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Article

Islamism, Islamic Modernism and the Search for Modern Authenticity in an Imaginary Past

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Abstract: How to be authentically modern? This was the pervasive question behind the ideological elaborations of numerous religious and nationalist movements toward the end of the nineteenth century. Many of them attempted to find the answer in an imaginary past. This article claims that Islamist movements are not an exception, but rather an affirmation of this rule. The orientation towards a "golden age" of Islam and its allegedly authentic Islamic way of life has been a crucial feature of Islamist thought across all national, sectarian and ideological divides. The article traces this invocation of the past historically back to the construction of specifically Islamic forms of modernity by representatives of Islamic modernism in the second half of the nineteenth century. Interpreting their modernist thought in the context of more global nineteenth-century concepts and narratives, the article argues from a comparative perspective that Islamic modernism laid the foundations for the ways in which Islamist thinkers have constructed both individual and collective forms of Muslim identities.

Keywords: authenticity; modernity; Islamic modernism; golden age; Islamist movements

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> "With deep conviction, I confess that Germans will never love political democracy and this because of the simple reason that they cannot love politics as such. [. . .] Democracy is a part of the political and mental invasion of the West that will destroy German culture."
>
> (Mann [1918] 2002)

1. Introduction: Islamic Modernism and German Conservatism

In his Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen (Reflections of an Unpolitical Man, published 1918), Thomas Mann (1875–1955), the German novelist who was awarded the Nobel prize in literature (1929), expressed the worldview of Germany's conservative intellectual bourgeoisie of the early twentieth century. In sharply distinguishing between culture and civilization, the worldview of these German intellectuals was organized around the dichotomy between German culture and Western civilization. From a perspective of "romantic aestheticism", Mann proclaimed the defense of German culture against modernity that he identified in the combination of political democracy with mass society (Mann 2017). Already in 1858, the German poet and novelist Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) drew on this dichotomy between culture and civilization when writing down the observations that he made in the British capital London (Fontane [1858] 1998). In 1915, to take another example, Werner Sombart (1863–1941) published Händler und Helden (Merchants and Heroes). In this polemic book, the German sociologist welcomed the outbreak of the First World War as a "holy war" between two fundamentally incompatible worldviews, represented by the morally flawed commercialism of Great Britain on the one hand and by the heroic culture of Germany on the other (Sombart 1915). Again, it was the purity of German culture that he set against the "flatness" of Western civilization. To be sure, this worldview was deeply molded by the political power struggle among France, Germany, Great Britain and—later—the United States. Yet the writings of all three authors were a

fundamental critique of modernity too. These conservative intellectuals wanted to preserve the "distinctiveness of German culture". Their mission was to defend the authenticity of Germany's culture against the forces of materialism and rationalism which they closely associated with modern times (Kroll 2004, p. 239). In their worldview, the West represented both crucial players in international politics and a metaphor for the denigrated culture of modernity. Why begin an article in a special issue about Islamism with the conservative worldview of Germany's cultural bourgeoisie?[1]

The answer to this question is manifold. First of all, we can trace back the ideological roots of Islamist movements to the reformist thoughts of Islamic modernism in the nineteenth century in which also the worldview of these German conservatives was formed. The centers of the origins of Islamic modernism and modern German conservatism roughly coincide with the period between 1860 and 1880 that Jürgen Osterhammel in his Transformation of the World defined as the gravity center of modern innovation with a global range (Osterhammel 2011, p. 16). Second, both intellectual movements wanted to address questions of modernity while simultaneously preserving their own traditions. Third, both Islamist intellectuals and German conservatives discovered the means to achieve modern authenticity in the linkage of the present with a perfect past. Fourth, they both constructed this linkage between the present and the past in terms of an "inverted teleology", that is to say, in a philosophy of history as a history of decay (Gadamer [1960] 1990, p. 204). Fifth, the two intellectual movements established their own kind of authenticity in stark opposition to the "inauthentic" culture of the so-called West. Last but not least, my scholarly work has always been driven by the search for similarities behind all the observable differences of social life. Therefore, I build the argumentation in this article on the assumption that Islamic modernists and German conservatives approached the challenges of modernity based on a mutually shared set of more generic ideas about how to achieve and/or preserve authenticity in modern life.

Based on this set of generic ideas, Islamic modernists justified the adoption of modern norms and institutions by references to an imagined and idealized past. It is my hypothesis that, in this way, Islamic modernists launched a meanwhile almost hegemonic discourse of Islamic modernity according to which authentic forms of Muslim modernity, in one way or the other, should relate to the corpus of Islamic religious traditions. Contemporary Islamist movements grow out of this discourse of Islamic modernity, although these roots meanwhile became to a certain extent obscured. I will underpin this hypothesis in three steps. I begin with a brief conceptual discussion regarding this set of generic ideas, in particular with respect to the conceptual triangle of modernity, authenticity and the past, as well as the idea of modern social actorhood. Then, I analyze the nineteenth century Islamic reform movement through this conceptual prism and discuss its understanding of Islamic history briefly in connection to Orientalist scholarship. In a third step, I present some examples of the ways in which Islamist intellectuals and Muslim mass organizations reflect these reinterpretations of Islamic history and their linkage to an ideal Islamic past. I conclude with putting these examples again in a comparative perspective.

2. Modernity, Authenticity and Their Relationship to the Past

The concepts of modernity and authenticity are widely used in both everyday language and scholarly literature. Consequently, their ubiquity goes along with disputes concerning their meanings. Therefore, it seems necessary to begin this article with a brief reflection on my own usage of these core concepts. This theoretical discussion will help to understand the way in which these conceptual references support my argumentation. I will do so in predominantly dealing with the ideational dimension of modernity, this is to say with "the culture of modernity", rather than discussing its institutional and macro-structural features such as capitalism, modern state formation, urbanization or technological advancements.[2] I divide my conceptual discussion in two parts. First, I am defining modernity by specific experiences of contingency and by particular forms of social actorhood that go along with the task to manage this modern contingency. In the second

part, I look at the quest for authenticity in the justification of modern identity constructions and the ways in which they become rooted in an imagined past.

The concept of contingency features prominent in the sociological literature on the "culture of modernity". Instead of referring to specific ideational and institutional settings, today there is a strong trend among social theorists to conceptualize modernity in terms of an open, emergent and therewith contingent historical process. From this perspective, modernity has been characterized by the "homelessness" of the present (Collins and Jervis 2008), the "liquidity" of social relations (Baumann 2007) and its inbuilt antinomies and contradictions (Eisenstadt 2001). In this modern discourse of uncertainty, modern society appears as "risk society" (Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). Thereby, the all-penetrating experience of contingency builds in principle on a double negation according to which nothing is necessary and nothing is impossible (Luhmann 1992, p. 96). While contingency might be a more general experience of humanity (Wuchterl 2011, p. 10), modern contingency is strongly characterized by the realization of choice, rather than by the mere accidental in life. It is the fundamental experience that against a horizon of alternatives, modern social reality seems to be in constant change (Holzer 2011).

In processes of individual and collective identity constructions, social actors navigate among a broad variety of alternatives in this way combining the mutually reinforcing dimensions of uncertainty and choice. Modern contingency, thus, goes along with the fundamental experience of the destruction of previously unquestioned foundations (Heller 2005, p. 64). Consequently, social actors are confronted with the quest to construct individual identities and collective social orders, they design a multiplicity of "projects of modernity" (Habermas 1997). Islamic modernism is just one of these projects of modernity and it has developed into different directions amongst those Islamist ideologies achieved a prominent position. Generally speaking, these projects of modernity operate on individual, organizational and national state levels, based on a specifically modern concept of social actorhood (cf. Meyer et al. 1997, p. 168). This concept of social actorhood, the historically constructed "capacity for responsible agency", shapes individual and collective actors as "authorized agents" working for their own interests, for the interests of others and for collective purposes (Meyer and Jepperson 2000, p. 101). In this way, social actorhood is the specific means to deal with modern contingency. It was precisely according to this model of social actorhood, the modernist "triad" of Jamal al-Din al Afghani (1838–1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935), to a certain extent the founding fathers of the Islamist movements of the twentieth century, interpreted Islam as "activity", as demanding social engagement (Hourani 1962, p. 128).

Modern contingency and the idea of social actorhood represent two general features of the culture of modernity. In the examples of both German conservatives and Islamist ideologues we can discern the enactment of modern social actorhood in meeting the challenges of modern contingency. They both articulated historically diverse projects of modernity in contradistinction to the so-called West. To a certain extent, German conservatism can be labeled as a form of modern anti-modernism, an intellectual stream which also Islamist thought represents in the much broader framework of a specifically Islamic discourse of modernity. Most notoriously is the example of the thought of the Egyptian Muslim brother Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) who rejected the culture of "Western modernity" in similarly denigrating words as the above-mentioned German conservatives. Yet, how did German conservatives and Islamists try to gain legitimacy for their respective projects of modernity?

This question brings me to the crucial role of the idea of authenticity in modern thought. This idea is a key concept in the intellectual self-understanding of modernity (Honneth 2004, p. 11). Authenticity, thereby, has the character of being an etic and an emic concept at the same time. Authenticity is a means of both of academic analysis and the language of everyday life, a concept of the observer and the observed. The idea of authenticity began to rise in the Romantic age of the eighteenth-century and was described as "men's deepest response to the modern world" (Berman 1970, p. 70). In light of

the experience of modern contingency, authenticity claims "the expectation of truthful representation" (Theodossopoulos 2013, p. 339). In this way, claiming authenticity turned into a central strategy in the justification of modern imaginations of subjectivity and social order by the political elite. With Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) as one of its inventors, the concept tries to give an answer to the question about essence versus appearance and is closely associated with values such as "sincere, essential, natural, original, and real" (Lindholm 2008, p. 1). In their search for authenticity, modern intellectuals were "oriented toward the recovery of an essence identifying the genuinely real with the help of imaginations of the past" (Bendix 1997, p. 8). In particular in nationalist ideologies, "the past is repeatedly re-signified and mobilized to serve future projects" (Prasenjit 2004, p. 3). Based on the before mentioned modern understanding of actorhood, social actors claimed to restore this purity of the past in valuating a "temporal, spatial and subjective formation of a Golden Age" (Fillitz and Saris 2013, p. 4). In this way, they distinguished their modern projects from the inauthentic nature of the present. Aziz al-Azmeh pointed to the fact that the literate discourses of the nineteenth-century "Arab Renaissance" (nahda) was a quest for modern authenticity. He discerned in this intellectual movement a romantic notion according to which Christian, Jewish and Muslim Arab intellectuals claimed authenticity for their revival of pristine Arab culture (Al-Azmeh 1996, pp. 41–43). Again, in the thought of both German conservatives and Islamists, it was the "West" often serving as a core metaphor for the inauthentic opposition to their own modern projects.

In this juxtaposing of an authentic past with an inauthentic present the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) identified the emergence of historical consciousness, the process of becoming critical toward oneself (Gadamer [1960] 1990, p. 221). The search for authenticity, according to Gadamer, is an elementary part of the hermeneutics of the modern self in the context of historicism as the ideological foundation of cultural relativism. The rise of Islamic modernism takes part in this evolution of modern historical consciousness in the nineteenth century, in a reflexive process through which history loses its a priori and becomes contingent (Gadamer [1960] 1990, p. 207). Understanding historicism in this way, that is to say in opposition to the universalistic claims of Enlightenment rationalism (Schnädelbach 1991, pp. 51–53), historical consciousness feeds into Romanticist thought. Inspired by and reacting against historical relativism, Romanticism was preoccupied with the search for origins (Roberts 2000, pp. 88–90). This search for origins is not only visible in nationalist ideologies. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it also generated various movements of religious revivalism looking for "authentic roots of piety" (Osterhammel 2011, p. 1269). In romanticist nationalism and religious revivalism we find the idea of an inborn authenticity, which their protagonists discover in a Golden Age. It is my contention that in the re-imagination of early Islamic history during the nineteenth century we can observe the rise of historical consciousness in modern Muslim thought. The worldview of Islamic modernists was molded by generic concepts such as authenticity, contingency and social actorhood that characterized the world historical context of the late nineteenth century.

3. Islamic Modernism: Social Actorhood in Light of an Inverted Teleology of History

There is a consensus in the mainstream literature on the modernist Islamic reform movement that in the second part of the nineteenth century Muslim intellectuals increasingly adopted a narrative of an Islamic history of decline.[3] In constructing an inverse version to the philosophy of history by the Enlightenment, Islamic modernists began to narrate Islamic history as a "progressive retreat" from the exemplary period of the Prophet and the rightly guided early Caliphs. This was in stark contrast to earlier reformers in the nineteenth century such as, for instance, Rifaat Tahtawi (1801–1873). The Egyptian alim was sent to Paris by his ruler Muhammad Ali (1769–1849) and observed and studied French urban society in the years between 1826 and 1831. In his An Imam in Paris, Tahtawi gave a detailed account of his stay in Paris. Tahtawi advocated self-confident reforms with selective institutional borrowings from European examples. European achievements, however,

he did not yet see as a proof for Islamic inferiority (Arafat 2001, p. 382; Tahtawi 2004).[4] There is hardly any doubt that the experience of European imperialism strongly contributed to the shift from self-confidence to decay in the historical perception of Muslim history in the middle of the nineteenth century. The series of events from the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829), the French invasion of Algeria (1830), the Indian Mutiny (1857), to the British occupation of Egypt (1882) seemed to prove the superiority of Europeans over Muslim peoples. This epoch of political subordination under European colonial powers also plays a central role in the historical consciousness of Islamist movements today. Yet this historical experience alone is not sufficient to explain the rise of a new philosophy of history with its focus on a perfect past. In the construction and dissemination of this history of decay, this is my argument; there were more general cognitive templates at work too.

I suggest finding these templates associated to Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of an "inversed teleology". Gadamer argued that historical teleologies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whether considering history as linear processes of progress or of decline, still applied standards based on conceptual a priori that are external to the factual historicity of the world. In his own work, Gadamer refers to the German scholar and politician Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) and the young historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886) as examples. In his classicist worldview, Humboldt interpreted the course of history as the loss and decay of the perfect culture of antiquity. Ranke, according to Gadamer, constructed the future as the restoration of an ideal past (Gadamer [1960] 1990, pp. 204–5).[5] In the perceptions of both German intellectuals, we can discern similar conceptual patterns as they appear in nineteenth century reconstructions of Islamic history by reformist Muslim thinkers. They all represent cognitive approaches for making sense of historical events in applying non-historical standards. Moreover, they perfectly underpin and justify the reformist claim to be authorized agents in their call for religious and social reforms. However, while in German thought the template of inversed teleology was closely associated with Romanticism, the Islamic modernists at least initially combined it with a pronounced Rationalism. Muslim reformers such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh or Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) insisted on the intrinsic rationality of early Islam. Consequently, they interpreted Islamic history as a gradual deviation from its originally rationalist core. Afghani and Gökalp, for example, described Protestantism as a kind of rationalized and therewith "Islamized" Christianity (Al-Afghani [1880/81] 1983, p. 171; Gökalp 1959, p. 222), whereas Abduh saw in the message of Prophet Muhammad a merger of divine revelation with reason (Abduh 1965, p. 8).

Generally speaking, narratives of historical decline played a central role in the justification of modern social and religious reform projects in the nineteenth century. They provided a legitimizing template for the propagation of modern social actorhood, for a new attitude to actively changing the world. In his paradigmatic essay Über den Begriff einer Wissenschaft des Judenthums (On the Concept of a Science of Judaism) Immanuel Wolf (1799–1847) appeared as such an authorized agent of social actorhood in the modern discourse about the reformation of Judaism. For him, Judaism represented a characteristic and independent whole, a holistic spirit; however, that spirit had lost its dynamics in a hostile atmosphere. In achieving modern scientific knowledge of Judaism, Wolf saw the path to remedy this status of Judaism and to disentangle the essential from the accidental in Jewish history. Modern science, in the eyes of Wolf, could pave a reformist way to find original Judaism in stripping it from its later historical additions (Wolf 1823).[6] In a similar vein, the Jewish philosopher Abraham Geiger (1810–1874) perceived historical knowledge of Judaism as a prerequisite for religious reform. In his reformist thought, Judaism had lost the access to its very essence by focusing on ritual externals alone (Meyer 1988, p. 97). It was later the Hungarian Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) who applied these cognitive templates of the reformist thought of Judaism to the study of Islam. In his Vorlesungen über den Islam Goldziher (English translation: Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law) described Muhammad as a "suffering ascetic" transforming into a "statesman and warrior" (Goldziher [1910] 1925, p. 27). However, in Goldziher's eyes, this transformation was

due to historical developments, which actually compromised Islam's original rational, ethical content. The inner religious ideas of Islam thus were gradually distorted in the orthodox and dogmatic systems of Islamic jurisprudence. The transcendental God was drawn into worldly affairs (Goldziher [1910] 1925, p. 24). Apparently, the analysis of the Hungarian Orientalist was not far from some historical tenets of contemporary Islamist thought (cf. Jung 2011).

Yet it was not only historical narratives and cognitive templates that Muslim and European reformers shared in the nineteenth century. Between September 1873 and April 1874, for instance, Ignaz Goldziher travelled to Istanbul, Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem and Cairo. In Cairo, he met the Islamic reformer Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and joined his study circle, discussing the issues of Islamic reform against the background of readings in essential works of Islamic philosophy and theology. According to his diary, Goldziher found among the Muslim reformists of this study circle brothers in mind, advocating a similar reconciliation of faith and modern culture that he aspired too for Judaism (Goldziher 1978). Later he described these months in Cairo as the happiest period of his life. I understand Goldziher's "Oriental Study Tour" as a perfect example of the factual entanglement of Muslim and European intellectuals in the construction of modern images of Islam (cf. Conrad 1990; Jung 2013; Patai 1987). The life and work of Ignaz Goldziher went parallel to historical processes in which Christian, Islamic and Jewish reform attempts met. His intellectual formation took place in the second part of the nineteenth century in which Osterhammel saw the gravity center of global innovations. In this time, Islamic reformers and European Orientalists implicitly applied the same cognitive templates in order to make sense of the modern world. And prime amongst those was an inversed version of the teleology of Islamic history.[7]

Historical narratives of decay and the restoration of an ideal past became core conceptual tools in the newly established discourse of Islamic modernism. They were key to the justification of both the reformists struggle against the traditional religious and political elite and the implementation of modern institutions and norms in various social fields. Moreover, they supported the national and pan-Islamist struggle against colonialism. Thereby, Islamic modernists did not uncritically adopt so-called Western ideas. Based on these more general cognitive templates they developed consciously and reflexively a modern discourse on religion (Tayob 2018, pp. 18–19). In the course of the twentieth century these conceptual templates have shown to be abstract enough to cater for very different reformist ideas. Their combination with Islamic religious traditions has never been fixed and, in this way, they launched a discourse leading to a multiplicity of specifically Islamic projects of modernity. In this way, utterly different Muslim thinkers became part of this modern Islamic discourse. The positivist minded Young Turk leader Ahmet Riza (1859–1930), for instance, legitimized his anti-clerical struggle with references to a "pure Islam" perfectly serving national cohesion in modern times (Zürcher 2005, p. 17). While Riza advocated the compatibility of early Islam with the institutions of modern science, the Islamist Said Qutb strongly rejected the adoption of so-called Western institutions invoking the spirit of the pristine community of the prophet and his companions (Qutb 2000, p. 38). Both, however, narrated Islamic history as a history of decline and claimed authenticity for their own intellectual worldviews in a return to an imaginary Islamic past. In this sense, the "decline thesis" did not only fit European Orientalist discourses (Sajidi 2007, p. 4), but it also supported the ideas of Islamic reform. Moreover, the inverted teleology of Islamic modernism turned into a building block in the perceptions of early Islamic history in modern Muslim and therewith also Islamist thought more general.

4. Invoking the Past: Rationalized "Others" as the Carriers of Islamic Discourses of Modernity

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Rashid Rida (1865–1935) published in his Islamic reform journal al-Manar a series of conversations between a young man and a traditional shaikh. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen described this young man in the story as

the "prototype" of a new Muslim activist, as a new kind of Muslim intellectual who emerged in the second part of the nineteenth century (Skovgaard-Petersen 2001). This fictional conversation between the young intellectual and the old shaikh took place in late nineteenth century Egypt. Together with new professionals, state administrators and newly enriched cultivators, Skovgaard-Petersen's new Muslim intellectuals challenged the authority of Egypt's traditional elite. In the context of an emerging "reading public", the Islamic modernists assigned an educational role to the press, previously held by the religious learnt. (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997, p. 78). In this sense, the Islamic reform movement was also an expression of the "shift away from the Turco-Egyptian aristocracy, notables and religious leaders" (Kazziha 1977, p. 377). Therefore, we find the origins of Islamic modernism in a context of political and economic transformations that went along with modern nation-building and state formation in the region (Moaddel 2001). Rida's fictional series of conversations must be understood against the background of this fundamental social transformation and the new social actors emerging together with it.

In lamenting the deplorable status of the Islamic umma, the young man analyzed the then current situation of Muslims through the prism of the narrative of decline. He compared the status of the umma with developments in other parts of the world and points to the discrepancies between religious ideals, traditional social roles and the profane realities of Egypt in his times (Rida 2007, pp. 15–20). In this way, the young man's worldview is distinctively modern in painting a picture of historical contingencies against the backdrop of possible alternatives. With this fictional story, Rida introduced a new type of Muslim intellectual who claimed authorized agency for him, Egypt and Islam. In short, the young man clearly resembled the conceptual type of a "rationalized other" who in the world cultural theory of the Stanford School plays the role of the legitimate actor behind modern social actorhood (cf. Busse 2018, pp. 56–58). This new rationalized other challenged the authorized agency of traditional shaiks and the ulama, undermining the previously existing relative monopoly of knowledge on Islam. I argue that contemporary Muslim thought and therewith Islamist ideologies have developed along the emergence of different of these types of rationalized others who became the major carriers of the discourse of Islamic modernities. They constructed an inverse philosophy of history that until today has informed both Western and Muslim perceptions of Islam.[8] Even more important, these new intellectuals gained public authority in closely linking the authenticity of their modernizing ideas to an imaginary past. I finally support this argument with brief examples in this section of my article.

The first generation of these rationalized others were mainly represented in the modernist Salafiyya around Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh,[9] the Indian Aligarh movement with its founder Seyd Ahmad Khan and the so-called Young Ottomans around Namik Kemal. While all three movements took different directions, their intellectual legacy provided the fundament for the contemporary discourse on Islamic modernities. They stripped many Islamic concepts from their classical context and bestowed them with modern meanings. These Islamic modernists developed a kind of conceptual toolkit for the authentication of modern institutions, norms and ideas (Al-Azmeh 1996). Moreover, they anchored modern Islamic authenticity ultimately in their scriptualist reading of the Quran and the period of early Islam itself (Dallal 2000, p. 347). In combining their reformist thoughts with Islamic concepts such as ijmaa, ijtihad, jihad, sharia, shura, tawhid and umma, they propagated modern imaginaries in correspondence to their own religious traditions and traced them back to a "Golden Age of Islam" (Jung 2011, p. 246; Moaddel 2001, p. 693). To be sure, the subsequent protagonists of Islamic modernities have never agreed upon the precise periodization of this Golden Age. While for Abduh this comprised the first centuries of Islamic philosophy, Rashid Rida tended to reduce it to the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the four rightly guided Caliphs. In his response to the letter of an Indonesian Muslim, Shakib Arslan even built his reform suggestions on the Quran alone (Arslan 2004). Yet the recourse to the past, returning to the Quran, Sunna and to the model of the Prophet and the early generations of Muslims became a

paradigmatic reference in the justification of modern projects. This applies not only to intellectual discourses but also to the new Muslim mass organizations that evolved during the twentieth century.

This invocation of early Islam, Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949) made central piece of the ideology of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, something like the archetype of the Islamist organizations in the twentieth century. According to his own pen, the experiences of the first Islamic community became the model for his own reform program. Hasan al-Banna combined religious with nationalist ideas and interpreted patriotic duties in terms of religious obligations (Al-Banna 2013, p. 35). Acting in an age of "sweeping nationalization, industrialization, mechanization, urbanization and educational professionalization" (Jung and Zalaf 2019, p. 383), he pursued with the Brotherhood an Islamic version of a modern reform project that the sociologist Peter Wagner defined as a form of "organized modernity". In this form of modernity a collectivist and state-centered political ideology goes along with the strong belief in the ability to manage the masses in a top-down organized society through bureaucratic processes (Wagner 2010). Born 1906 in a small provincial town, al-Mahmudiyya, Hasan al-Banna joined in 1923 the Dar al-Ulum, a famous training center for teachers in Cairo. His move to Cairo confronted him with the miserable living conditions of many Egyptian city dwellers as well as with the political dominance of foreign forces (Al-Banna 2004, p. 238). At the same time al-Banna made the acquaintance of leading Islamic reformers such as Rashid Rida and Muhib al-Din al-Khatib who was the co-founder of the Salafiyya Press Bookshop. In his memoirs, al-Banna praised Rashid Rida for his defense of Islam and tells us that he became an arduous reader of Rida's work (Al-Banna 2013, p. 67).

The influence of Rida's thought is visible in the way in which Hasan al-Banna aimed to solve Egypt's social and political problems. In the experiences of the first Islamic community, he found the model for political and economic reform and in the sharia he identified the prime source of moral integrity, cultural authenticity and national integration (Krämer 2010, p. 114; Al-Banna 2004, p. 95). Contrary to the intellectual circles around Muhammad Abduh, however, Hasan al-Banna rejected the modernist idea of a conscious but critical appropriation of modern European institutions within an Islamic framework (Commins 2005). Implicitly, however, he also Islamized central ideas of modern politics. In his discussion of Islamic governance, for instance, al-Banna introduced the concepts of the social contract (al-aqd al-ijtimai) and the public good (al-maslaha al-amma). The Islamic authenticity of these modern political institutions, he then proved by a quote from Abu Bakr the first rightly guided Caliph (Al-Banna 1937, p. 5). In this way, Hasan al-Banna justified his concept of Islamic governance with reference to an ideal past. At the same time, his concept of Islamic governance reflected a major element of organized modernity. He perceived the conscious reconstruction and bureaucratic management of society as the reformist task of a ruling avant-garde. Hasan al-Banna seemingly understood himself in terms of an Islamic vanguard close to the core type of the rationalized other that characterized many nationalist movements of his time.

Rather different to the state-centered political ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood is the approach of Tablighi Jamaat, with its estimated 90 million followers worldwide, probably the largest Islamist though not overtly political organization today.[10] Tablighi Jamaat is a transnationally active Islamist missionary movement founded 1927 by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885–1944) in a provincial town southwest of the Indian capital Delhi. Having his theological roots in the thoughts of the reformist school of Deoband, Muhammad Ilyas wanted to improve the "depraved status of Islam" in India by rectifying the religious practices of individual Muslims (Pieri 2015, pp. 31–32). The movement considers "nominal Muslims" as the main target of its mission and it aims at "re-orienting lapsed Muslims back to a correct understanding of Islam" (Pieri 2019, p. 361). Applying the narrative of decline on the individual level, Tablighis understand contemporary Muslims as having departed from the right way to fulfill their religious and social duties. Their missionary activities therefore put emphasis on the personal renewal of Muslim individuals "in reverting to the

ways of Prophet Muhammad as an ideal life-form" (Ali 2003, p. 175). The establishment of a just Islamic social order, therefore, is not the political task of a vanguard group, but it is supposed to evolve through a change of social and religious practices of ordinary Muslims.

Consequently, the members of Tablighi Jamaat are following detailed and exemplary rules in their everyday lives. These rules, according to the organization, are directly derived from the example of the Prophet and from the first three generations of pious Muslims. For instance, members of Tablighi Jamaat are instructed to "dust the bed three times before laying down to sleep". Thereby they are supposed to "lie on the right side, with the right hand under the right cheek and recite: 'Oh Allah in your name I live and die'" (Pieri 2019, p. 372). The behavioral manual of the movement is derived from practices of the early Muslim generations and commentaries to the Quran and the Sunna. Its regulations comprise "correct practices" of worshipping, dress and everyday behavior (Pieri 2015, p. 43). Modern social actorhood, in the case of Tablighi Jamaat, is translated into missionary work by individuals. Thereby, spreading the correct understanding of Islam is not the task of an Islamist vanguard or a religious elite, but the obligation of every ordinary Muslim (Ali 2003, p. 176). In correcting the wrongs of contemporary Muslim life, Tablighis orient themselves toward a Golden Age of Islam, taking their example in the life of the Prophet Muhammad and the early Muslim community. The emulation of these examples from the early formative period of Islam serves them as a source for both the reformation of modern social life and as a path toward individual salvation (Pieri 2019, p. 376).

5. Conclusions: Islamic Studies and the "Provincialization of Europe"

I started this article by drawing parallels between Islamic modernism and the response to modernity by German conservatives. In the early twentieth century, this response of Germany's conservative educational bourgeoisie was characterized by a romanticist world-view. Contrary to the promise of progress by the Enlightenment, they rather interpreted the course of history as a process of decay, as a loss of the precious cultural values of "Old Europe". Thomas Mann's Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen were animated by the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, together directly cited 257 times (Keller 1965, p. 170). In light of modern contingencies, Germany's Conservatives advocated the defense of the authenticity of the German cultural traditions against the threat posed by the "West". They were aiming at a complete "restoration of Germany" and thereby oriented toward the past (Keller 1965, p. 139).

In this article, I argue that we can identify similar conceptual elements of this world-view in the discourse on Islamic modernities that has been launched by Islamic modernists in the second part of the nineteenth century. Similar elements, however, have been combined with the specific Islamic religious concepts of renewal (*tajdid*) and reform (*islah*). In Muslim thought, the template of an inverted teleology of history, constructing history as a process of decline, became a central axiom of this Islamic discourse of modernity. Islamist ideologies, then, have put forward the call for the restoration of Muslim societies in the context of the political, economic and cultural supremacy of the "West". Their philosophy of history is intimately connected with the conceptual triangle of modernity, authenticity and the past. From the perspective of Islamist activists, the task of modern politics is the revision of this process of decay through the search for pure Islamic origins in a Golden Age. Consequently, for many political movements in the Muslim parts of the world imaginations of a pristine Islam in the times of the Prophet turned into an intellectual reservoir for both the justification of social change and the struggle for political independence. Throughout the twentieth century this mechanism characterized a broad range of reformist Muslim thought.[11] In this way, for instance, Islamic reformers from Rashid Rida to Ibn Ashhur and Muhammad al-Ghazali have expanded the scope of the maqasid al-sharia (the principles of sharia) by modern normative institutions and ideas such as women's rights, freedom, social justice, human rights and equality (Duderija 2014, p. 6). Since the rise of modernist thought in the nineteenth century, Islamic projects of modernity increasingly gained legitimacy by their close linkage to an idealized past.

In this process of the construction and dissemination of projects of Islamic modernities Muslim intellectuals and populist leaders played the role of what the Stanford School labelled authoritized agents. Figures such as Muhammad Abduh, Namik Kemal, Rashid Rida, Hasan al-Banna, Muhammad Ilyas or Ibn Ashur represent rationalized others who claimed actorhood in the name of Muslims and Islam. From this perspective, Islamic modernism and its Islamist followers have been inherent parts of the emergence of global modernity. The rise of Islamist movements and their references to an imaginary past, therefore, should be studied along global discursive lines that have molded modern political thought in general. Yet their historical development they have been modified by specific social contexts and path-dependent legacies. The polarization between ideas of specifically Islamic and secular "Western" modernities is a result of these contextual modifications. In the course of the twentieth century these opposite worldviews have increasingly reinforced each other. To be sure, the hegemonic rise of these two discourses of modernity has always been contested. In contemporary sociology of religion, the secularist understanding of "Western modernity" almost has been rendered to a myth; and Islamic modernities have been constantly challenged by Arab, Turkish or Iranian nationalist narratives, as well as socialist and liberal projects of modernity.[12] Yet, according to my own observations, projects of specifically Islamic modernities became gradually dominant in Muslim thought. What to do with these insights in our assessment of contemporary Islamist movements?

With my article I argue for a need of historical context in our understanding of current developments among and within Islamist movements. The evolution of Islamist projects across national, sectarian and ethnic boundaries is closely linked to the above presented discourse of Islamic modernity with its anchorage in an imagined past. I completely agree with Oliver Scharbrodt's conclusion that the worldview of Islamic modernists and Islamist activists is deeply rooted in a historical tradition of religious dissidence that in the case of Muhammad Abduh often has been obscured (Scharbrodt 2008, p. 173). In Abduh we can see the "prototype" of a twentieth-century learnt Islamic activist "whose religious authority does not solely rest on the depth of his scholarship but on a blend of traditional religious expertise and social and political activism" (Scharbrodt 2008, p. 154). In the conceptual language of the Stanford School, he is a paradigmatic example for the role of rationalized others in the modern world. Abduh's revision of Muslim thought, his critique of the religious and political establishment together with a modern reinterpretation of various Islamic traditions with reference to a pristine past, were instrumental in launching the discourse of Islamic modernity out of which Islamist movements have grown. Moreover, the Islamic modernists of the nineteenth century were responsible for undermining the interpretative monopoly of religious traditions by the ulama.[13] They opened the door for the independent reading of Islamic scriptures beyond the confines of classical Islamic sciences such as fiqh and kalam. Consequently, we can draw a historical line from Muhammad Abduh via Rashid Rida to Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb. This historical path we should keep in mind when analyzing the Islamist movements of the present.

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Notes

1 Islamism is a highly contested concept in current scholarship. Moreover, the notion of political Islam and Islamism is not only dependent on the phenomenon observed but is equally molded by the observer and his or her specific disciplinary backgrounds (Volpi 2010). In this article my own usage of the term roughly follows the definition of Asma Afsaruddin who defined Islamists as "activist individuals and groups in various contemporary Muslim-majority societies whose primary wish is to govern and be

governed politically only by Islamic pinciples, understood by them to be immutably enshrined in the Sharia or the religious law" (Afsaruddin 2015, p. 18).

[2] For a more comprehensive concept of modernity, see (Jung 2017, 2018).

[3] Khaled El-Rouayheb suggests a differentiation into three independent narratives of decline: an Ottomanist, an Arabist and an Islamist narrative of decline which served as backdrops for different projects of cultural and religious revivals (El-Rouayheb 2015, p. 1).

[4] See also Rasheed El-Enany's book with an analysis of 56 Arab writers' encounters with Europe and the West over more than 200 years (El-Enany 2006).

[5] The German historian Reinhart Koselleck discussed this transformation of temporality in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in his Futures Past, in which he analyzed the evolution of a new kind of the historical experience of time and the relationship between the future and the past (Koselleck 2004).

[6] For a short description of Wolf's work as a classic of the humanities, see: (Feldt 2019).

[7] I presented this thesis of parallels in Orientalist and Islamist thought in book length in my Orientalists, Islamists and the Global Public Sphere (Jung 2011).

[8] In a comparative view on four social sciences journals in Arabic, Rifaat Ali Abou-el-Haj comes to the conclusion that they represent scholarly work that lumps together 400 years of Ottoman history under the notion of decay and therewith serving as the foundation for a common Arab identity (Abou-el-Haj 1982).

[9] In my notion of the Salafiyya, I am largely following the interpretation of Abduh's concept of the al-salaf al-salih by Albert Hourani (1962) and not the more recent re-conceptionalization of the term by Lauzière (2010). Like Hourani, Frank Griffel and Itzchak Weismann have, more recently, argued for the application of this notion of the modernist Salafiyya (Griffel 2015; Weismann 2017).

[10] While Tablighi Jamaat has not developed political aspirations like the Muslim Brotherhood, the organization shares the missionary purpose with the Brotherhood. Itzshak Weismann argued that this missionary zeal (dawa) was at the heart of the Brotherhood movement and therefore of Islamist thought, rather than the meanwhile dominant concept of jihad. From this perspective, there are certainly parallels between Tablighi Jamaat and the Muslim Brotherhood (Weismann 2015).

[11] To be sure, finding authenticity in an imagined past was a template we can observe across the globe. Historically specific here is only the association of this past with the early period of Islam.

[12] For a good compilation of articles on these alternative discourses of modernity, see: (Hanssen and Weiss 2018).

[13] This does not mean that the ulama have not participated in shaping the Islamic discourse of modernity. On the contrary. The excellent study on the Egyptian Dar al-Ifta by Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen clearly shows the ways in which state appointed muftis contributed with their fatwas to this discursive development in re-formulating Islam as "simple, rational, just and easily applicable", in short, as a means for the construction of "authentic" projects of Islamic modernities (Skovgaard-Petersen 1997, p. 35).

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