣrār ‘alā ḡinā'ihā’, Viewed 6 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8C30RK34-oo>>.

<sup>23</sup> Maḥmūd Šība, ‘Fīdyū / «Tahyā Maṣr» bi-ṣawt Anūškā fī «Masā' dmc»’, *Mubtadā*, 16 September 2017, <<https://www.mobtada.com/details/651252>>.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Tahyā Maṣr – Anūškā Tahya Misr – Anoshka’, Viewed 6 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0YyznppP7Wc>>.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.



While listening to the songs, the most important topics for the artist seem to be: love for Egypt connected with pride and love for the Egyptian army, and all of this is based on historical references. She combines her personal feelings to Egypt while describing the country – strong, fighting against terrorism, having historical success. And all this thanks to its brave soldiers. Her vision of the country is simple – it saves and protects itself. There are two recipients of the song – Egypt and its army. The music is very poignant and serious and seems to not let any Egyptian pass without having feelings close to the song. It seems to be a good proposal for difficult times. It is not a kind of everyday song.

There is also a video clip to accompany this song.<sup>27</sup> Whilst the lyrics create an atmosphere of bombast and seriousness – the video builds upon this even further. Just as the video starts, the logo for the Egyptian Center for Research and Security Studies appears. It takes the form of an eagle in the colours of the Egyptian flag and the bottom of its body takes the form of half a heart.

The video is full of military motifs – planes, soldiers, explosions, and all of this while hearing the word “Maṣr” and seeing once more the colours of the flag. The video does not change a lot – soldiers, their exercises, explosions, shooting and victory (by planting a flag in the ground)<sup>28</sup> are observed. Sometimes we can see the flag waving in the air. In the video we see old photos and recordings from the time of the October War, others with presidents Ġamāl ‘Abd an-Nāṣir, Anwar as-Sādāt and ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī (who smiles, shakes hands with children), the Suez Canal, crowds carrying coffins covered by Egyptian flags (carrying the bodies of dead Egyptian soldiers). While singing about feeling safety and the spirit of victory, the singer has as a background the sky – clearly a reminder of hope and happiness. And perhaps also the existence of God on the side of Egypt. While singing about danger photos of long-bearded people appear.<sup>29</sup> The photos are from June 30<sup>th</sup> 2013<sup>30</sup> and the declaration by, at that time Defense Minister, ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī of the removal of the President Mursī from power. The video clearly proves that by “terrorists” she means people who were against the changing power in 2013 and the terrorist groups. Crowds from June 30<sup>th</sup> are again shown. When she sings about being proud of being Egyptian, she declares support and pride of the current activities and policy of the President of the Republic. This is proven by the inclusion of images showing him greeting other world leaders, e.g. Presidents of Russia and United Arab Emirates, Kings of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Near the end of the song, when the “white” singer wearing a red dress on a black background sings the words *Taḥyā Maṣr*, near her are various photos showing Egyptian army high officers. The use of these three

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>28</sup> In reality this took place when the Egyptian army broke the Bar-Leve Line mentioned in footnote nr. 17.

<sup>29</sup> This can be connected with nationwide thinking that supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood or other Islamist political parties’ representatives look this way.

<sup>30</sup> On this day millions of Egyptians went out on the streets demanding the resignation of president Muḥammad Mursī whose inauguration to this position took place exactly one year prior [source: Patrick Kingsley, ‘Protesters across Egypt call for Mohamed Morsi to go’, *The Guardian*, 30 June 2013, <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/30/mohamed-morsi-egypt-protests>>].

colours is not surprising – they are the colours of the Egyptian flag. At the end of the song when she says one last time the word “Maṣr” we see a waving flag, a smiling President ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī and a beautiful sky in the background.

The whole video is made with a red-white-black aesthetic. When the words *Tahyā Maṣr* are sung they also appear on the screen. The video is strongly linked to the song, increasing the very deep, easily understood feelings when hearing the song’s message. If somebody were in any doubt about her main message, the video immediately cancels these doubts.

The next song was released on the occasion of the “New Suez Canal” opening, which took place on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2015. The work was completed in one year and the overall length of construction was 72 km.<sup>31</sup> The building of the second line of the Suez Canal was financed by the Egyptians. The author of the article personally remembers how some Egyptians she knew at this time wanted to “buy some part” of the Canal. This national project was very important and was seen as a noble gesture for them. Those who were too late and were not able to give money and be a joint “owner” of the Canal were very upset.

The analysed song from 2015 is sung by a group of Egyptian children.<sup>32</sup> The lyrics were written by Tāmīr Ḥusayn with the music composed by ‘Amr Muṣṭafā. The song is sung in three languages. The beginning of the song refers to the Egyptian anthem with its first two words. Then the children declare that they sing it every day. They address their words to their beloved homeland – Egypt is their life, the place where they were born, and they can sacrifice their life for it. They call the homeland “love” and explain that this love exists in every generation. They sing that the words *Tahyā Maṣr* are repeated while Egyptians are winning and are always felt by soldiers.

The children declare to Egypt that whenever it calls them, they will be ready for any order. Their lives are nothing compared to Egypt. Their homeland is the most important and their love for it has reached its zenith. They also draw the creation of the second line of the Suez Canal – they sing that *they* made the whole thing and took the challenge despite its difficulties. Here *they* can be understood as all Egyptians, not exactly these singing children. They promise that the new line of the Suez Canal is just a beginning, and so it may be understood that they are planning to do many great things. And it will be done by the children of Egypt and its youth. These words sung by the children seem to be a hope and promise that they will care about their homeland and they will face all their difficulties.

In the end of the song they address words to the whole world. They invite people to come and see what Egypt did. It gave a gift to the entire world. A gift because they counted and made the time of passing the Canal much easier and shorter. The children

<sup>31</sup> Edyta Wolny-Abouelwafa, ‘Pride in History – Particularly Pharaonic – in Contemporary Egyptian Songs as a Part of Shaping National Identity’, in: *Egypt Yesterday and Today. Between Tradition and Modernity*, ed. Karol Myśliwiec, Katarzyna Pachniak, Karolina Nabożna, Edyta Wolny-Abouelwafa, Warsaw 2019, p. 74.

<sup>32</sup> ‘(HQ) Ūbirīt iftītāḥ Qanat as-Sūs al-ḡadīda + al-kalimāt’, Viewed 6 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00oWX5rjds0>>.

sing also parts in English and French: “Venez voir le cadeau que l’Égypte offre au monde entire / Our present to the world is saving time, reducing distance / we’re the sons of the Pharaohs and we’re proud to be Egyptians / It’s the country of peace and miracles and in Egypt you will meet no impossible<sup>33</sup> / you are the most expensive thing for me, the love which arrived till zenith.”<sup>34</sup> We see here a reference to the ancient history of Egypt. Its citizens are proud of it and call themselves the grandsons of the builders of the pyramids.

This song shows children’s feelings towards their country. They are ready to do anything for it, something that they, as Egyptians, proved by making the “second Suez Canal” in a single year. The song gives a kind of hope that the young generations feel pride and love for their country and declare their commitment to it. The music is calm, making a person sway to the music. There are two recipients of this message – of course Egypt, and then to people from around the world, for them to visit Egypt and see what the Egyptians have done. This is also meaningful – here children are showing the pride of all Egyptians. Those who build the Canal seem to be symbols or representatives of all nation. And children seem to be their successors.

Compared with the previous arts, the song itself seems to be less solemn, keeping more patience, relaxation, and optimism at all the same time. It is clear that the country after years full of difficulty is now in safe hands. The citizens do not have to worry, they can look with smile and optimism to the future. What is also not unmeaningful, the song accompany a great and important for Egyptian history day – the opening of the second line of the Suez Canal. That is why the song presented on such a day has to send the message of a spirit of possibilities, happiness, hope, encouragement, cheerfulness and encouragement.

There is no special video clip created for this song. On the Internet we can see the presentation of this song during official celebrations of the opening of the “New Suez Canal”, which was ceremony attended by Egyptian authorities and guests from around the world, including the French president and the King of Jordan.<sup>35</sup> The celebrations were also attended by the Coptic Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar – so the highest representatives of the two main religions in Egypt, Islam and Christianity. The video sometimes shows guests sitting along the Canal and a stage which is placed between them and the Canal. In the video, aside from these officials, we can see children standing in 5 rows. They are wearing a kind of sailor’s uniform. While singing the chorus they raise their hands up and wave the Egyptian flag. Sometimes the television shows a bigger Egyptian flag waving and the Suez Canal from a bird’s eye view. From another perspective, passing ships are shown.

The next song was released in 2016 and is indisputably the most popular from all those presented here. It could even be considered one of the most popular of all the patriotic songs released in the last seven years. Ahmed Gamal [Aḥmad Ġamāl] presented

<sup>33</sup> Up to this moment the words were sung in French and English. The rest of the song is in Egyptian dialect.

<sup>34</sup> ‘(HQ) Ūbirīt ifitāh Qanat as-Sūis al-ġadīda + al-kalimāt’, Viewed 6 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00oWX5rjds0>>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

this song during the Egyptian Day of Youth in 2016, which took place on January 9<sup>th</sup> 2016. The song was prepared over about one year and was dedicated to “the Egyptian nation and its authorities after the success in completing the Road Map.”<sup>36</sup> It clearly shows one of the reasons for creating this song – it is a kind of support for the president and the government. The lyrics are by Tāmīr Ḥusayn and the music by ‘Amr Muṣṭafā. This song is a very interesting research object, and not only because of its huge popularity. We can even say that its popularity was reawakened in February 2017 when during 24<sup>th</sup> Educational Symposium “Countering terrorism... The will of the nation.” It was performed with the use of sign language.<sup>37</sup> It is important to mention that this performance was not the first time it was shown with sign language but – possibly – that first time officially. In January 2016, Ahmed Gamal published an acknowledgment to Sāra al-Ġūharī for translating this song into sign language on his Twitter profile.<sup>38</sup>

Ahmed sings that someone (“they”) asked him to make a sentence containing the word “Maṣr”. The first thing that came to his mind were the words *Tahyā Maṣr*. When he received a request to draw a flag, he imagined it as a castle, full of guards and between them an eagle and two lines – they can symbolise the lines on the flag dividing the red, white and black. In the chorus he repeats the words *Tahyā Maṣr* and informs that Egypt’s eyes are always open and observing every side. He sings for Egypt to be free and whatever happens for it to exist until the end of the world. It is important to realise that here, in this song compared to the previous ones, it’s not only the soldiers that have their eyes open, it is Egypt itself, and so it can be a metaphor for all citizens. At this moment Egypt did not have a strong enemy, the country had had the same authorities from two years, which showed their support for its youth by organising, for example, the Day of Youth or National Conferences.<sup>39</sup>

He also imagines Egypt as a bride wearing a veil. It means that he sees his beloved country as an innocent girl. Comparing Egypt with a girl is not surprising as “Egypt” in Arabic and Egyptian dialect is a feminine noun. Despite the fact that she is innocent, she knows exactly where she is going. She is happy and full of goodwill. She waves to tomorrow. At this moment the singer addresses the audience for the first time, telling them that they can “enter it safely”. It means that he welcomes everybody – Egyptians

<sup>36</sup> Šaymā ‘Abd al-Mun‘im, ‘Maṣdar bi-rādyū “9090”: Uġniyyat “Tahyā Maṣr” li-Aḥmad Ġamāl antaġnāhā munḍu ‘ām’, *Al-Yawm as-Sābi*, 10 January 2016, <<https://www.youm7.com/story/2016/1/10/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88-9090-%D8%A3%D8%BA%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A3%D9%86%D8%AA%D8%AC%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A7-%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B0/2531500>>.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Tahyā Maṣr / Aḥmad Ġamāl - bi-luġat al-išāra min šabāb aṣ-šum bi-ḥuḍūr ar-ra‘īs As-Siṣī’, Viewed 7 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeLp8xyfBXI>>.

<sup>38</sup> Sūzān Muḥsin, ‘Fidyū / Uġniyyat Aḥmad Ġamāl «Tahyā Maṣr» bi-luġat al-išāra’, *Al-Ġad*, 19 January 2016, <[<sup>39</sup> To know more visit the official website of Egyptian National Youth Conferences – <https://egyouth.com/ar/>.](https://www.alghad.tv/%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%88-%D8%A3%D8%BA%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A3%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%AC%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%84%D8%BA%D8%A9-%D8%A7/>.</a></p>
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and others – to feel safe and good in Egypt, because he sees his homeland as a safe place, ruled correctly, free and having a bright future which seems to be well planned.

The characteristic of this song is the fact that its singer describes his feelings for Egypt and his vision of the beloved country at the same time. The main receiver of the song is Egypt. A partly-recognised receiver could also be every person worldwide who might think about visiting Egypt or staying inside it. That is why Ahmed Gamal makes him claim – a visitor can come without any doubts because the country is safe.

This song is also special because of its extremely calm music. The lyrics, as were shown above, are full of metaphors and meanings. It seems to be more close to a poem than an everyday song. The song is very poetic, giving feelings of hope for a good and safe future and can put a smile on your face.

As it was mentioned, the song can be connected with two videos. The first one is a simple presentation of the song by its singer during the Day of Youth.<sup>40</sup> He performed it in front of the President of the Republic and other official Egyptian guests. What should be mentioned here is the background – sometimes behind Ahmed Gamal on a huge screen viewers can read such words as: “Egyptian Day of Youth... with its [Egypt’s] Youth’s power.. Long Live Egypt.”<sup>41</sup> There are no dancers, Gamal is wearing a suit and barely moving while singing. Behind him on the screen we can see words and also other photos – young smiling people on the streets, a mosque and church, workers, antiquity (as pyramids) and the Egyptian flag. All of these elements work together in the perfect way with the message of calm and hope, giving it more clear information – all these people, religions and their entire history is part of Egypt and while respecting it, working together Egypt will live on.

The second video is that which presents the song in sign language.<sup>42</sup> Here Ahmed Gamal is not shown. The Egyptian Youth (we do not know their names) are there and “sing” the words of the song. They wear formal clothes in the colours of the flag of Egypt (their hijabs, if the girls wear them, and ties are red, the shirts are white and trousers are black). Nothing else is shown except at the beginning of the song, which shows a young man with a microphone and behind him the Egyptian flag. This recording was released during the above mentioned seminar, which was attended by Egyptian authorities and between them, of course, the president. The artists shown in the video were also in attendance. The message of the video is a special one because of its presenters. It also shows the policy of the Egyptian authorities towards disabled people. For a few years their inclusion in the media and public life has been more actively encouraged. It is a very important step as such people are finally not being hidden by families and are not treated with shame, as had happened earlier. The authority’s approach is directed to make important changes to people’s thinking and the president clearly shows that they

<sup>40</sup> ‘Taĥyā Mašr / Aĥmad Ġamāl / ‘alā ar-rādyū 9090’, Viewed 7 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnEVaLmnMuU>>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Taĥyā Mašr / Aĥmad Ġamāl - bi-luġat al-išāra min šabāb aš-šum bi-ḥuḍūr ar-ra’īs As-Sisī’, Viewed 7 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eeLp8xyfBXI>>.

are part of society and nobody can treat them without respect. The example comes from the most important Egyptian, who hugs them, gives them awards and supports them.

The popularity of this song is also connected to one fact: a lot of times, the author of this article has observed that Egyptian television broadcasts of important activities of the authorities, put this song in the background, (sometimes only music without words). This song is still very popular to this day (May 2021). The author has also observed that during the Coronavirus pandemic, some artists recorded this song's performances with sign language as support for Egypt and Egyptians during this difficult time. The citizens of the country make recordings too and Ahmed Gamal publishes some of them on his Facebook profile.<sup>43</sup>

The last two analysed songs were released in 2018. The first was released by Madḥat Šāliḥ, Rihām 'Abd al-Ḥakīm and Mayy Farūq.<sup>44</sup> The lyrics were written by Walīd Ramaḍān and it was produced by Radio Nile and the Egyptian Media Company. The song starts from the perspective of Egyptian citizens. The singers ask them to start from the beginning of the history of the civilisation he has. They declare that Egyptians are building their country and that they are ready to sacrifice themselves for it. Their land is an honour for them, as it was in the past. Whoever will try to do anything bad to the country, its citizens (here called Egypt's "children") will be ready to protect their land, which will only be a cemetery for those who will try to destroy it. It is important to draw attention to the chorus: "They said 'Muslim' or 'Christian', they forgot who the Egyptians are. They are one hand, Nile and unity. / It has thousands of years... Society can build the nation and the love for its army is running inside [its] veins. / His grandfather wrote on an obelisk that to build Egypt [we have to work] hand in hand."<sup>45</sup> As we can see, the attention is put on a few topics – cooperation between the members of society, cooperation between the members of two religions, love for the army, unity and things which bring all Egyptians together – the Nile, long-lived history, the army and the common ancestors – the Pharaohs.

The singer sings about the Egyptian military, calls them "heroes", declares that their anger is like a fire and everyone knows who the Egyptians are. They are strong and brave and built humanity and civilisation. "They" are the ancestors of this seven-thousand-year-old country. Then comes the next reference to Egypt – for her army, police and citizens together will be victorious over all difficulties.

All the singers very much emphasize the unity of Egyptians who built and together protect their beloved homeland. Their will is compared with iron. They refer again to the past, which was a witness and the future which will witness that Egyptians can build history from the very beginning. They will never give up. It can be understood in two ways. First – in a direct way. Simply – Egyptians will do everything for their country,

<sup>43</sup> 'Dah taḥyā Maṣr giddan', Facebook profile of Ahmed Gamal (@AhmedGamal), Post on Facebook 3 May 2020, Viewed 7 May 2020, <<https://www.facebook.com/AhmedGamal/>>.

<sup>44</sup> 'Uḡniyyat "Taḥyā Maṣr" ḡinā' Madḥat Šāliḥ wa-Rihām 'Abd al-Ḥakīm wa-Mayy Farūq', Viewed 8 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=raib33q7VU4>>.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem.



protect it and build it for all of them and their children to live in happiness. The second meaning is a little bit hidden – the singers show that now they have the chance to build history from the beginning. It means that now the country is safe, has no problems, is ruled well. This is a kind of support to the Egyptian authorities. All of it gives them the possibility to look to the future with hope and have the power to fight against all adversity.

The song also spreads one more important message – Egyptians are aware of what is going on around them. They understand the past challenges, never give up, and can surprise the whole world (as it can be understood – how brave and special they are). They also understand what their enemies wanted to do to their beloved homeland and that the “lions” protected it. Again, the motif “Egyptian soldiers as lions” is used. Again there is a reference to Egypt that the country will always progress.

In the end of the song there is a special part, a short bit with different music. The message here is strongly connected to the Egyptian soldiers, who all the singers together call “heroes of the factory of Egypt’s soldiers.”<sup>46</sup> They suggest that new generations will be like them, as those who finish military training are strong and believe that the most rich thing worldwide are the words *Tahyā Maşr*. It has to be clearly mentioned that despite the title of the song being *Tahyā Maşr*, these words only occur once in the song, at the very end.

Notwithstanding that in the song a lot of references towards Egypt can be observed, the song mainly talks about Egyptian citizens, not about the country itself. The courage of the military (in the first place) and all Egyptians (in the second place) is stressed. The song also sends messages about the strong connection between the military and the citizens. The references to ancient history and religions can also be seen here. They play an important role, especially while talking about the unity of the people. The song shows and creates the pride of being Egyptian – thanks to being a citizen of the country and also because of its long history, which should be appreciated by the whole world. In the last part, we can see something that can be treated as giving praise to the Egyptian army.

The song clearly talks about the country, not the feelings of the singers. Egypt is presented as a country of the strong, brave, united, cooperating and aware nation. The receiver is mainly Egypt – so actually all Egyptians. The receiver in some moments can also be Egyptian soldiers, as those who protect the beloved homeland. The music can be considered as military music. The song can be heard every day on the TV, but is not the type of music that we can dance to. Unquestionably, this song can be a good support during difficult times for the country.

As the music is of the military style, the same motif is also available in the song’s accompanying video.<sup>47</sup> To begin with we see a waving Egyptian flag. Then many different images appear, such as ancient hieroglyphs and monuments (e.g.: pyramids, the temple at Abu Simbel, etc.), singers, historical battles, soldiers on parade, crowds waving Egyptian flags, the smiling president of Egypt waving to people, tourists, Egyptian

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem; originally they sing: أبطال مصنع رجال جيش مصر.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

workers (e.g.: farmers, craftsmen, sailors, doctors, footballers), the Al-Ahram newspaper and military planes. When singing about danger, there are the images of terrorists (e.g. ISIS-affiliate groups). Opposing these images we see the good and brave Egyptian military. They conduct exercises everywhere (in the air, on the water and across the land) and are ready to defend the country. When the song refers to religions, religious motifs are shown in the video. We see the Quran, praying Muslims and a church. While talking about “one hand” we can see a crucifix and the Quran together, with a young child paying close attention to the Egyptian flag and fireworks – a symbol of happiness and victory. Sometimes we are also shown singers in front of microphones, and children wearing military uniforms. President ‘Abd al-Fattāh as-Sīsī is shown repeatedly throughout the video clip. He is with children, signing documents, passing the Suez Canal while opening its second line and planting a tree or with the military.

Footballers bring happiness, as is shown by happy football fans carrying flags (this is connected to Egypt qualifying for the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia). We see Christian and Muslim monuments, photos of soldiers, military tanks, policemen kissing an old woman’s hand and huge Egyptian flags placed on apartment blocks. We see the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Aḥmad at-Tayyib hugging the Catholic Pope – Francis. Images from history (e.g. the same video of planting the Egyptians flag in the ground at the liberation of the Suez Canal during the October War) are also shown.

The video matches the message of the song very closely. Religious unity and the importance and variety of workers (and hence the variety of Egyptians who built the country throughout history) are topics that may be more stressed in the video clip than in the lyrics. Anyhow, the message is the same and clearly shown. Aside from the brief mention of the country’s enemies, the video has positive messages and is shown vividly – it is not a dark vision. The Egyptian flag is one of the main “actors” in this video as well.

The last song to be assessed is a unique example of how to combine patriotic feeling with a particular kind of Egyptian music – *ša‘bī*.<sup>48</sup> This *Taḥyā Maṣr* song was released by *ša‘bī* singer Aḥmad Šība during the presidential elections in 2018. He was a supporter of ‘Abd al-Fattāh as-Sīsī. His song was devoted to the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior because of the bravery those who protect the internal affairs of Egypt and fight against terrorism.<sup>49</sup> The lyrics were written by Riḍā al-Maṣrī and the music was prepared by Fāris.

At the beginning of the song we can hear the words *Maṣr* and *Taḥyā Maṣr* many times. He addresses his words to Egypt and describes what he loves in his homeland: its characteristic features and tolerance, which do not exist anywhere else, its smile, the atmosphere of its gatherings and the taste of food eaten with a small piece of bread. For him the most beautiful thing is “Umm id-dunyā” – Egypt, “mother of the world”. He makes a distinction between Egypt and the rest of the world. His homeland is special

<sup>48</sup> ‘Uḡniyyat Taḥyā Maṣr li-Aḥmad Šība’, Viewed 8 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxfOvH8zjg>>.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Arabī As-Sayyid, ‘Aḥmad Šība yuhdī ad-dāḥiliyya «Taḥyā Maṣr»: «Ġayšik nusūr māli ḥudūdik», *Ad-dustūr*, 2 April 2018, <<https://www.dostor.org/2114855>>.

and exceptional. In his view, small things created in Egypt grow to become the most important and greatest in the world.

He compares Egyptian soldiers to eagles. It is interesting because this metaphor is not as common as that presented before – “Egyptian soldiers – lions”. Here, “eagles” protect the Egyptian borders and their only goal is the continued existence of, and peace within, the homeland. To ensure this, soldiers do not sleep day or night. Egypt will never be broken, it will always be strong and victorious. The singers also refer to God – this country was important for the Prophet and people who were close to him. He poses a rhetorical question: “how many times was it [Egypt] mentioned in the Quran and in monotheistic religions?”<sup>50</sup>

He sees Egypt as a country with a long history, highly respected and having great prestige. Thanks to the spirit/vigour of Egypt’s workers, the country will reach such a level of wellbeing that they will be able to export it. He also presents other metaphors for Egypt: Egypt as laughter in an innocent child’s eyes, as a mother’s morning prayer, as a medicine. He is sure that his country (its citizens and authorities) knows exactly where it is going. This means that there is a plan for the future and the singer is confident about his homeland’s future.

In the song the word “God” is repeated many times. This can be understood as a consolidation of the message, not so much as a direct referral to God. It should also be mentioned that the song repeats the words *Tahyā Maşr* and *Maşr* many times. Some sentences are repeated, which can be understood as a further strengthening of the message. The song does not describe a country’s vision, but can be understood as an expression of the artist’s feelings towards his country. A country that is simply the most amazing thing for him. There is nothing more beautiful and more beloved to him. Egypt is presented as a strong country with a strong army. A country special to God and always having workers ready to contribute to its wealth. The receiver of the song is the beloved homeland and, indirectly, its citizens. The music is quick, good to dance to – typical of the *ša‘bī* style, which can be treated as an everyday song good for many different occasions.

There is also a music video for this song.<sup>51</sup> This can be described as very vivid. It contains a lot of images and videos of things other than the singer. When he appears he is standing in front of a microphone and sometimes has the Egyptian flag in his hands. The main message is portrayed through the other images. We can see people from all over Egypt (shown by differing skin colours, different clothes – some wearing traditional costume, some “international”, older and younger people, working in different industries, from different social groups, different religions, more local and more affluent districts, women and men). All of them are happy, mainly dancing (sometimes with flags in their hands), celebrating, showing the “V” for victory sign. The police and military are presented as helpful people – with smiles on their faces they help older women or disabled people and secure the country at its checkpoints. Smiling members of the armed forces

<sup>50</sup> ‘Uğniyyat Tahyā Maşr li-Aḥmad Šiba’, Viewed 8 May 2020, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxfbOvH8zjg>>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibidem.

in planes, in the desert and on the sea, saluting their commanders are presented. The message is singular – the police and armed forces protect the country with a smile on their faces and will do anything for it. We can also see images of the ancient monuments (pyramids, temples, etc.). Some of the young people shown in the video wear T-Shirts with slogans encouraging others to participate in elections, while others show their finger, meaning that they have already voted. Sometimes supporters of President ‘Abd al-Fattāh as-Sīsī can be seen. The cheerful mood is strengthened by showing happy Egyptian fans, representatives of Egypt at different sporting contests and sporting victories. We can also see references to Islam and Christianity, young people giving Egyptian flags to drivers, boats in Aswan and the Suez Canal, quadbikes in the desert, images of different places in Egypt, balloon trips in Luxor, dancing dervishes, disabled Egyptians with flags (clearly showing that everybody should be treated as an equal member of society), photos of the president with other world leaders, etc.

The video escalates the message of the song. It is clearly shown that all Egyptians are happy and cheerful, they celebrate and are proud to be Egyptians. They see a hopeful and happy future for Egypt. They all love and respect each other, there is no difference between them. The main emphasis of the video is people – Egyptians.

### Summary

As was clearly proven in the article, subjects broached in the songs and the kinds of music used have changed over several years. The analysis began with two songs that were released during the changing power in Egypt and on the occasions of the anniversary of the October War. Here were special kinds of music – more solemn and with topics concentrating on security and the role of the military in difficult times. They also had to show support for the activities of the new authorities and to give them a mandate to develop Egypt and plan its future. The lyrics put more pressure on the motifs connected with the strong Egyptian army, its success and strength, God’s support, pride of the country. The videos, in turn, send the same message or even strengthen it.

From 2015 we see a change. The opening of the “New Suez Canal” was the first important international success for President ‘Abd al-Fattāh as-Sīsī and all Egyptians. Egypt proved that they can do any task quickly and without help from outside (it is also a motif in other patriotic Egyptian songs, for example “Uḡniyat il-agyāl”). From this moment, the emphasis is more often placed on different topics – still, of course, there is the pride of the military, which has protected the country and has claimed victories throughout history, but from 2015, after the situation in country became more calm, Egyptians have been prouder of themselves, how they have built the country, think about its future and have created history from the beginning. Step-by-step we see topics connected with *Egyptian* identity itself – they are proud to be the descendants of the Pharaohs, and they can be Muslim or Christian – no matter what, they cooperate and support each other, there are no differences between them, they are Egyptians. In

2016–2017 we can observe more care and support being shown to fellow citizens and disabled people. Songs bring hope for a better „tomorrow“, show that the new generations are ready to take on the responsibility of protecting their country and change it for the better. They are young but have a vision and plan. Music also becomes less serious, more calm or, later, lively. Finally in 2018, topics become very much related to unity, cooperation between citizens, the military and police and show more direct support for the authorities. The accompanying videos, if they exist, are strongly connected with the songs and many times strengthen the messages in the lyrics.

Creating different kinds of songs and videos can have another purpose. In different ways the most important messages (love for Egypt, support for its military and the unity of its citizens) reach more people. Different age groups and different social groups prefer different kinds of music. In the same way, different occasions “inflict” particular kinds of music. So, by creating a broad variety of arts, they can reach the broad swathes of society. And, as has been observed by the author of this article, it works. Even if some citizens are not supporters of the current policy, they are often fans of some patriotic songs.

The answers to each of the research questions posed were presented under each song’s analysis. Here only the most important issues would be emphasised. Placing the results in a chronological way clearly showed how the subjects were changing, along with the atmosphere of the songs. It also shows the reason (as was mentioned before, pure love being the sole reason for a song’s creation was not examined) for creating a number of songs under the same title in six years and, at the same time, confirms the validity of the hypothesis: “Songs under the title *Tahyā Maşr* do not send exactly the same message to Egyptian society, but all of them contain the most important factor – love of Egypt – and their main role is to strengthen patriotic feeling. Their variety is connected with the different usage of these songs – during different occasions and different situations in the country”.

The general message is the same – showing love and support to the country, but when we deeply analyse the song’s lyrics and socio-historical context, we see some difference. The pressure is put always in a slightly different place – once on its army and its victories, youth and possibilities, etc. In the time of changing the power we can see more support to the army and pressure put on the fact that always Egypt was winning and it would be always the same – whatever would happen, any enemy will be defeated. When the country starts to move to the stable path and makes its successes (e.g. building the new line of Suez Canal) the message is little bit more moved to the future vision of the country full of successors of great Egyptians who will succeed the same as their grandfathers. They will work strong and build Egypt with the smile on their face to be still the best place to live for them and their children.

The recipients of the songs in general, as it was proved in the article, are: Egyptian strong and brave army, Egypt itself, people from around the world who are invited to visit and see what Egyptians did and also Egyptians.

The professional videos or the ‘video covers’ of songs available are mainly compatible with the songs and even strengthen the messages. They show the support and love of

the country, army and authorities, care about its future, respect and pride of their past. They are also full of symbols connected with Egypt – viewers can see the mosque and churches as a symbols of two main religions, pyramids as a symbol of great and long history, children and contemporary authorities as a symbol of better future full of hope, army as a symbol of strong and safe Egyptian land, workers as a symbol of a nation which is ready to take care of its country and build it with their own hands.

At the end of this research one very important piece of information must be mentioned. As was suggested at the beginning of the article – it is possible that other artists have created songs titled *Tahyā Maṣr* that the author was not able to uncover. But, a fact she is sure of – this is not the end of the trend for “*Tahyā Maṣr*” songs. They will continue to be created under this and similar titles. And, despite the fact that their details may differ and some deeper new research will be needed, in the end, similar messages will be sent. For Egypt to live for a long time.

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