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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		أَ، آَ، إِيَّ	an
أُ	u		أُوَّ	un
إِ	i		إِيَّ	in
آَ، آِ، إِيَّ،	ā		أُوَّ	aw
أُوَّ	ū		إِيَّ	ay
إِيَّ	ī		أُوَّ	uww, ū (in final position)
			إِيَّ	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

A Theory of “Islamic Modernities:” Religion and Modernisation in Muslim History

Dietrich Jung*

Abstract: This article takes its point of departure from the observation that references to Islamic religious traditions became the dominant signifier in defining the authenticity of Muslim modernities. How should we understand this observation of a relative hegemony of ideas of specifically Islamic modernities in the Muslim world? The article wants to answer this question in developing a theoretical argument concerning the role of religion in modernity in four steps. The first section presents a critical discussion of Eisenstadt’s concept of multiple modernities. Then, I develop a conceptual dichotomy between modernity as a social macro structure and modernity as a multiplicity of cultural projects. In the third step, the article briefly discusses notions of secularisation and their remaining relevance for theories of multiple modernity. Finally, I suggest understanding the observable dominance of specifically Islamic constructions of modernity in the Muslim world through the lenses of the concept of cultural hegemony. The article concludes with four short suggestions to answer the question as to how my argumentation relates to some core tenets of classical modernisation theory.

Keywords: Modernity, Modernisation Theory, Multiple Modernities, Islamic Reform, Cultural Hegemony

Abstrak: Makalah ini bertitik-tolak dengan pemerhatian bahawa rujukan-rujukan tradisi keagamaan Islam telah menjadi penanda dominan dalam menentukan kesahihan konsep kemodenan Muslim. Bagaimana patut kita fahami tentang pemerhatian terhadap hegemoni idea yang relatif tentang kemodenan Islam di Dunia Islam ini? Makalah ini akan menjawab soalan

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ini dengan membangunkan hujah teoretikal berkenaan peranan agama dalam kemodenan dengan empat langkah. Langkah pertama membentangkan diskusi kritikal mengenai konsep pelbagai kemodenan yang diperkenalkan Eisenstadt. Langkah kedua membangunkan dikotomi konseptual di antara kemodenan sebagai struktur sosial makro dan kemodenan sebagai satu kepelbagaian projek-projek sosial. Dalam langkah ketiga, makalah ini membincangkan secara ringkas tanggapan-tanggapan sekularisasi dan perkaitan lain mereka dengan teori pelbagai kemodenan. Langkah terakhir mencadangkan pemahaman terhadap penguasaan yang dapat diperhatikan dalam pembinaan kemodenan Islam secara khusus menerusi lensa konsep hegemoni budaya. Makalah ini menyimpulkan empat cadangan pendek dalam menjawab persoalan-persoalan ini bagi menunjukkan bagaimana hujah-hujah yang disampaikan ini berkait dengan beberapa pegangan teras teori modernisasi klasikal.

Kata kunci: Kemodenan, Teori Modernisasi, Pelbagai Kemodenan, Reformasi Islam, Hegemoni Budaya

The irresistible power of the evolution of human society (...) is merciless to laws even of divine origin and transfers them, when their time is come, from the treasury of everlasting goods to a museum of antiquities (C. S. Hurgronje 1916).

Introduction

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), a Dutch orientalist scholar and founding father of modern Islamic studies, perceived religion as “the most conservative factor in human life” (Hurgronje, 1916b, p. 138). For him, to be a Muslim and to be modern were not necessarily contradictions, but a modern Muslim had to get rid of Islamic traditions, in particular in as much as they are systemised in Sunni orthodoxy and its canons of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Publishing his *Lectures on Islam* in the early twentieth century, Hurgronje was convinced that the historical process of modernisation would inevitably render the normative system of Islam obsolete. His work both as a colonial advisor in Dutch East India (1889–1906) and later as a professor at University of Leiden (1906-1936) was predicated on the classical sociological assumption of a zero-sum relationship between religion and modernity. However, in stark contrast to Hurgronje’s expectation of a gradual disappearance of Islam, the aspirations of many contemporary political movements in Muslim countries tend to build on versions of a specifically Islamic form of modernity.

The relevance of Islamic traditions for contemporary Muslims has not withered away. On the contrary, historical developments in the twentieth century seemingly have proven Hurgronje's conviction wrong in both theoretical and empirical terms. Theoretically, the idea of a linear, all-encompassing, and universal social development subsequently replacing traditional by modern social norms and institutions – the classical meaning of "modernisation" – has lost most of its scholarly credit. The world has witnessed diverse forms of modernity alternative to this "Western" ideal type. Modernisation, if we still apply this term, can no longer be equated with Westernisation. Looking at Islamic discourses, we can observe the hegemonic idea that modern authenticity only is granted by a specifically Islamic type of modernity. Yet, the legitimate form of this Islamic modernity is highly contested from within.¹

The relative hegemony of these specifically Islamic imaginations of modern life has deeper historical roots. We can trace back the idea of an Islamic modernity to the Islamic reform movement of the nineteenth century. Leading representatives of this movement such as Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), Namik Kemal (1840–1888), and Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–1898) launched an intellectual discourse that has been grounded in the more general idea that authentic forms of modernity must be closely linked to Islamic religious traditions. This "Islamic modernism" advocated educational, political, legal, and economic reforms in specifically Islamic frameworks. In the twentieth century, then, these references to religion in constructing modern social imaginaries have gradually assumed a hegemonic status. At the beginning of the new millennium, references to "Islam" became the dominant signifier in defining the authenticity of Muslim modernities. Yet what kind of references to Islam? The observer is confronted with a broad range of Islamic political movements from various rights advocacy groups to militant Jihadist organisations all claiming Islamic legitimacy for their worldviews and actions.

¹ This idea also has been contested by non-religious and even secularist projects of modernity. Good examples are the Kemalist Turkish Republic or Tunisia under its first President Habib Bourgiba (1957-1987). However, these secular alternatives to Islamic projects of modernity will not be considered in this article.

In combining modernity with Islamic traditions, the Islamic reform movement somehow “anticipated” the more recent revision of classical concepts of modernisation in social theory. These classical modernisation theories once built their conceptual apparatus on the fundamental dichotomy between tradition and modernity, a dichotomy in which tradition largely, but not exclusively, was understood in terms of religion. In line with the quote from Hurgronje above, classical modernisation theories conceptualised the rise of modern society in terms of an inevitable “passing of traditional society” (Lerner, 1958). They claimed to observe a social transformation toward one general model of modernity on a global scale. The conceptual revision of this universal model inherent to classical modernisation theories finds one of its most pronounced contemporary expressions in theories of multiple modernities. Originally coined by the late sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt (Eisenstadt, 2000a; 2000b), the concept of multiple modernities tries to make sense of the multiple faces in which modernity historically has appeared. Even more important, Eisenstadt assigned religious traditions a prominent role in shaping these different forms of modernity. Instead of disappearing, one of Eisenstadt’s core arguments, religious traditions have played a key role in the construction of historically observable varieties of modern social orders.

In this article, I engage in several contemporary discussions of social theory, making an empirically informed yet fundamentally theoretical argument that concerns the role of religion in modern society. I am doing so with specific reference to Muslim history. Thereby my argument is intimately linked to the question about the ongoing relevance or irrelevance of some of the core tenets of classical modernisation theories. To be sure, I am going to paint a picture with a very broad brush. The endeavour here is not to go into particularities, but to link different theoretical assumptions and historical observations in making a more general argument on the relationship of religion and modernity. Given the ever-increasing specialisation of social enquiry, contemporary research in the social sciences and humanities tends to justify itself in rather microscopic perspectives. Consequently, the highly specialised findings of these studies are often not anymore mutually intelligible, they tend to not speaking to each other any longer. The purpose of this article is going deliberately against this tendency, aiming at a more holistic picture of social enquiry.

I first take up Eisenstadt's claim concerning the role of traditions in shaping multiple modernities. I briefly discuss his theory with respect to some of the basic assumptions of classical modernisation theory as represented in Lerner's once so prominent book on the Middle East. I argue that the concepts of modernity and multiple modernities are mutually dependent, that they logically cannot exist apart from each other. In the second step, I present the dichotomy between modernity as an abstract social macro structure and as a cultural project. This dichotomy allows me to put theories of modernity in the singular and pluralistic theories of modernity in a relationship. The third section reflects upon the role of religion in modernity. I critically revise the paradigm of secularisation without throwing this concept into the dustbin of conceptual history. Finally, I investigate the historical course in which the idea to combine modern authenticity with Islamic traditions has assumed its relative hegemony in the construction of Islamic modernities. In this section, I utilise theories of cultural hegemony in order to answer the question why the connection to Islamic traditions became so important in granting modern authenticity to Muslim imaginations of modern life.

From Modernity to Multiple Modernities

The cover of Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* features some mosques in the foreground overshadowed by the drilling towers of an oil field. This image contains some of the core assumptions of classical modernisation theories in a stereotypical Middle Eastern representation. According to them, economic growth and industrialisation will bring about political changes toward secular, participatory, and eventually liberal democratic societies on a global scale. In Lerner's theoretical framework, modern society is first and foremost a "participant society" in which religion gradually loses its societal relevance. Through urbanisation, literacy, and media participation, modern people acquire new lifestyles that fundamentally distinguish them from the non-participant forms of "traditional" life. Structural changes in the social fabric of society go hand in hand with a specific moulding of the personal character of the modern subject. The macro and micro levels of society undergo systemic transformations of a specific kind according to which "secular enlightenment," the spirit of rationalism and positivism, gradually replaces "sacred revelation in the guidance of human affairs" (Lerner, 1958, p. 43). Lerner juxtaposed the autonomous, mobile, and empathic personality of modernity to the constrictive selves of traditional

society with its approved personal styles and lack of any awareness of alternatives (1958, p. 73). To be sure, in doing so, he conceded that the concrete paths of modernisation can take very different forms (1958, p. 65). Yet despite all observable historical differences, Lerner nevertheless claimed that in the Middle East a similar process of modernisation as in the “West” was under way (1958, p. 44).

Daniel Lerner’s book is a paradigmatic example for studies based on the application of some core tenets of classical modernisation theory to non-Western contexts that dominated sociology in the 1950s and 1960s. Lerner perceived modernisation in terms of a systemic relationship between economic growth, democratic participation, and religious decline. The pretension of the grand theories of modernisation, explaining social change through one “scientific” model, meanwhile has been replaced by a radical historicisation of the discourse of modernity in a variety of ways. Today, social theorists produce a growing number of pluralistic theories of modernity such as alternative, entangled, or successive modernities. The theoretical move in this direction was not due to intrinsic developments in social theory alone. While postcolonial, poststructuralist, and postmodern authors have visibly changed the field, it was, at the same time, empirical observations that made these new approaches of social theory so fashionable. Considering the Islamic revolution in Iran, the global rise of Islamist discourses, the capitalist achievements of non-democratic countries such as China, or the resilience of religion in American society itself, the linear model of social convergence almost entirely lost its scholarly credibility. Yet does this mean that all of the assumptions of classical modernisation theory were wrong? What is the conceptual relationship of pluralistic theories of modernity to classical modernisation theory?

For answers to these questions, Eisenstadt’s theory of multiple modernities seems to be a good starting point. To a certain extent, he maintained the assumption of a more generic process of modernisation behind the rise of multiple modernities. Eisenstadt claimed that a “cultural programme” of modernity has spread from Europe over the globe. This programme, however, has not led to a convergence of historical societies. On the contrary, in Eisenstadt’s reading, different “civilisational complexes” have reacted to this generic programme in very different and path-dependent ways. Eisenstadt defined these civilisational complexes with reference to the ongoing discussion about

the "Axial Age" theory (Jaspers, 1956). The civilisations of the Axial Age, a period roughly comprising five centuries around the middle of the last millennium before Christ, "elaborated new models of order, based on contrasts and connections between transcendental foundations and mundane life worlds" (Arnason et al., 2005, p. 2). Eisenstadt reformulated this concept in a historical-sociological perspective and assigned religious traditions a significant role. He broke radically with one of the axiomatic principles of classical modernisation theories, the dichotomy between tradition (speak: religion) and modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000a; 2000b; 2001).

Eisenstadt's approach attempted to combine unity and difference, a universal programme of modernity with a multiplicity of forms in which this cultural programme has been turned into historical reality. Therefore, Eisenstadt's approach does not serve the purposes of those postcolonial and postmodern proponents of pluralistic theories of modernity, who promote a form of arbitrariness in their claims to the diversity of modernities. In those theories, modernity in the singular represents nothing more than the shallow concept for an epoch. The almost random application of Eisenstadt's term of multiple modernities in contemporary scholarship, however, has turned it into an academic buzzword losing its conceptual substance (Thomasen 2010). Therefore, it is important to emphasise again the core claim of Eisenstadt that it was traditions that bestowed a generic meaning in modernity with its various cultural expressions. Yet, what is then modernity in the singular in Eisenstadt's work?

In his pilot essay on multiple modernities, Eisenstadt characterised the modern cultural programme by ideas such as human autonomy, reflexivity, mastery of nature, and the loss of legitimacy of previously taken-for-granted social orders. His theory of multiple modernities emphasises the role of human agency in the constitution of political orders and, quite similar to Daniel Lerner, Eisenstadt too considered modern society as defined by participation (2000, p. 5). In Eisenstadt's participant society, however, we can observe an ongoing struggle about the definition of the political realm, and he does not equate this realm with liberal democracy. According to Eisenstadt, modernity is "beset by internal antinomies and contradictions and a tension between totalising and pluralistic visions" (2001, pp. 325–26). While democracy certainly remains an option, this kind of political order has been challenged

by fundamentalist movements of a Jacobin nature aiming at a “total reconstruction of personality and society” (2000, p. 19). Multiple forms of modernity share this ambiguity as well as the adoption of the nation-state model with its social features of bureaucratisation and routinisation (2000, p. 8). Evidently, Eisenstadt’s theoretical design maintains some of the defining elements of classical modernisation theories and revokes others.

The theory of multiple modernities has been criticised for two shortcomings when it comes to an understanding of the varieties of modern social orders.² First of all, there is Eisenstadt’s conceptualisation of the cultural programme of modernity, modernity in the singular, that remains relatively vague. This applies to both questions about the very conceptual definition of modernity and whether modernity represents a civilisation in its own right or not (Arnason, 2003, pp. 30–35). Secondly, in Eisenstadt’s approach, civilisations/religions almost appear like hermetically demarcated cultural complexes, as coherent and bounded “cultural containers” (Wagner, 2008, p. 12). Consequently, his theory focuses on differences between religions, yet it does not tell us much about multiple modernities within religions. In this respect, the broad range of different Islamic imaginations of modernity is telling. Muslim intellectuals have understood Islamic modernity in rather different ways. The educational projects of the Islamic modernists of the nineteenth century, for instance, were of a rather elitist nature. The foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, then, marked a fundamental change. Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) brought the Muslim masses in, making Islamic reform the purpose of a broad social movement. During the twenty-first century, however, the collectivist organisational model of the Muslim Brotherhood has increasingly been challenged by alternative forms of more individualised imaginations of modern Islamic life. In short, there exist competing visions about Islamic modernities within Islam. In the following two sections, I will address the shortcomings of Eisenstadt’s theory of multiple modernities. I start with a conceptual clarification regarding the relationship of modernity in the singular with the concept of multiple modernities and then move on to a discussion

² Personally, I would add a third critique regarding Eisenstadt’s insistence on that the programme of modernity has its temporal and spatial origin in Europe. For my argumentation against this view, see: Jung, 2023.

of the role of religious traditions in modern life shaping multiple modernities within "civilisational complexes."

Modernity as Macrostructure and as a Project

The German sociologist Hartmut Rosa defined modernisation as a progressing social process associated with both "cultural promises" and "structural constraints" (Rosa, 2014). In conceptual terms, Rosa explained this "double nature" of modernity with reference to the theories of the German sociologists Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann. On the occasion of receiving the Adorno award from the City of Frankfurt in September 1980, Habermas defined cultural modernity as a "project of modernity" once put forward by the eighteenth-century philosophers of the Enlightenment. This normative-cultural project consisted "in the relentless development of the objectivating sciences, of the universalistic foundations of morality and law, and of autonomous art, all in accord with their own immanent logic" (Habermas, 1997, p. 45). In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, then, Habermas criticised the representatives of the classical modernisation theories of the 1950s such as Lerner for inventing the evolutionary and highly abstract concept of modernisation that detached modernity from its European cultural and philosophical origins. Habermas stated a farewell from modernity by neoconservative forces who accepted that modernity as a cultural project had been made obsolete by the self-contained ongoing process of social modernisation (Habermas, 1996, pp. 10–12). In Habermas' own words, the autonomous dynamics of modern economic and administrative systems have colonised people's life worlds (Habermas, 1987).

Niklas Luhmann was one of those sociologists who defined modernity exclusively in terms of this self-contained systemic process. For Luhmann, modernity represented a highly abstract macro structure fully devoid of any purpose in a normative sense. According to him, the global progression of modern society has been a self-referential process of the production and re-production of social structures through communication. While modern society as world society represents a whole at the global level, it is internally subdivided by functionally differentiated social subsystems such as the arts, economics, law, politics, religion, and science. These subsystems of modern society constitute themselves through a sharp distinction between system and environment, each following its own binary communicative code. The

legal system, for instance, operates based on the code legal/illegal, while the scientific system applies the code true/not true. In defining modern society as an all-encompassing global system of self-referential communications, Luhmann excludes the modern individual from the social realm. In his theory, the modern subject appears as a psychical system that is separated from society through its own operational modus of consciousness. In Luhmann's theoretical edifice, modernisation represents an "empty process" of sociocultural evolution. This process no longer knows agency, and its self-referential mechanism of functional differentiation gradually has superseded other forms of social differentiation such as segmentation or social stratification. While these latter modes of social differentiation coexist with functional differentiation in modernity, they are nevertheless entirely subordinated to the communicative structure of a functionally differentiated world society (Luhmann 1987; 1990).

Based on these two different theoretical perspectives on modernity, Hartmut Rosa interpreted modernisation as a conflictual interplay between modernity as a cultural project and modernity as an empty structural process. Yet, while we can differentiate between the project and the process of modernity in logical and analytical ways, these two natures of modernity are empirically enmeshed, and we, therefore, can observe modernisation in historically and regionally different ways (Rosa, 2014, pp. 133–34). In Rosa's analysis, and here apparently resonate Jürgen Habermas' thoughts, in early modernity, a mutually stimulating relationship characterised the project and process of modernity, whereas in contemporary "high modernity" project and process have separated from each other and the structural advancement undermines its previous normative-cultural foundations (2014, p. 137).

In taking my theoretical inspiration from Rosa's dichotomy, I would suggest defining modernity in the singular as this self-contained social process at the macro level, the increasing formation of social relations through functional differentiation. The concept of multiple modernities, by contrast, tries to grasp the historically varied ways in which social actors, whether individuals or collectivities, have attempted to make sense of this structural transformation. The before-mentioned Islamic reform movement is just one example of this sense making in a Muslim context. In this way, multiple modernities represent different projects of modernity in whose normative-cultural

constructions, as Eisenstadt showed, religious traditions may play a role or not. When we talk about modernity in the singular and in the plural, we are apparently referring to two different levels of social reality (Jung, 2017, chapter 3). And it is at the level of social actors where we observe the formative struggles about identity, knowledge, and worldview in giving global modernity its historically different meanings. From this perspective, however, there is not one project of modernity, but many projects of modernity that have developed from historical struggles with both modernisation as an empty structural process and with the promises of the Enlightenment.

In the *Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia* (2007), Cemil Aydin analysed this construction of multiple projects of modernity via the shift in the visions of world order in Islamic and Asian thought during the era of high imperialism. In his analysis, Muslim and Asian intellectuals often subscribed to the major ideas of the European Enlightenment discourse. "Pro-Western liberal civilisationalism" marked the dominant reformist discourse among both Islamic intellectuals and intellectuals in East Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century (Aydin, 2007, p. 31). The idea of a "universal West" was initially at the heart of the Islamic reform movement. "One major characteristic of the predominantly Islamic discourse of modernity was its insistence on the essential compatibility between fundamental teachings of Islam and the qualities of universal progress and science" (2007, p. 47). For major protagonists of Islamic modernism such as the aforementioned Muhammad Abduh, Namik Kemal, and Syed Ahmed Khan, the promises of the Enlightenment and the normative idea of a universal modern civilisation were core features of their reformist thoughts. The first generation of Islamic modernists aimed at participating in this universal normative framework through the synthesis of Islamic values with the ideas of the Enlightenment (Jung, 2011, p. 224). With the subsequent political domination of Muslim regions by European colonial powers, however, these intellectuals were faced with a severe dilemma: "under the impact of imperialist politics Europe could not be embraced, but because of its advances in science and its political and intellectual liberties, it could not easily be rejected" (Jung, 2011, p. 228). Facing this dilemma, Islamic reformists blamed the imperialist Europeans for violating their own universal standards and developed an alternative vision of modernity (Aydin, 2007, p. 192). They fused Islamic traditions with some of the ideals of

the Enlightenment, initiating an ongoing discourse about a specifically Islamic project of modernity.

Eisenstadt emphasised this role of religious traditions in shaping culturally different projects of modernity. However, the historical path of the discourse of Islamic modernity clearly shows that religious traditions contributed to very different modern projects within Islam. This applies with respect to both intellectual and everyday imaginations of Islamic modernities. Farzin Vahdat, for instance, examined nine very different Muslim thinkers with South Asian, Iranian, and Arab backgrounds. In his reading they all “grappled with modernity and its relation to the Islamic world” (Vahdat, 2013, p. xx). However, these thinkers did so in utterly different ways. While the Indian Abu al-A’la al-Mawdudi (1903-1979) and the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) invoked romanticist ideas in constructing new forms of a holistic Islamic society, the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi (1940-2015) and her French colleague Muhammad Arkoun (1928-2010) imagined Islamic modernities as pluralistic societies in feminist and liberal democratic ways. Vahdat claimed that these very different modernities within Islam revolve around the idea of a new Islamic person predicated on the specifically modern notion of human subjectivity. They all, according to Vahdat, imagine the modern Muslim as an empowered subject with human agency, though some of them, such as Qutb, did so while morally condemning this core feature of modernity at the same time (2013, p. 265).

In our study of young activists in Islamic charities, welfare organisations, and youth movements, we could make similar observations. In our fieldwork, we were confronted with a remarkable variety in which these activists combined the notion of the engaged modern subject with their adherence to Islamic traditions. For some of them, Islam was more a convenient facilitator for achieving employment, social status, and friendship, whereas for others doing volunteer work in an Islamic charity was a pious endeavour. However, those “following the path of God” in their social engagement did so in different ways. They differed in their orientations toward ideals such as the neoliberal Muslim professional, the Islamic advocate of human rights, the peer-group oriented follower of the Muslim Brotherhood or the Islamist activist engaged in changing society (Jung et al., 2014). In short, within a hegemonic discourse of Islamic modernity we observed very different

forms of collective and individual religious identifications. This finding calls for a closer examination of the ways in which we can understand religion in the context of modernity.

Religion in Modernity

There is no scholarly consensus on the role of religion in the modern world. On the contrary, when we turn to the discipline of religious studies, we find leading scholars in the field who even reject the existence of a clearly definable social phenomenon such as religion. Russel McCutcheon, for instance, considered religion to be a mere conceptual tool without any ontological quality (McCutcheon, 1997). In Talal Asad's eyes, the origin of the modern concept of religion in the West rules out its universal validity (Asad, 1993, p. 30). In a similar way, several scholars oppose definitions of religion as belief systems because of the strong references to Christianity that underpin this definition (Matthes, 1993). Timothy Fitzgerald, finally, considered the notion of religion as a specific domain of human agency as nothing other than a myth (Fitzgerald, 2007: 9). In light of this ongoing conceptual debate about religion, Peter Beyer once suggested understanding modern religion as a global system of a specific form of communication (2006). With reference to Niklas Luhmann's modern systems theory, Beyer defined modern religion at the macro level as a global and self-referential subsystem of world society. The religious system achieved its operational closure through boundary demarcations with other functional systems such as economics, law, politics, or science. The concept of modern religion has emerged in this historical process in basing the recursive and self-referential communication of religion on the binary code of being "blessed or cursed" (2006, p. 85). Consequently, religious communication was conceptualised as faith, as the individually experienced belief in and contact with supernatural forces. In empirical terms, then, religions represent relatively stable patterns of religious communication, referring to specific sets of textual, symbolic, and ritual traditions – Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, etc. – ultimately defining what a particular religion is (2006, p. 89). Beyer shows the way in which cultural traditions have been reinterpreted in terms of modern religions, as likewise described in Tomoko Masuzawa's book *The Invention of World Religions* (2005). And it was Shmuel Eisenstadt for whom these world religions played a central role in the construction of multiple modernities.

Adopting this perspective, we can treat religion as a historically contingent social phenomenon whose conceptualisation has a temporarily limited yet in its modern meaning nevertheless universal applicability. Consequently, we are not dealing with a transhistorical concept of religion. The emergence of the above-described understanding of traditions as religions is inseparably embedded in the structural context of modernity. The universal applicability of this concept of religion is a matter of general recognition and not of its specific origin. The application of abstract definitions does not claim to capture the essence of things but is merely a provisional procedure to transparently organise thoughts (Lincoln, 2003, p. 2). In short, we refer to a specifically modern understanding of religion resulting from boundary formations among functionally separated subsystems of communication. As such, the conflictual border negotiations between religion and other systems of communication remain an ongoing process. This is observable, for example, in contemporary European disputes about the Muslim headscarf or the status of religion in public education. In these cases, it is the courts whose legal rulings can hardly avoid deriving from and applying publicly acknowledged definitions of religion (Reuter, 2014). In these public disputes, social actors translate the abstract communicative structures of society's macro level into applicable semantics of everyday life.

In sharp contrast to the discipline of religious studies, in the semantic practices of everyday life, people apply without hesitation a definition of religion which is based on those stabilised patterns of communication with the transcendental realm outlined in Beyer's study. In the empirical chapters of his book, Beyer shows in a number of case studies how intellectuals in China, India, and in predominantly Muslim countries reconstructed and reinvented their traditions in light of this new social model of modern religion. We can identify the conflict-prone process of modern religious reconstruction in the course of the Islamic reform movement throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consequently, the emergence of a global system of religion has provided the communicative environment in which we are able to identify corpuses of traditions with religious belief systems. How does this modern emergence of religion, however, relate to the assertion of modernity being a secular project?

Under the impact of theories of secularisation that considered the relationship of religion and modernity as a zero-sum game, the functional reduction of traditions to specifically religious forms of communication has been interpreted as a decline of religion in modern society. In lumping together various historical developments, the term of "secularisation," however, has encompassed very different meanings. William Barbieri, for example, suggested distinguishing at least among three of these different meanings concomitant with secularisation (Barbieri, 2015).

In terms of a historical process, firstly, secularisation describes the social transformation through which religion became just one realm among other functionally differentiated subsystems of modern society. This process has been visible, for instance, in border demarcation between religion, education, and science, in which eventually each domain has developed its own specific institutions. The adjective "secular," by contrast, defines specific social conditions and institutions under which religious communication does not play a role. Applying this second meaning, we speak about secular constitutions, secular courts, or secular schools and universities. To be sure, modern institutions in this sense may be secular or they may not be. The label "secular" does not entail being modern as such. Secularism, finally, represents an ideology according to which religion ought to disappear from the public sphere. It is this "secularist secularity" that, to a certain extent, has occupied a dominant position among European intellectuals' imagination of modernity during most of the twentieth century (Casanova, 2015, p. 17). In this sense the project of "Western modernity" was governed by secularist ideologies.

This secularist project of modernity, however, was a historical reality – if at all – only in some parts of Western Europe.³ In order to understand the relationship between religion and modernity more generally, we therefore need to turn our attention to other parts of the world and in particular to the "global South" (Okeja, 2015). In Muslim social contexts, for instance, religious traditions have played a much

³ Yet this does not mean that Europe has not experienced alternatives to this secularist narrative. In Germany, for instance, specifically Catholic projects of modernity played a visible role in the consolidation of the German state from its foundational phase until the end of the Weimar Republic (Weiss, 2014).

more visible role in shaping projects of modernity. As already mentioned, it was the Islamic reform movement that originally constructed the model for an Islamic modernity. In the idea of a socially active, well-educated, and religiously conscious modern Muslim, two of the most influential founding fathers of Islamic reform, Muhammad Abduh and Syed Ahmed Khan, constructed a religious modern Muslim subject in combining religious traditions with the global model of the modern subject as an agentic actor (Jung, 2011, pp. 242–46). In an anthology on intercultural discourses about modernity, to take a contemporary example, two Arab contributors point to this specific role of religion in constructing modern identities in Arab and other Muslim countries. While both authors agree upon the inherently Islamic character of many Arab projects of modernity, they utterly disagree with regard to the relationship between these projects of modernity and the idea of modernity as a universal condition. With his strongly anti-Imperialist jargon, the Egyptian Hasan Hanafi rejects outright the applicability of the very term “modern” to Arab imaginations of contemporary social life because of the term’s “Western” connotations in the Arab cultural settings. For the Tunisian Moncef Ben Abdeljelil, however, Islamic and Arab projects of modernity indisputably subscribe to the universalistic ideas of the Enlightenment in aiming at the improvement of the living conditions of humankind. Yet, they do so, according to Abdeljelil, in a multiplicity of different local and Islamic kinds (Ben Abdeljelil, 2012; Hanafi, 2012).

This observable dominance of references to Islamic traditions in the construction of the multiplicity of Muslim projects of modernity, however, does not exclude the combination of Islamist ideologies with processes of secularisation in its first meaning. This becomes apparent in the example of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Katajun Amirpur, for instance, argues that the Islamisation of politics in Iran has been accompanied by an increasing secularisation of the political attitudes among the Iranian population. The establishment of Islamic governance in Iran has resulted in a loss of confidence in religious institutions. Today, Amirpur argues, many Iranians would advocate the institutional separation of the spheres of religion, politics, and law (Amirpur, 2015, p. 11). This process of secularisation in terms of a functional differentiation between religious and political institutions has been clearly visible in the change of thought of previously prominent supporters of the Islamic

revolution. Already in the late 1990s, Abdolkarim Soroush and Ayatollah Montazeri openly advocated the institutional separation of religion, law, and politics by calling "for the full implementation of popular instead of divine sovereignty, an independent judiciary, freedom of expression, and the restriction of the religious establishment to matters of religious and moral guidance" (Jung, 2007, p. 27).

In conclusion, from the perspective of modern systems theory, religion plays an important but restricted role in modernity. Our understanding of religion has been moulded by the ongoing structural process of modernity, by the increasing dominance of functional differentiation relegating religion to a specific field of communication with the transcendental realm. While this structural development may be labelled as secularisation, this social process does not exclude the role of religion in constructing cultural projects of modernity at the same time. Individual and collective imaginations of modern life may incorporate religious communication, or they may not. There are religious and secular modernities, and this applies to both the so-called West and to Muslim regions of the world. The historical difference, however, lies in the forms of modernity which have achieved a relative hegemony in these different cultural settings. For more than a century, in Europe, this hegemony has been represented by varieties of secularist ideologies. Among Muslims, in contradistinction to Europe, the twentieth century has experienced a more pronounced struggle between secularist and Islamist imaginations in which the construction of authentic Muslim modernities increasingly was associated with Islamic traditions. It is the rise of this form of "religious hegemony" in Muslim projects of modernity to which I will turn in the final section of this article.

The Hegemony of Islamic Modernities

In the early twentieth century, for the German Orientalist Martin Hartmann (1851–1918), the modernisation of Islam could only progress successfully if the regional "national awakenings" would follow the "European" path. In line with his Dutch colleague Snouck Hurgronje, for Hartmann, the modernisation of Muslim countries was synonymous with getting rid of the impact of religious (Islamic) traditions (Hartmann, 1909b). Hartmann was a typical representative of Germany's anti-clerical intellectual elite whose ideological worldview closely resembled what Casanova labelled as "secularist secularism."

Born as the son of a Mennonite preacher in Wroclaw (Breslau) in 1851, Hartmann lived in Istanbul and Beirut before taking up the position of Lecturer in Arabic at the newly founded Seminar for Oriental Languages in Berlin in 1887. In his then widely read book *Der Islam: Geschichte – Glaube – Recht* (Islam: History – Belief – Law), Hartmann conveyed to the general reader the image of Islam as another example for the anachronistic resistance of religion against social progress (Hartmann, 1909a). Based on this opinion vis-à-vis religion, Hartmann eventually made the decision to leave the Protestant Church at the age of 53 in 1904 (Hanisch, 2000, p. xx). In Hartmann's eyes, similar to Snouck Hurgronje, a term such as "Islamic modernity" would have been an oxymoron.

To be sure, in the early twentieth century, secularist worldviews found their confirmation among Muslims too, although with a certain rather non-religious Islamic-cultural component due to their resistance against the colonial West (Sharabi, 1970, pp. 87–104). In the nineteenth century, the Islamic modernists had to compete with both secularist and traditionalist worldviews. In his book on the political and legal thought of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, Malcom Kerr came to the conclusion that in this competition, their "attempts to reform the Muslim world by returning to the pristine teachings of the early 'Golden Age' of Islam had failed in political and intellectual terms" (Jung, 2011, p. 235; Kerr, 1966). This alleged failure of the Islamic reform movement seemed to be confirmed after the end of the First World War. In particular, the foundation of the laicist Turkish Republic appeared to be a kind of proof for the secularist worldview of Martin Hartmann. The abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate (1922) and the Islamic Caliphate (1924) by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk resonated around the globe. As part of his iconoclast cultural revolution, Atatürk removed the article declaring Islam to be the state religion from the Turkish constitution in 1928, eventually turning the country into a secularist republic (Jung and Piccoli, 2001, pp. 60-61). In the same year, however, the Egyptian Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood and reinvigorated the ideas of Islamic reform by creating a populist religious mass movement. The Muslim Brotherhood continued Abduh's and Rida's transformation of the language of Islamic traditions into the semantics of an authentically modern social project with the help of organisational tools typical for the mass movements of the interwar period (Jung and Zalaf, 2019).

Founded as a benevolent religious society, the Muslim Brotherhood soon turned into a religio-political movement with national branches in various Muslim countries. Hasan al-Banna, a schoolteacher with a provincial social background, adopted the idea of the role of Islamic traditions in shaping an authentic modern Islamic order from the nineteenth-century Islamic reform movement. However, he shifted the discourse of Islamic modernity from an emphasis on morality and education toward the idea of an Islamic legal and social order. In Hasan al-Banna's populist discourse, Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) appeared as the core symbol of cultural authenticity and national independence (Krämer, 2010, p. 114). This nationalist-religious discourse attracted substantial parts of the emerging Egyptian middle class, the *effendiyya*, with their nationalist and anti-European sentiments (Eppel, 2009; Ryzova, 2014). The Muslim Brotherhood continued to spread the message of Islamic reform according to which the return to the exemplary order of early Islam would provide the aspired solution to the social and political crisis of modern Muslim countries. The authenticity of a modern Islamic present was therewith legitimated through its anchorage in the religious traditions of an ideal past. In the course of the twentieth century, this message achieved a certain discursive hegemony in the imagination of authentic forms of Islamic modernities among many Muslims.

With the concept of hegemony, or "methods of organising consent," Antonio Gramsci addressed the nexus between power and knowledge long before this became a core theme of poststructuralist and postcolonial thinking. Political negotiations and intellectual persuasion, according to Gramsci, construct hegemonic structures of knowledge (Hoare & Sperber, 2016, p. 125). These structures constitute a kind of "common sense" that expresses the cultural reality of a certain historical epoch (2016, p. 87). It is in this Gramscian sense that the ideas of Islamic reform have informed the construction of a specifically Islamic discourse of modernity. With this discourse, Muslim intellectuals dealt with the general modern experiences of alienation and anomie in their historically specific forms. They bestowed their imagination of modern forms of the good life with authenticity in relating them to Islamic traditions.

This specific discourse of Islamic modernity comprises linguistic and non-linguistic practices that represent a totality of what can be considered to be "authentically" modern. In the words of Ernesto Laclau

and Chantal Mouffe, the discourse of Islamic modernity represents a “totalising horizon” whose hegemony evolved through a historical process of “negativity, division and antagonism” (2001, p. 144). The historical evolution of this antagonism, today’s juxtaposition of Islam and the West, has partly been analysed in the previously mentioned book by Cemal Aydin (2007). It became its historical confirmation through a chain of events such as the First World War, the mandate period, the Second World War, the foundation of the state of Israel, and the subsequent series of Arab–Israeli wars. Throughout the twentieth century, we can observe the way in which some of the core ideas of Islamic reform contributed to the construction of a fundamental antagonism between “Islam and the West.” Referring again to the vocabulary of Laclau and Mouffe, we can observe the increasingly total negation of two projects of modernity based on the ideologies of “Islamic authenticity” and “secularist secularism,” the latter for a long time the hegemonic expression of European modernity.

Conclusions

The starting and ending point for this article was the significance that references to Islamic traditions have assumed in granting modernising projects authenticity in Muslim parts of the world. This observation of religion performing a core role as a modern identity marker in Muslim cultural settings contradicts both the expectations of the founding fathers of Islamic studies such as Snouck Hurgronje and Martin Hartmann, as well as some of the theoretical tenets of classical modernisation theory. I presented a theoretical way to tackle this puzzle in four steps. I first developed the conceptual dichotomy between modernity as a macro structure and modernity as a cultural project, linked to a critical appraisal of Eisenstadt’s theory of multiple modernities. In light of this dichotomy, then, I argued that we may still use the concepts of modernisation and secularisation in describing concomitant social processes. Yet, in doing so, we must distinguish between secularisation as an inherent part of social differentiation, in Luhmann’s theory of modernity as an empty structural process, and secularisation as an element of secularist projects of modernity according to which religion ought to, and eventually will, disappear from the modern public sphere. The precise role that religious traditions may play in concrete imaginations of modernity is then due to historical hegemonies which specific projects of modernity can achieve in ongoing cultural struggles and contestations. From

this theoretical perspective, the rise of Islamic modernities to cultural hegemony is therefore not an intrinsic result of Islamic culture, but the consequence of a historical process of discursive representations and self-representations in a chain of historical events between "Islam and the West."

How does this argumentation relate to the core tenets of classical modernisation theories? I conclude with four brief answers to this question. First of all, it confirms the critique against them perceiving modernisation as a linearly progressing process of social convergence toward a single model of social order. Historically, modernity has developed in ruptures, breaks, and contestations of the hegemonic aspirations of competing cultural projects. Second, religious traditions may or may not play a part in the constructions of these modern projects. A certain process of secularisation takes place in structural terms, but it should not be confused with the disappearance of religion from any social level. Third, modernity has increasingly been established as a "participatory society" at least in the sense of an inclusion of the masses in modern social orders. However, the inclusionary mechanisms of liberal democracy are only one form of participation and does not represent the modern blueprint as such. In European history, Stalinism and Fascism represent totalitarian ways of this inclusion of modern mass society in collectivist political projects. Different imaginations of Islamic governance add further varieties to this general idea of modern participatory societies in both liberal and authoritarian variants. Finally, as a structural social process modernity is and remains a global condition. This global nature of modernity, then, largely confirms one of the basic assumptions of classical modernisation theory. In this, multiple modernities represent historically different actualisations of human engagement with these global structural conditions that thus are both the result of non-intended outcomes of and the constraints for intended social actions.

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Journal Article

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Chapra (2002)

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Chapra, M. U. (2002). Islam and the international debt problem. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10, 214-232.

The Qur'ān

In-text:

(i) direct quotation, write as 30:36

(ii) indirect quotation, write as Qur'ān, 30:36

Reference:

The glorious Qur'ān. Translation and commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (1977). US: American Trust Publications.

Ḥadīth

In-text:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, 88:204 (where 88 is the book number, 204 is the ḥadīth number)

(ii) Ibn Hanbal, vol. 1, p. 1

Reference:

(i) Al-Bukhārī, M. (1981). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

(ii) Ibn Ḥanbal, A. (1982). *Musnad Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal*. Istanbul: Cagri Yayinlari.

The Bible

In-text:

Matthew 12:31-32

Reference:

The new Oxford annotated Bible. (2007). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Transliteration of Arabic words should follow the style indicated in ROTAS Transliteration Kit as detailed on its website (http://rotas.iium.edu.my/?Table_of_Transliteration), which is a slight modification of ALA-LC (Library of Congress and the American Library Association) transliteration scheme. Transliteration of Persian, Urdu, Turkish and other scripts should follow ALA-LC scheme.

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