

Examining A Post-Colonial Neo-Traditionalist Response to Modernity: The Case of

Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr (1947-2022)

By

Ahmed Mohamed Elsayed SAAD

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Abstract

This thesis challenges the long running trend within academia to characterise traditional Muslim responses to modernity as rejectionist, obstructive, or revanchist, and as such are overlooked. In correcting this characterisation, I examine the intellectual response to modernity of Yemeni traditionalist scholar Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr as a significant representative of this hitherto neglected trend. Though heavily critiquing European modernity as a colonial tool responsible for corroding communal, moral, philosophical and political arrangements, he proposes an edited modernity that rejects the need for Eurocentrism in the Muslim world. Drawing on a comprehensive analysis of Al-Mashhūr's writings, this study sheds light on how traditionalist Muslim scholars engage with and respond to the complex phenomenon of modernity. The analysis presented here reveals an emergence of a decolonial narrative within traditional Muslim scholarship; one that adopts conservative pragmatism and a negotiating tone to offer another way of thinking about modernity; neither rejecting or embracing it wholesale. In this new way a deconstructive and constructive engagement with modernity goes beyond the question of ‘what went wrong with Muslims?’. Confidence in tradition underpins this narrative, expanding its constituent sciences and showing its dynamic ability to engage without reverting to Islamism or compromise with other forms of modernism. These original findings correct our understanding of traditional responses and reveal an alternative modernity within the ranks of traditional scholars; one that is neither binary nor Eurocentric.

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

This thesis uses a modified form of transliteration system from Arabic to English, based on the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* system. It employs the symbol (') for *hamzah* and (‘) for *'ayn* (ع). The definite article (al) is in this format regardless of its pronunciation. For example: 'Abd al-Rahmān instead of 'Abdur-Rahmān. *Shaddah* is represented as doubled letter and (š) in the end is represented as a (h) as in *al- ālamiyah* unless in genitive cases where it is represented by (t) as in *rahmat Allah*. Diacritics at the end of words are generally neglected in favour of a *sukūn* so as to allow the following word to be fully transliterated.

Translations are as close to literal representation as possible unless literal translation leads to distorting the intended meaning, I have given priority to the meaning. This approach proved useful in translating book titles where the original Arabic is too complicated to be translated literally. I have kept the original words transliterated (without translation) when they were used as terminology and where the translation proved too long and distortive. In all situations, I have opted for remaining as close to the literal translation as possible. Unless otherwise is expressed, all translations from Arabic are mine.

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1. Introductory Chapter: Scope and Outline

This chapter sets out the justification of this thesis and highlights its importance and research questions. It achieves this purpose by pointing out a neglected narrative in the current academic studies of Muslim responses to modernity i.e. traditionalist narrative, and the implication of this neglect. It then moves to foundational discussions to justify its choice starting with the debates about the definition of modernity, the multiple responses to it within Muslim circles and the imbalance, generalisation and binary attitude of current academic studies covering those responses. This is followed by justifying the choice of the subject of this thesis and posing the research questions and the thesis' outline.

1.1. Introduction: A Neglected Narrative

Apart from a very limited number of recent works, a historical narrative that depicts traditional Muslim responses to modernity as ‘obstructive’, ‘disengaging’ and ‘antagonistic’ dominates academia (Gesink, 2010, Shepard, 1987). While restricting itself to a ‘reformist’ trend that echoed colonial wishes of modernisation following a European model (Gesink, 2010, Quadri, 2021, Hallaq, 2019), such a narrative, which is haunted by dichotomous outlook of ‘modernising reformists’ fighting the ‘stagnant traditional scholars’, not only misrepresents reality, neglects the nuanced and diverse approaches within the tradition, sustains a continuation of a colonial-orientalist narrative but also breeds stereotypes and contributes to Islamophobia and violence.

While changing the current academic narrative starts with shifting the focus to traditional responses to modernity and researching their nuanced engagements with the challenge; a

stepping stone to this large enterprise is to study individual traditionalist Muslim scholars' engagement with modernity such that we discover their variance and evolution in responding to the challenge, the reasons and the implications of that variance and evolution. It is essential however to look into the concept of 'modernity' itself, for it is debates on that concept and its corollaries that underlie the multiplicity of responses to its offerings. In what follows, I will discuss various approaches of conceptualising modernity, a discussion that precedes and justifies another discussion of diverse Muslim responses to modernity. These two discussions will be followed by a further justification of my choice of the subject of this thesis; a traditionalist Muslim scholar whose response to modernity is representative of a long-neglected narrative.

1.2. A Foundational Layer of Difference: Modernity and Ambiguity:

The debates around how to respond to modernity stem from the debates on the concept itself. One of the essential characteristics of modernity as a concept is its resistance to a process of definition and being elusive (Fūdah, 2015, Elvin, Nov., 1986, Khir, 2007). Despite those who attempt to conflate a depiction of modernity to a singular definition while still acknowledging its broadness (Jemberie and Kumar, 2019), various attempts to formulate a conclusive and exhaustive definition always fell short of one that can be agreed upon. To disentangle those definitional discussions, we can look at the approaches each of them has taken. This, I argue, should lead us to delineate an area to start working with and understand why engaging with modernity, amongst religionists in general and Muslims in particular, takes various shapes, tones and attitudes.

Modernity is now a lived reality rather than merely an academic discussion; it shapes people's

choices than just stimulating their minds (Appadurai, 1996), and its relationship with religion is a global affair; one that impacts people's lives and relationship with one another. World religions continue to be "the most long lasting civilizational institution" (Hefner, 2009). What shapes their presence in the world today though is not as much internal; rather, it is external challenges posed by powers like capitalism, the nation-state, new modes of knowledge and communications, and non-religious ideologies such as liberalism and secular nationalism and such powers constitute modernity (Hefner, 2009). Assuming, as Hefner suggests that such powers constitute modernity, the question remains, however, is modernity then a homogenous unitary concept that has developed through specific time or space? Is it multiple concepts that come together heterogeneously? Is it a continued unfinished project or a done enterprise? A European construct? These questions have been and continue to formulate the discussion and controversy around modernity and make it relevant to academic research today.

It is beneficial to state at the start that, the multi-faceted and much debated concept of modernity is essentially what has made a precise definition of the term difficult to come by. Talal Asad affirms this difficulty when he describes modernity as "neither a totally coherent object nor a clearly bounded one" (Asad, 2003 p.13). Similarly, possible eurocentrism of the term, its dependence on chronology –thus need for continual updating- pose another difficulty to the process of definition (Elvin, Nov., 1986, Smart, 1990).

1.2.1. Historical Approach:

One approach of defining modernity takes history as its mainstay trying to trace the historical origins of the concept. Bendix (1967) and Pippin (1999) trace the origins of the concept of modernity to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which witnessed economic and political changes culminating in the British Industrial and the French political revolutions and leading to a new world of ideas, a discontinuation of how societies used to function before via creating

new forms of intellectual and social organisation (Portes, 1973, Bendix, 1967, Pippin, 1999).

While acknowledging its being far from unproblematic, Wagner (2013) agrees that it is the most common definition of modernity. According to him the definition puts at the forefront a Western historical model that claims superiority and requires global diffusion (Wagner, 2013); something that may face resistance in other historical contexts. Calling modernity, a ‘glorious sunrise’, Hegel is cited by Jürgen Habermas to date it back to the Enlightenment (late 17th and 18th centuries), but extending into the start of the nineteenth century (Habermas and Lawrence, 1987), a view that is not far from the previous one.

Another attempt of tracing the historical start of modernity, differentiates between ‘the modern’ as an era; a historical stage which the Western society has entered around 1500 and ‘the modern’ as a description of historiographical, philosophical and artistic reflection which started around 1800 (Eiselein, 2006). This differentiation which links ‘the modern era’ to the printing press, the discovery of the New World, the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation while associating ‘the modern’ as a philosophy with a heightened awareness of the difference between the past and the present, complex social orders and heightened reliance on technology, innovation and the machine (Eiselein, 2006) seems to miss the link between the two; in the sense that ideas and the events responsible for them happen in synchrony. We may be falling in a cycle of circularity if we question whether ideas beget events or events beget ideas. Hodgson (1977) refuses this distinction and refers to a period of general transformations at all levels that extend from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century (Hodgson, 1977). Hodgson (1993) further refuses to include Renaissance within the actual transition to modernity because it is a falsification from a world-historical view point and equally to extend it beyond the eighteenth century because it confuses arbitrarily one or more phases of the unfolding consequences of the decisive event with the world-historical event itself (Hodgson, 1993).

This historical periodisation of modernity with the Enlightenment or even the Renaissance is refused by Dupre (1993), who describes modernity as “an event that has transformed the relation between the cosmos, its transcendent source, and its human interpreter” and insists that it pre-dates the Enlightenment and goes back to the earlier periods of Renaissance and the Middle Ages or even before i.e. it does not have a specific historical context; and highlights that it has a universal project corroding any culture that it comes into contact with (Dupre, 1993, Dupré, 2008). Dupre makes a further claim that as an active process, modernity “has not reached its completion” (Dupré, 2008 p.5). This attitude of superlative timelessness of modernity claimed by Dupré faces harsh criticism, as a tempered judgment that faults modernity as short on context and causes (Starn, 1996). Second, in addition to just offering us an intellectual outlook which is not new (Byrne, 1994), Dupré ignores the direct economic, political and social contexts of the emergence of modernity for his ahistorical hermeneutical synthesis. I can argue that significant ideas like modernity do not grow in a bubble; they interact with society, shape it and are shaped by it. Thus, neglecting its historical context and attempting a trans-epoch approach, jeopardises our ability to conceptualise it and as Pollack and Rosta (2017) conclude, it makes it inconceivable (Pollack and Rosta, 2017). Just as the historical start of modernity poses a point of debate, whether modernity has ended and was followed by post-modernity or it is still a continued unfinished project is another point of contention (Friedman, 2006). I will not discuss this further since our focus here is modernity itself and the aim of this engagement is to lay down the background as to why responses to modernity take variety of approaches and contain complexities.

1.2.2. Geographical Approach:

A second approach looks at the geographical dimension of modernity; is it bound with ‘Europeanism’ or ‘Westernism’ or is it a universal concept that emerges in any society; in other

words, is there one modernity or multiple modernities? Likewise, if it is European, does it claim universal application and how does that affect its faithfulness to the original changes that have led its emergence?

While Ferguson (2006) argues alongside the common view that “the modern is automatically connected with the West” (Ferguson, 2006 p.166) and Portes (1973) stressed before him that “modernity can be defined as the ideology of successful Westernism” (Portes, 1973 p.252), Wagner (2013) highlights that this European modernity was given a global or universal significance from the beginning; it claimed to have established the firm foundations upon which universal knowledge could be erected, namely, freedom and reason (Wagner, 2013). Despite being humanly shared principles, freedom and reason proclaimed by European modernity were presented afresh within its own framework, definition and desire for universal application. Appadurai notes that modernity as a theory desires universal applicability (Appadurai, 1996). The problem with this definition of modernity as European is that it presumes a European supremacy and neglects the possibility of other valid models. Acknowledging the problem of modernity as a global process rooted in Europe or as specifically European manifestation, Hodgson (1993) questions if modernity were to emerge in Islamdom how would that have affected the shape of the modern society, possibly producing a cosmopolitan one? (Hodgson, 1993 p.xix)

Chakrabarty (2011) refuses the Eurocentric exclusivity claim of the term ‘modernity’ as one that, not only neglects ‘early modernities’, but insists that modernity has to be a discontinuity project in order to qualify as modernity (Chakrabarty, 2011). Another criticism hailed by Elvin (Nov., 1986) blames the elusiveness of the concept on the Eurocentric exclusivity claims (Elvin, Nov., 1986). To that end, views from within social sciences that see modernity as

neither homogenous, singular and not even European are gaining currency (Bowering, 2011). These views argue that it is better to speak of alternative modernities than simply a modernity so that we can see the universal features of modernity and how such features were tropicalized or domesticated by non-Western cultures (Taylor, 1998, Bhambra, 2007). Western pattern of modernity, despite being prominent one, is not the only authentic modernity (Eisenstadt, 2000). Additionally, proponents of this thesis of multiple modernities believe that it settles the assumed clash between European modernity and religion (Smith and Vaidyanathan, 2011). Despite its novelty, the thesis of ‘multiple modernities’ is beset with the challenge of scope; by expanding the scope of modernity from one locale to many we are challenged by looking for more definitions for these ‘modernities’ rather than focussing on one. One may suggest looking for what is common between these multiple modernities to come up with an ‘archetypal modernity’, but such a suggestion faces problems of essentialism, comparison and particularity of each locations. Despite the importance of the historical moment and the place of origination, a better suggestion is that since Western modernity is the prominent and the most debated one, a search for its core components is an easier and more focussed enterprise despite the slight variations in scholarly accounts of these core components.

1.2.3. Looking into Components:

Turning to the modernity that emerged in Europe we realise that it has core components that are linked to society, economy, philosophy, politics and science all characterised by presenting a break from traditional ways of life, social and political organisation. As a sociologist, Giddens (1990) focuses on a list of “capitalism, industrialization, the nation-state, and the state’s monopoly on power” (Pollack and Rosta, 2017) as modernity’s core components. Justifying his choice, Giddens sees modernity as a shorthand for modern society or industrial civilization

and that it produces certain distinct social forms that are credited only to it (Giddens and Pierson, 1998 p.94, Giddens, 2005). It is these components, Giddens argues, which make modernity more dynamic than any previous social order” (Giddens and Pierson, 1998 p. 94). Not far from this account, Zapf (1991) counts three; “competitive democracy, a market economy, and an affluent society with mass consumption and a welfare state”(Pollack and Rosta, 2017). Zapf sees that these are the “basic societal inventions” (Zapf, 2004 p.2) and therefore worthy of the focus and highlight as representatives of modernity.

Focussing heavily on its philosophical components, Pippin (1999) suggests that this enterprise include; the emergence of nation-state as a political unit, claims for supreme authority of reason in human affairs, claims for the authority of natural science in the investigation of nature, the corresponding demystification of life, an insistence on the natural rights of all individuals above all to freedom and self-determination, the domination of social life by a free market economy, a belief in the perfectibility or at least the improvability of mankind and a commitment to a variety of virtues that originate in Christian humanism including tolerance, sympathy, prudence and so on (Pippin, 1999). Giving a mega perspective, Bhambra (2007) contends that themes of ‘rupture’ and ‘difference’ underpin all theories of modernity regardless their difference as to its nature, time of emergence and continued character (Bhambra, 2007). Highlighting another feature of modernity, Asad states that modernity is a “a project” or “interlinked projects that aim at institutionalising a number of (sometimes conflicting, often evolving) principles: constitutionalism, moral autonomy, democracy, human rights, civil equality, industry, consumerism, freedom of market and secularism” (Asad, 2003 p.13).

In a more comprehensive manner, modernity, in the words of Harvey Cox, “is constituted by 1) sovereign national states as the legally defined units of the global political system; 2)

science-based technology as the ‘modern’ world’s principal source of its images of life and its possibilities; 3) bureaucratic rationalism as its major mode of organising and administering human thought and activity; 4) the quest for profit maximization, in both capitalist and socialist countries, as its means of motivating work and distributing goods and services; and 5) the secularization and trivialization of religion and the harnessing of the spiritual for patently profane purposes, as its most characteristic attitude towards the holy”(Cox, 1984 p.183). Essential to modernity thus are; autonomy, material and technological growth, industrialisation, capitalism, subjectivity, secularisation and materialist worldviews, individualisation and decline of traditional hierarchies, human control of nature, political change and emergence of secular forms of political power, differentiation, emergence of new ways of producing and classifying knowledge and the construction of language and symbols (Hall, 1995, Smith and Vaidyanathan, 2011). We can thus, identify four main areas of the modern project; social, economic, political and philosophical; it is the changes that occurred in and the interaction between these four areas that brought the features of what we know as the modern society and thus constitute modernity. At variant degrees, these areas will feature in this thesis.

Another feature, that is less present in works of writers about modernity is ‘colonialism’; a tool through which European modernity was carried to other cultures and societies (Masud, 2014, Bhambra, 2007, Jameson, 2016, Friedman, 2006). Regardless of whether the idea of colonialism was marginal or essential to the thinkers of modernity (Said, 2003, Hallaq, 2018), the vehicle through which its ideals were presented to non-Europeans was colonialism, thus can be linked more with the sense of ‘Westernism’ and Western superiority. Discussing modernity without colonialism or vice versa leaves the modernist project short of a host of discussions and debates that are essential to the rest of its components and deprives it from the

claim of universality and superiority; an attribute which Wagner (2013), Ferguson (2006), Quijano (2007), amongst others, argue was its feature from the very beginning. Stating and laying out these aspects and features of modernity are of prime importance to conceptualise the multiplicity and divergence of Muslim responses to it.

1.3. Muslim Responses to Modernity: Binary or Diverse

The early waves of modernity were brought to Muslim societies in large part within a colonial project driven above all by economic and political considerations (Bayram, 2014, Salama, 2013). In a lesser part, however, certain circles within Muslim societies, like the Ottomans, were impressed with the European military and technological efficiency and material potency; a potency that became a door for introducing other components of modernity including secularism, rationality, progress and nationalism (Lapidus, 2014, Bayram, 2014, Duara, 1991). The most prominent event that marks the initial encounter between Western modernity and Muslim societies was Napoleon's French invasion of Egypt in 1798; an event that presented modernity as an external form of domination from the onset (Habti, 2016, Bayram, 2014, El-Affendi, 2001). This encounter and the host of transformations that followed it and were brought by colonial administrations in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries has generated variety of responses from Muslim circles covering a whole spectrum; from total adoption to total rejection and all degrees in between. Complex and colourful, these responses have reflected how outstanding fragmentation has become the main feature of Muslim thought following its meeting with the challenge of modernity (Taji-Farouki and Nafi, 2014, El-Affendi, 2001).

Despite the plethora of writings on the theme of Muslim responses to modernity, a large part of those writings is still haunted with a binary categorisation of adoption or rejection. For example, Lapidus (2014) talks of two principal responses; Islamic reformism and Islamic modernism before turning to the latter response to give it an elaborate presentation (Lapidus, 2014). Even in his limited discussion of Islamic reformism, Lapidus (2014) gives the highest voice to figures that identify more with modernism like Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) and later briefly bundles together apparently contrasting groups like Sufis, Salafis, Islamic liberalism and others under the very abrupt ‘umbrella designation’ of ‘Islamic revival’ (Lapidus, 2014). It is important to note that Lapidus’ work is an often-cited reference in the field despite its obvious limited approach. In similar fashion, Bayram (2014) starts off by mapping Muslim responses into modernist, reformist and traditionalist but ends up mixing or rather merging reformist and modernist and concluding in the same binary tone of adopting modernity or rejecting it (Bayram, 2014). Like Lapidus (2014), Bayram (2014) gives an elaborate account of the modernist and reformist discourses, which he acknowledges are extension of one another, and hails its pioneers like Abduh, al-Afghani and Sayid Ahmed Khan but unduly sums up traditionalists in three short paragraphs describing all of them as those who believe that there is no need for change and who gave less priority to modernity (Bayram, 2014). Other striking examples include Kurzman (2002), Hunter (2009) and Esposito and Voll (2001) where the focus is totally given to reformist or modernist voices leaving the traditionalist response with its possible variations and narratives, at best, underexplored. It is this imbalance that led Gesink (2010) to alarm us to the current of essentialisation of Muslim responses into the exclusive categories of reformers and opponents, a problem which is incapable of explaining variations and evolution in non-modernist views,

in addition to presenting one sided narrative (Gesink, 2010). There is, unfortunately, not many like Gesink (2010) on the academic shelves.

Another limitation in the current literature is their discrepancy of categorisation and distribution of titles. There is a level of arbitrariness in using the labels that we are left without explicit and demarcating definitions (Shepard, 1987). Islamic reformism, for instance, is a title given to the Wahhabi/salafi movement while the regime that cherishes and supports it i.e. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is seen as the best example of traditionalism (Bayram, 2014, Lapidus, 2014). In another place, traditionalism is equated with literalism (Hunter, 2009) despite the continuous criticism of traditionalist scholars to literalist movements who are seen as ‘modernists’; a title that has also been used for radicals and fundamental Islamists, besides their being literalists, in other places (Gray, 2003, Robinson, 2008, Armstrong, 2004, Bauer, 2021). In his oft-quoted work, Rahman (1984) places ‘Abduh, al-Afghani, S.A. Khan, elsewhere categorised as pioneers of reformism, under category of modernism, while still maintaining the same ‘binary’ tone held by his predecessors (Rahman, 1984).

A third problem is related to historical and geographical scope; most studies focus on Muslim responses during colonial times with much less focus on post-colonial Muslim world where the actual application of modernist ideas took place. Geographically, much focus is given to countries where political upheavals have occurred while some other countries that also witnessed no less transformations are much less represented. Regions like Egypt, Turkey, India, South East Asia and Iran feature the most in the literature (Hunter, 2009, Kurzman, 2002, Lapidus, 2014, Voll, 1994) while countries like Yemen, which went through the currents of modernity under the British authorities and post-colonial Marxist regime, are much less represented or almost out of the radar.

I shall dedicate the next chapter to a more elaborate review of the problems associated with the current literature that deals with Muslim responses to modernity; problems that make the need for more work to cover existing gaps and balance the current discussions poignant. For the sake of stating the problem in brief, I have restricted my discussion here to some initial observations that highlight the need for this thesis.

1.4. Why Al-Mashhūr: Justification for Selection

The presence of Yemen on the map of colonial powers goes back to 1839 when the port of Aden was occupied by the British (Gause, 1988, Bujra and Brehony, 2017). For the following century or more, features of modernity found their way into the British run Eastern Aden Protectorate and its surroundings as part of the colonial project; this included reformed education, state structuring, constitutional reform, political federation for the local sultanates, abolition of the Islamic courts and introduction of European ways of life (Hinchcliffe et al., 2013, Dresch, 2002, Harrington, 2014, Carapico, 1998, Al-Salimi, 2010, Maknūn, 2018). With the departure of the British, South Yemen came to independence and was ruled by a Marxist regime that adopted other ideas of modernity including nationalism, women liberation, radical secularism, materialism and privatisation of religion; and used violence against traditional scholarly elite marginalising them from their historical spiritual and social roles (Stookey, 1982, Naumkin, 2004, Talib and Brehony, 2017).

For centuries, the South Yemen region of Hadramawt has been the home of a traditionalist scholarly clan known as the Bā'Alawi who trace their genealogy to Prophet Muḥammad via 'Alawi a grandson of Aḥmad b. Isā himself an 8th generation grandson of the Prophet; who

migrated to the region from Baṣrah after 930 CE (Serjeant, 1957, Bang, 2003). In Hadramawt, the Bā‘Alawi *sādah* (sing. *sayyid*; a title given to a descendant of the Prophet) enjoyed status, spiritual authority and influence that extended beyond their homeland to vast parts of India, South Asia and East Africa for centuries (Manouchehri and Melvin-Koushki, 2008, Serjeant, 1957, Al-Hibshi, 2019). Through their focus on teaching, *da‘wah*, spirituality and social mediation, the Bā‘Alawi *sādah* solidified a trio of Shafī‘i jurisprudence, Ash‘ari theology and a spiritual Sufi order that carried their name; a feature that they attribute to be a definer of traditional Islam (Serjeant, 1957, Sinani, 2019). The Bā‘Alawis have attracted much academic interest in the recent decades focussing on their history, hagiography, social stratification, family networks and activities, scholarship, social and spiritual contribution to their communities at home and in diaspora (Edaibat, 2022, Sinani, 2019, Knysh, 1993, Ho, 2006, Bang, 2003). In the recent decades, the teachings of the Bā‘Alawi scholars have extended to the West as many of their scholars have visited Europe and North America in addition to considerable numbers of Western students who travelled to study in their home city of Tarim and returned to take leading roles in their respective communities (Sinani, 2019, Buxton, 2013).

During his life, Abu Bakr b. ‘Ali b. Abu Bakr b. ‘Alawi Al-Mashhūr (1947-2022) was a leading figure in the Bā‘Alawi school with strong media and social presence in Jeddah, active role in educating and leading the Yemeni society, established presence in South East Asia, Sri Lanka and India (Sinani, 2019) as well as a long list of published works some of which were dedicated to a direct engagement with modernity and treatment of some of its themes. A traditionalist scholar from Yemen, Al-Mashhūr witnessed the last twenty years of British presence in Aden and had a first-hand experience with the Marxist regime before fleeing persecution to the Saudi city of Jeddah in 1980 where he came face to face with Wahhabism (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 2001a, Al-Mashhūr, 2017a). Added to this, the post-colonial spread of Marxism in

many parts of the Arab world from 1967, with the renewed importation of its attached theories, led to a new wave of heated discussions about the role of Islam in public life and the relation between tradition and modernity such that calls to abandon tradition or reinterpret Islam to be able to join the caravan of modernity resurfaced formulating second wave of questioning the state of Muslims societies in comparison to the modern world (At-Tayyib, 2016). Al-Mashhūr lived through this post-colonial stage and was part of those discussions which shaped his views and were expressed in his writings. This background and long experience with colonial and post-colonial modernity, in addition to intellectual engagement with it through writings, make Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity worthy of studying as it fills a much-needed gap in knowledge as highlighted earlier.

Additionally, his position in the Bā Alawi school, being the founder of 32 *ribāts* (traditional Islamic college) and 178 education centres in addition to an accredited university that serve students from inside and outside Yemen, make his views impactful on his students, followers and the communities that embrace his thought, because they shape Muslim engagement with modernity in today's world. I argue that studying Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity is necessary for exploring an underexplored narrative, attaining a balance in the current representation of Muslims' engagement with modernity, probing how a traditionalist Muslim scholar perceives modernity in a post-colonial Muslim world and if the tone has changed. These reasons, amongst others that are emphasised later, not only validate this research but place it in a unique position to suggest changes in the direction of current academic studies of Muslim responses to modernity. At the moment of conducting this research, no other academic studies have been conducted on Al-Mashhūr, a point which gives originality to this thesis.

1.5. Research Questions

This research explores selected body of works of Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr (1947-2022), a traditional Yemeni Muslim scholar who engages with modernity in post-colonial Muslim world in an attempt to fill in the gap of academic works on traditional Muslim responses to modernity. Choosing Al-Mashhūr goes back to three main reasons; he is a traditional Muslim scholar who lived through colonial and post-colonial times and wrote about extensively modernity; his engagement with modernity may tell us something about how modernity is perceived and whether a shift in that perception has happened; he comes from a country which witnessed conflicting ideologies of modernity and a direct clash with traditional structures yet not presented in the current studies of Muslim responses to modernity, and thirdly, he is situated in a *sufi* juristic tradition which is not known for engaging this type of thought. One other reason why researching his response to modernity is important is that, unlike other scholars who start their engagement by the question of ‘what went wrong’, Al-Mashhūr questions the legitimacy of this question. Yet, he moves practically to dealing with modernity as a reality.

With this background, the research is not attempting to craft his model of modernity; rather, explore what he grapples with from the themes/components of modernity; thus, display that there are variety of ways of thinking about and engaging with modernity. The research poses an overarching mega question which is answered by engaging in three method questions.

The mega question is concerned with **whether post-colonial traditional Muslim responses to modernity take one shape; whether they are complete engagements with modernity or partial ones and why?** Answering this question will show that traditionalist Muslim responses

are more than uniform, static or obstructionist as predominantly presented in the current academic narrative. While this question requires multiple research projects to be adequately covered, its answer starts by engaging in a single case study, here being Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity, for that is enough to reveal the multiplicity of shapes if any. But while this question justifies why I am conducting this research, its answer is possible only through the subsequent questions of 'what' and 'how'.

The first of those questions is, **what is Al-Mashhūr's contribution to thinking about modernity?** What is it that he grapples with and does he have a model or a theory of modernity? Is his response philosophical, social, political...etc.? What dimensions and components of modernity does he engage with?

To answer this question, I analysed selected works of Al-Mashhūr which formulate the corpus for this research linking his ideas and responses back with themes of modernity to understand if he offers a whole structured theory or variety of ideas that engage with parts of modernity that he developed interest in or came across. Al-Mashhūr blames colonial modernity for destroying scholarly authority creating 'multiple Islams' (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2005c, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b) before engaging with each of these trends as products of modernity. In this sense, his recurrent engagement of 'the fragmenting' power of colonial modernity shows a Muslim response interested in 'decolonisation'.

Answering this question can help academics understand what areas responses focus on and what tone they adopt. This will also necessitate questioning his knowledge about modernity and representation of it, his language and symbolisms. Questions will be raised throughout the thesis as to why he chose to focus on certain themes and give little or no attention to others.

But this investigation of ‘choice’ and ‘focus’ as well as enquiry about his knowledge of modernity will require an investigation of his context and thus comes the second question; the question of biography.

The question of biography explores, **how does his contribution and thought connect with his context? What background does his ‘response’ stem from? How his background contributes and shapes his choice, language and engagement?**

Al-Mashhūr lived a life on the move, growing up in colonial Yemen and living through Marxism where religious scholars were attacked as belonging to the decadent past. Later, he moved to KSA where his *sufi* background brought him into intellectual confrontation with Wahhabism, which he describes as a product of modernity, before he returned to the unified Yemen dividing his time between Jeddah and Aden and finally settled in Yemen in the last two years of his life. This life, pictured and analysed in the biography chapter, formulated and guided Al-Mashhūr’s perception of and response to various themes of modernity like nation-state, liberalism, colonialism and its adjacent orientalism, secularisation, modern schooling, capitalism, materialism, autonomy...etc. and is essential for our points of departure. It is important to note, however, that he lived through a context shaped by modernity itself; where a fully functional tradition in a traditional world seems waning or extremely struggling at best. The aim of this question, therefore, is to question a critique/response for modernity in which modernity itself is the formulator; where modernity is the framework of knowing; where his response itself dwells within modernity. Does this mean he is not criticising modernity but ‘a’ modernity that is linked to Europeanism? Is there a possibility that he is creating a more ethical modernity?

Linked with this is a third question **how does he construct his argument? What is the shape of his response and what does his logic tell us about any shift in traditional Muslim responses to modernity?** Is his engagement with modernity as a reality an insider's one that identifies elements of faith that make it functional and accommodate a refined and more humane version of modernity? Is this part of what Anjum (2007) and Asad (2015) call discursive tradition; one that is characterised by its own rationality or styles of reasoning (Anjum, 2007, Asad, 2015). Are we to witness a hybrid response that combines a tone of reformism with the spirit of conservative traditionalists? Does this bid farewell to 'rejectionist traditionalist responses' that refused modernity completely? Are we to see an expansion or a reshaping of tradition to secure its survival?

In answer to these questions, the research looks into the language of Al-Mashhūr to identify any change in that language. In his response, Al-Mashhūr moved from refusing modernity to accommodating a better form of it. He continually blames the 'Eurocentrism' of modernity; so will that open the door for a non-Eurocentric one? His argument is characterised by 'pragmatism' and 'accommodation' rather than adaptation or rejection.

1.6. Thesis Outline

This thesis is made of an introduction and seven chapters including the conclusion. The introduction lays out the discussion through identifying the key issues and pinpointing the gap in the current research on Muslim responses to modernity. It also highlights the problem of defining what modernity is as one of the possible reasons why it receives mixed responses. With this background, the chapter justifies the choice of Al-Mashhūr's engagement with modernity as its focus and outlines the main research questions and their justification.

Chapter two explores the map of the current literature on Muslim responses to modernity in detail; an essential exercise to highlight the problems of the current categorisation, its binary tone and unbalanced focus. It also shows how selectivist and arbitrary it is before suggesting a suitable model that avoids the current problems and provide a foundation for the inclusion and exclusion process that justifies the selection of Al-Mashhūr.

Chapter three sets out the research methodology; the corpus selection, analysis, creation of codes and themes, relationships and networks of ideas and then narrowing the fields and structuring the intellectual project in light of the biographical context. In this chapter, I will also speak of my relationship with Al-Mashhūr and the possible bias that it may present for the research and how I attempted to minimise this bias. At the end of this chapter, the need for a biography; a context in which ideas are formulated, is displayed as necessary to understand the response as a whole and its content.

In chapter four, I highlight the problems associated with writing a biography and the necessity of such a biography for this thesis. In the rest of the chapter, I engage in an analytical biography that reveals the context in which Al-Mashhūr's ideas have been formulated, in synchrony with offering other narratives about this context to balance his narrative and get a better understanding of external factors and agencies that could have affected them. This chapter ends with themes of engagement that are based on the biography; an initial map that reveals how the biography guides his engagement with modernity in general.

Chapter five features Al-Mashhūr's response to the political face of modernity. It explores his engagement with colonialism, which is central to his project and understanding of modernity. Al-Mashhūr tackles many political aspects of modernity as consequences of colonialism, central to which is loss of authority (political and scholarly) leading to the emergence of political Islam, modernist Islam, *salafism*, extremism, weakened *madhabism*, and

sectarianism. At another level, Al-Mashhūr discusses the nation-state, democracy, political change through revolution as political products of modernity replaced the caliphate and contributed to the loss of authority. This chapter reveals the first part of Al-Mashhūr's deconstructive engagement with modernity and shows that such an engagement is informed and guided by his biography.

Chapter six looks into Al-Mashhūr's views on the philosophical side of modernity and his engagement with themes like the production of knowledge, atheism, autonomous reason, the relation between religion and science and the spread of materialism. It also discusses his views on orientalist anthropology as a tool of producing knowledge and modern education as a tool of disseminating modern knowledge and creating the modern subject. While this chapter presents the second part of his deconstructive engagement, it also shows how his background as an educationist shapes and guides his choices and responses. This chapter and the previous one reveal the centrality of a decolonising narrative to his project that rejects the Eurocentrism of modernity, yet also point out a pragmatic tone in that narrative.

Chapter seven focusses on presenting and discussing what Al-Mashhūr actually offers; his negotiation with modernity and proposal for Muslims to navigate through it. Focussing on the constructive part of Al-Mashhūr's engagement, this chapter lays out the features of his modernity, his justification for his project, its scope, purpose and areas of interest (also relevant to his biography and experience). It also discusses how he sees the role of Muslims in a global society, how he expands the constituents of the Islamic tradition to prove its vitality and relevance and how he responds to criticism. This analysis reveals also limitations to his project and highlights its nuances.

Chapter eight is the concluding chapter where the discussion is shifted to his logic and evaluating his project. The conclusion returns to the research questions, answering them and

discussing the limitations of the current research before suggesting further studies. It registers a shift to decolonisation that characterises Al-Mashhūr's project and points out his tone of conservative pragmatism. The chapter discusses the ability of critiquing modernity from within a modernity framework; where tradition negotiates its position and amplifies its resilience techniques. The chapter proposes new areas for engaging traditional Muslim responses to modernity and in an interdisciplinary way that ensures enclosure and integrity.

2. Muslim Responses to Modernity: Literature Review

This chapter comprises eight sections and a conclusion. The first six sections identify the multiple problems of the current literature covering Muslim responses to modernity while the seventh section suggests a typological framework that can overcome these problems. While serving as a literature review for this thesis (as there are no works written on Al-Mashhūr), the chapter supports the foundational argument of this thesis and offers an essential step to the process of inclusion and exclusion; another justification of the validity of the choice.

At the time of writing this thesis, there are no academic works in Arabic or English about Al-Mashhūr's engagement with modernity; a point which gives originality to this work. Apart from his own autobiographical works which will be used later in the biography chapter, there is one non-academic unpublished treatise by Al-Ahdal (no date) in Arabic which is a descriptive account of the author's personal experience with Al-Mashhūr and how he sees him as a teacher. This directs the focus of this thesis to review the current literature on Muslim responses to modernity in an attempt to identify the gap in the literature and justify the need for this research.

Due to the long lists of titles that cover Muslim responses to modernity (El-Affendi, 2001); yet, the repetitive nature and saturation of such literature, I have chosen to abandon a chronological literature review in favour of a thematic one that covers significant material on the subject and includes the main references in the field and writers that are always quoted, so much so that the work presented here reaches the point of saturation. In order to locate the literature hereinafter, I have used Google Scholar search engine, Birmingham University library services, Endnote online database, bibliographies of academic articles and books to widen my scope in addition to personal visits to libraries and international book fairs during

my travels abroad; this last one helped me obtain literature in the Arabic language specifically. I have used key search phrases such as ‘Muslims and modernity’, ‘Islam and modernity’, ‘Muslim responses to modernity’, ‘Muslims and the modern’, ‘tradition and modernity’, ‘traditionalist and modernist Muslims’, ‘Islam in the Modern world’, ‘Islamic reformism’, ‘Islamic modernism’, ‘liberal Islam’, ‘Muslims and secularism’ and ‘progressive Islam’.

2.1. Background

The confrontation between Muslims and modernity has engaged the Muslim mind for nearly two centuries and continues to do so especially as modernity has become a global phenomenon and discussions have expanded to include Muslims in the West; modernity’s assumed birthplace (El-Affendi, 2001, Murad, 2020). Even though writings categorising Muslims’ stances from modernity number in their hundreds, serious scholarly Muslim critique of modernity are still limited. There is a growing need for works within the Islamic tradition focussing on the assumptions of modernity and its evolution; these areas have not yet been duly covered (Abu-Rabī, 2002).

Unlike the case in the West, modernity was seen as an external challenge to Muslim societies, as it arrived on the vehicle of colonialism, surrounded by an army of orientalists and a host of ideas that caused sudden and irrevocable shock, followed by much intellectual and religious controversy in busy Muslim capitals like Cairo from the point of its arrival (Brown, 2015, El-Shamsy, 2022, Hefner, 2010). In a less common narrative, early debates and conversations of modernity are said to have been brewed in the presence of the coffee coming from the East; geographically part of the Muslim World. The famous Parisian coffeehouse, *Le Procope*, was frequented by leading figures associated with the French Revolution, like Jean-Paul Marat and

Georges Danton, who discussed ideas of the Revolution, while having this Muslim drink (McHugo, 2013, Lewis, 2002, Diliberto, 2018).

Whether this coffee trade led to any trade of ideas and introduced the thoughts of modernity to the world of Islam is not confirmed. This means we have to go with the more common narrative that the material strength of the modern West arrived to the shores of the world of Islam with Napoleon's invasion in 1798. This parade of power which, although surprisingly presenting new scientific and military discoveries, was not - at the time – perceived as a departure from the past or the tradition (Murphy, 2010, El-Affendi, 2001, Salama, 2013, Hopwood, 1998, Hefner, 2010). This background of early encounters between the modern West and the Muslim world featured central in the debate of whether Muslims should adopt Western habits and values to become modern, create their own modernity or decide on another course of action; and should always be remembered as it will impact subsequent discussions on how Muslims responded to modernity (Habti, 2016, Salama, 2013, Hefner, 2010, El-Affendi, 2001).

2.2. Selectivist Approach: Identifying the First Problem

One initial observation about how Muslims responded to modernity during its colonial or post-colonial stages is the ‘selective’ manner of dealing with its components at one level and its Western models at the other. Enamoured by the military power of the West, the initial reaction was to ‘select’ the military field as a space for reform and adoption of Western potency rather than a wholesale adoption of the modern West (El-Affendi, 2001, Lapidus, 2014, Hefner, 2010, Habti, 2016, Lewis, 2002). But ‘selectivism’ is like a slippery slope, once you are in, it never ends. With rulers aspiring for more military and industrial power, intellectual elites calling for importing the scientific and democratic West, the upper classes embracing ‘exotic goods’, fashion and luxurious life style, the scope of selectivity widened (El-Affendi, 2001, Hefner,

2010). In the post-colonial Muslim world, this selective nature continued to colour Muslim countries' choice of which Western model was the most suitable to follow in their modernisation process. (Habti, 2016)

If the first wave of Muslim engagement with modernity was characterised by a 'cautiousness' that metamorphosed into 'selectivism' before the latter dominated the debate over whether and what to take from the modern, this 'selectivist' approach continued to haunt the literature portraying Muslim responses to modernity. The selectivist approach starkly encompasses the bulk of literature and damages the credibility of its representation. Starting from colonial time, and beyond, a type of 'selectivism' was applied on the respondents i.e. those within the Muslim circles; promoting and bringing to the limelight those who have decided to favourably engage with modernity and marginalising, demonising or even oppressing traditional '*ulamā*' and branding them irrelevant and out of fashion (Trevathan, 2014, Bennett, 2005, Gesink, 2010, Jung, 2016, Lewis, 2002). For example, Bennett (2005) himself a selectivist, informs us of the remarkable friendship that bonded orientalist scholar William Muir, who viewed Islam as totalitarian, autocratic, intolerant and unadaptable to the march of humanity, with the modernist Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Bennett, 2005). In similar fashion, the British colonial administrator Lord Cromer (1840-1917) whose unfavourable views on Islam and non-Europeans are recorded in his book *Modern Egypt* (Mitchell, 1991), was an ally to the Egyptian modernist Muhammad 'Abduh and not only advocated for his return from exile in Beirut and permanent appointment in the Shura Council for Legislation, but supported his appointment to the *mufti* position, the highest judicial post in the country, despite objections from both the *khedive* and the '*ulamā*' (Adams, 2010, Elshakry, 2016, Gesink, 2010, Sedgwick, 2010).

This spirit of selectivism appears clearly in literature of highly acclaimed Western academics like Montgomery Watt (1909 – 2006). Watt's choice and presentation of Muhammad Arkoun

and Fazlur Rahman, who are both clearly modernists (Bennett, 2005, Hunter, 2009), as analysts of the present situation of Islam who have clear and authentic realisation of the character of the new world-view or identity needed (Watt, 1988) is an epitome of ‘selectivism’. In a manner typical of a Eurocentric, reductionist view of the ‘other’, Watt makes it his premise to claim that the defining feature of the Islamic tradition is ‘unchangingness’. He therefore divides Muslims based on their so-called position from the Islamic traditional world-view into ‘fundamentalists’ who want to keep that world view without a change and claim its sufficiency to address the world, and ‘liberals’ who see its need for correction and selects Rahman and Arkoun who have fully accepted Western historical criticism (Watt, 1988) as paragons of this well-hailed trend. He includes in the former, the *ulama* who are the custodians of that world-view and partial reformists who focus only on political and social aspects. (Watt, 1988) Watt’s decision to divide Muslim responses to modernity in this manner, his continuous claim of development being exclusively a Western construct, his failure to acknowledge Western colonisation of Muslim lands in addition to his neglect of the adaptive nature of Shari’ah and the multiplicity of opinions held on legal, intellectual and socio-economic matters all led him to conclude that the Islamic tradition is a burden to the Muslim ability to adapt to modern life, an old paradigm that is now critiqued by many scholars (Abu-Rabi', 1989, Safi, 2007, Salvatore, 2009). This made him not only a victim of ‘selectivism’ but also of reductionism and binary thinking.

Not far from Watt, Bennett (2005) whose book tops the works on the topic, is dominated by the same ‘selectivist’ approach. Besides a host of other problems, his choice to categorise Muslim responses to modernity into four strategies; traditionalists, neo-traditionalists, radical revisionists and modernists includes multi-layered problems. He selectively chooses Wahhabis and Islamists like Al-Mawdūdi and Sayyid Qutb, variably counted as Islamist, radical and

modernist (Lawrence, 1990, Lee, 1997, Voll, 1994, Lapidus, 2014, McDaniel, 2003), to represent traditionalists and neo-traditionalists respectively (Bennett, 2005). Without mentioning a single traditionalist scholar under the first two categories and abruptly defining the traditionalists as those withdrawing from Western influence, Bennett (2005) turns their focus to modernists with a relatively elaborate discussion in which praise is hailed for modernists figures like Sayyid Ahmed Khan and his ilk; not forgetting to mention their cooperation with the British and spearheading of secularisation and Westernisation of Muslim lands (Bennett, 2005).

On the same path, Lapidus (2014) *A History of Islamic Societies*, selectively narrows down Muslim responses to modernity to; ‘Islamic reformism’ and ‘Islamic modernism’, bundling under the first one a very colourful variety of groups many of whom are antithetical to one another like Sufi *tariqahs*, Wahhabis, Ahl-i-Hadith and others (Lapidus, 2014). After the short account dedicated to the first category, Lapidus (2014) turns his focus to Islamic modernism of which he speaks at length hailing the two famous figures Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849-1905) and crediting them for merging Islamic reformism with Islamic modernism (Lapidus, 2014) with no further mention of any other scholars from the traditionalist ranks that responded differently to modernity.

Selectivism is not confined to intra-book representation; rather, it goes beyond to direct and guide themes covered by whole works. Hunter (2009) *Reformist Voices of Islam* focuses only on the reformist response as the one mediating Islam and modernity and offering moderate discourses that ensure Islam’s compatibility with modernity and thus offering Muslims a solution for the challenge of having to choose between abandoning their faith or remaining on the margins of the modern world (Hunter, 2009). Although a few proponents of traditionalism are featured in the book like Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, they

are presented as reformist-modernists (Sonn, 2009, Noor, 2009), despite being ardent critics of modernity and widely regarded as traditionalists (Sedgwick, 2004, Al-Aktiti and Hellyer, 2010).

Another sourcebook in the field is Kurzman (2002) *Modernist Islam 1840-1940* which credits modernists for carrying out the necessary repair of Islam by self-consciously adopting modern values and leading the way to two successor movements which supplanted modernists in the 20th century; secularists who downplayed the importance of Islam in favour of socialism and other ideologies and religious revivalists who favoured an Islamic discourse before the emergence of liberal Islam as a third successor later (Kurzman, 2002 p.4). Similar works that follow the same fashion of unduly favouring modernists as the Muslims whose response to modernity is the only one that merits elaborate discussion include Lee (1997) *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity* which, despite some intriguing insights on the meaning of authenticity within the context of modernity, selects four Muslim respondents as examples of ‘seeking authenticity’ all of whom belong to the modernist trend; namely Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb, ‘Ali Shari’ati and Mohammed Arkoun (Lee, 1997). Another well-known title in the field is Esposito and Voll (2001) *Makers of Contemporary Islam*; a typical example of ‘selectivism’ which briefly brands traditional scholars with failure, withdrawal and ineffectiveness before introducing the readers to a list of nine “makers of contemporary Islam” who all identify with modernism and political Islamism without allowing traditionalists to speak for themselves (Esposito and Voll, 2001).

Even at the level of terminology, ‘selectivism’ continues to manipulate Western discourse about Muslim responses to modernity. Muslim responses to modernity are still labelled in terms alien to the Muslim context and borrowed from modernity itself; something that “functions as obstacle to understanding the actual people and the tendencies involved” (Shepard, 1987

p.307). For example, the term ‘fundamentalist’ is borrowed from an intra-Christian debate between Protestants, modernists and liberals in the 1920 United States (Rippin, 1997, Nasr, 2004). The very labelling of Muslims into ‘liberal’, ‘radical’, ‘reformist’, ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘traditionalist’ that ensued from their position towards modernity and hence the West needs to be revisited to offer indigenous, definite descriptions and meaningful labels rather than selectively using a language that was once used to describe the contending parties of European enlightenment and traditional theocracies (Trevathan, 2014).

This selectivist approach that dominates the literature towards such diverse responses that range between accommodation, adjustment, restoration, revival and rejection (Masud, 2014) shifts the focus towards one side of the spectrum, augments it by subsuming other responses in it and presents non-modernist views in a very reduced manner that ignores their multiplicity and overlooks their narrative (Gesink, 2010).

2.3. Non-exhaustive: A Problem of Scope

The shift of focus towards the modernist and reformist responses made the meagre literature on traditional responses inherently non-exhaustive and starkly limited. In addition to the abrupt identification of traditionalist responses as those that were unable to fathom the demands of the modern world; thus resisted and obstructed modernity without engaging intellectually with it (Boauod, 2016, Esposito and Voll, 2001, Abdul Rahim and Abdul Rahman, 2011, Bayram, 2014), the works dedicated to traditionalist responses suffer from limitedness of number, scope and focus on a fraction of traditionalists without mirroring their intellectual diversity.

Works that cover traditionalist response to modernity are limited in number and scope. One main work on the subject is Sedgwick (2004) *Against the Modern World* despite the obvious limitation of its focus on one fraction of traditionalists i.e. “those individuals and groups united

by their common debt to René Guénon” (Sedgwick, 2004 p.22) and the authors acknowledgement of the existence of many sorts of traditionalists (Sedgwick, 2004). Held by the same limitation, Nasr (2004) who, following a categorisation of Muslim responses into traditional, modernist and liberal, attempts to show that in its earlier stages “the *modus vivendi* of traditional Muslims was not reaction but a continuation of the Islamic modes of life and thought” (Nasr, 2004 p.105). However, this has changed from 1960 onwards, Nasr (2004) continues, when scholars deeply rooted in the Islamic tradition but also well-acquainted with the West, began an intellectual critique of modernity (Nasr, 2004). While Nasr tries to defend the ‘traditional’ trend as being the proponent of preserving the rhythm of traditional life and discrediting modernism, his account suffers great limitation as he focuses only on Western traditionalists like René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Coomaraswamy, Titus Burckhardt and Martin Lings (Nasr, 2004, Nasr, 1994) who all share a controversial perennial philosophy (Sedgwick, 1999); let alone his claim that the intellectual traditional response to modernity started with them.

Yu (2014) offers a selection of three Western Muslim thinkers each of whom represents an intellectual approach to modernity; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Bassam Tibi and Tariq Ramadan. His study depicts the response of Muslims as a minority in a context where modernity is seen as an internal challenge, which is different from other studies that investigate responses to modernity in Muslim lands where it was seen as an external imposition (El-Affendi, 2001). It also offers a comparative investigation of three variant modes of thought all of which are well grounded in “Western thought and philosophy” and raises a valid question of why such difference exists between the three selected academics even though they share the experience of Western education. The modes of thought these academics are said to represent are; ‘the privatisation or secularisation of Islam’, ‘the reconciliation between Islam and modernity’ and

‘confrontation between Islam and modernism’ belonging to Tibi, Ramadan and Nasr respectively (Yu, 2014). In addition to its selectivism and essentialisation, which Yu (2014) himself acknowledges, the study does not exhaust other Muslim responses which, necessarily, contribute in one way or another to these Western responses in addition to the fact that none of the thinkers is of ‘ulama background.

Despite the glamorous claim of talking about traditionalism, none of the above works refers to the plethora of classical scholars who criticised the early generations of modernists. Shaykh Muhammad Zahid Kevseri (1879 – 1951) and Shaykh ül-Islam Mustafa Sabri (1869 – 1954), amongst others, are prominent traditionalist Sunni scholars who defended traditionalist positions and continued to respond in writing to secularist and modernist interpretations of Islam specifically those of Muhammad ‘Abduh and his admirers (Hassan, 2016, Quadri, 2021, Hammond, 2022a). In his four-volume extensive study *Mawqif al-‘Aql wa-l-‘Ilm wa-l-‘Ālam min Rabb al-‘Alamīn wa ‘Ibadihi Al-Mursalīn* (The Position of Reason, Knowledge and the World on God and His Messengers), Sabri launches a searing refutation of the modernist re-interpretation of Islam, the rationalisation of miracles and the privatisation of faith as products of modern European philosophy and offers a lengthy defence of the Islamic tradition (Sabri, 1950, Hammond, 2022a). Even so, none of that merits a mention in the above works assumingly representing traditionalism.

On a related note, the attention given to ‘Abduh in Western writings on modern Islamic thought is too lavish if compared to the limited writings on his ardent critic Mustafa Sabri in whose thought, a very recent interest started to grow. At the beginning of preparing the first drafts of this literature review, I could not locate any academic papers specifically focussed on Sabri apart from a Master thesis by Karabela (2003) while for ‘Abduh I was able to access a rich list of articles and extended biographical works including Adams (2010) *Islam and Modernism*

first published in 1933 and Sedgwick (2010) *Muhammad Abduh*. This trend seems to change slowly with the emergence of budding interest like a brief mention in Hassan (2016), *Longing for the Lost Caliphate* and a more elaborate discussion in Hammond (2022b) *Late Ottoman Origins of Modern Islamic Thought*.

This focus on a fraction of traditionalists is no less problematic than the works that put their focus on traditional sufi brotherhoods' military resistance to colonial powers; a focus that says nothing about the intellectual engagement of traditional 'ulama and suffers the same problem of limited scope. Voll (1992) is a perfect example of this problem; as his discussion of conservative and traditional brotherhoods does not say anything about the scholarly contributions of those brotherhoods and their leaders, assumingly traditional scholars. On the contrary, its focus on the military resistance of European colonialism launched by Sufi leaders like Uthman dan Fodio, Ahmad ibn Idris, Muhammad Abdallah Hasan and the Sanusiyya (Voll, 1992) neglects the intellectual engagement of remaining traditional scholars of the time and claims an erroneous link between these brotherhoods and ideals of nationalism.

The current non-exhaustive literature on traditional Muslim responses gives credence and importance to this thesis as an endeavour to add to the few emerging genre that covers traditionalist scholars' engagement with modernity like that of Gesink (2010), Quadri (2021) and Hammond (2022b) to balance the current narrative and address the lacuna in the literature.

2.4. Between Dismissive & Assimilative: Caught in the Noise of Binary Responses

One other problem of the current literature is the binary tone that dominates it. Responses are still seen through a binary lens of "reformers and opponents" as Gesink (2010) critically notes, or "conservatives and traditionalists on one side and reformers and modernist on the other" as

in Elshakry (2016) or as “rejection of modernity vs. assimilation of modernity” as Abdul Rahim and Abdul Rahman (2011) suggest. In other places, it is referred to as “reformist-conservative” (Voll, 1994) or bluntly, “Islamist/fundamentalist vs. modernist/reformist” (Lewis, 2002). In the same vein, Hunter (2009) refers to a ‘liberal’ and ‘literal’ Islam whilst sustaining the use of ‘reformist/conservative’ (Hunter, 2009). This polarisation of responses noted by Bennett (2005) is rooted in an underlying assumption that the discussion has to be based on a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to the introduction of elements of modernity, creating categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims who answer yes and no respectively (Bennett, 2005). This polarisation is clear in Moten (2011) discussion which divides the debate over modernity between traditionalists whose rejection for the West, as he argues, extended to everything including science and technology and reformers who admired the role of reason and science but questioned their ontological and epistemological underpinnings (Moten, 2011 p.7). Not only does Moten (2011) fail to depict the nuances of various traditional responses, but bundles traditionally trained scholars together with Taliban movement on one hand and makes no mention of any traditional scholar while naming Afghani, ‘Abduh, Iqbal and other figures of reformism, in an obvious bias.

It is not clear whether this binary tone is a result of the aforementioned problem of selectivism or one of its causes. What is evident though is that it is framed “in terms of reform/revival or lack thereof” (Mosaad, 2022) which is a modernist framework itself. This binary model crept into the analyses of modernity arising within the tradition also (El-Affendi, 2001). Scholars asked either ‘how much can be borrowed from modernity’ or ‘how much can remain from tradition?’ (El-Affendi, 2001); rather than attempting to overcome the question of comparison. Writings on Muslim responses have thus usually arisen within the framework of choosing the world of either Mecca or mechanisation (Masud and Salvatore, 2009) and not examining the

context of the emergence of modernity and overcoming the question of comparison. It was what Roy (1994) calls a problem of comparativism; “one that tends to take one of the elements of the comparison as the norm for the other, finding that there is either a resemblance or lack of one, but never questioning the original configuration” (Roy, 1994 p.8)

2.5. Difficulty of Pigeonholing: A Problem of Order:

The above problems are surpassed by a larger one; the unjustified categorisation of Muslim responses in which the categories themselves lack definition and remain ambiguous. In many situations, such labels are conflated and confused with one another. Although used frequently, the label ‘reformist’ lacks real definition. How can we differentiate a “reformist” from a “modernist” in light of Kurzman (2002) confession that the latter’s boundaries are imprecise yet characterised by adoption of modern values (Kurzman, 2002)? But ‘modern’ values are also adopted by reformists as Esposito and Voll (2001) contend in their use of the label to refer to a variety of different individuals including Rifa’ah Al-Tahtawi, Muhammad ‘Abduh, Kemal Ataturk and Anwar Al-Sadat (Esposito and Voll, 2001). At the same time, how can we understand the categorisation of Wahhabism as “traditionalist” movement (Bennett, 2005) while Hefner (2010) and Makris (2007) label it as “reformist”?

How can progressive be differentiated from liberal if both seek ‘to transform unjust societies into just ones’ (Bennett, 2005 p.24). Also, if both of these labels describe the ‘modernist’ movement, will it be possible to group them, or use them to refer to ‘fundamentalists’ who are described by Lawrence (1990) as moderns but not modernists? Lawrence (1990) justifies his differentiation by contending that moderns are universalists while modernists are relativists (Lawrence, 1990) forgetting that modernity itself claims universality and supremacy over all other epochs and that his differentiation between modernity and modernism is problematic

(Gray, 2003, Wagner, 2013, Appadurai, 1996). Yassine (1998) questions the existence of any clear-cut line between secularism and rationalism, both characteristic of modernists on one side and fundamentalism on the other; concluding that both believe in something absolute be it accessibility of absolute truth or the impossibility of absolute knowledge of truth; rather absolute rules for seeking knowledge (Yassine, 1998).

The labels, ‘traditionalist’ and ‘fundamentalist’ are also applied interchangeably without clear justification and, despite differences, with great ambiguity. Rippen (1997) notes that opposition to Western ways is perceived, by some, to be the most important feature that unifies fundamentalists. He continues to observe that a conflation happens in the use of these labels as Wahhabis who are termed ‘fundamentalists’ may be labelled by other scholars as ‘neo-traditionalists’ (Rippin, 1997 p.38). This confused use of terms is opposed by Nasr (2004) who writes that “it would be the greatest error to fail to distinguish between the traditionalists and the “fundamentalists” and to include anyone who wishes to preserve the traditional Islamic way of life and thought in the “fundamentalist” category. It would be as if in contemporary Catholicism one were to call Padre Pio and Mother Teresa “fundamentalists” because they insisted on preserving traditional Catholic teachings” (Nasr, 2004). In a similar fashion, Bosca (2014) decides to put under the label ‘salafism’, a term appropriated by Wahhabism (Abou El Fadl, 2017), any group for whom Islamic tradition is central and revelation is the only criteria of truth; this includes, mystics, traditionalists, philosophers who support the tradition alongside Wahhabis, Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic State and figures like Afghani, ‘Abduh, Al-Sanusi and Rashid Rida (Bosca, 2014). Elsewhere in this chapter, I have highlighted the error of such generalised labelling and that to identify such groups with tradition rather than with modernity is flawed. In addition, when modernist reformist groups (including Islamists) are faced with the diversity of tradition, their modernist conviction that Islam was a harmonious totality leads

them to deal with the past in a highly selective and almost revisionist manner and choose an imaginary conceptualisation of it (Tayob, 2009).

Absence of justification continues to be witnessed in Bustami Khir's quick summary of the different trends of Muslim responses to modernity; he points out three main trends that can summate Muslim intellectual engagement with modernity: the assimilative, who accept modernity uncritically as their parameter of interpreting Islam and try to reinterpret the faith in light of Western modern paradigm, the dismissive, who refuse modernity and prefer a return to the pre-modern tradition, and the challenging, who critically look at both and advocate a renewal of Islam without losing its original form (Khir, 2007). Descriptive and generalised rather than analytical, this categorisation does not really give a full account of what falls underneath each of these trends and the various degrees of sub-categories of each let alone the absence of any examples.

Abdul Rahim and Abdul Rahman (2011) offer two binary categories; the first label of 'rejection of modernity' vouchsafed upon the Wahhabi movement, traditional scholars, traditional and religious authorities, Sufi groups and, vaguely, the vast majority of those who have not been exposed to modern education (Abdul Rahim and Abdul Rahman, 2011). In addition to using the label so loosely and applying it to opposing groups without any justification, it commits a mistake of claiming that those who rejected modernity have not been exposed to modern education. This neglects traditionalist thinkers like Sayyed Hossein Nasr, William Chittick, Rene Guenon and others "trained in Western-style educational organisations" (Nasr, 2004 p.108). The second label of 'assimilation of modernity' includes secular modernists who favoured Western ideas of science and civilisation and rejected Islamic civilisation like Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Taha Husayn (1889-1973), 'Ali 'Abd al-Rāziq and the Islamic modernists who undertook the task of modernising to a limited degree like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his

student Muhammad ‘Abduh who are drawn as if they were the ‘Muslim Martin Luthers’ using the words of Brown (2015). This second label does not trace the intellectual genealogical link between what it calls secular modernists and Islamic modernists; a link observed by Adams (2010) and De Bellaigue (2017) who list Taha Husayn and ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Rāziq, among others as the young modernists, directly influenced by and blindly following ‘Abduh and his modernising zeal; one that was not indeed limited; rather put him in direct cooperation with colonial powers (Adams, 2010, Brown, 2015, Elshakry, 2016, Sedgwick, 2010). In addition, it does not justify placing Sayyid Ahmad Khan within the ranks of secular modernists; as he is seen as a key figure of Islamic modernism alongside Afghani and ‘Abduh (Tahir, 2011, Ahmad, 1967, Kurzman, 2002, Lapidus, 2014, Hunter, 2009).

Trevathan (2014) identifies three tendencies towards modernity; ‘traditional classical Islam’, ‘Islamic modernists’ and ‘reformist secular modernists’. Under the umbrella of ‘Islamic modernists’, he lists a wide variety of “modernists, reformists, fundamentalists and extremists” (Trevathan, 2014 p.125). Even though, he is right in observing an underlying tone of succumbing to methods and terms of modernity that links these very divergent groups like modernists and radical Islamists, he does not detail the core ideas of each group distinctly and he justifies the designation by a controversial premise that modernity is defined as reason, science and technology, a definition that builds on a modernist claim. He would have fared better were he to justify his designation by a common denominator of attacking traditional scholarship and abandonment of their way as obsolete (Walbridge, 2011). Moreover, he does not explain what he actually means by his labels of ‘revivalist’ and ‘reformist’, ‘fundamentalist’ and ‘extremist’ and what are the actual differences between them. In similar vein, his labelling conveys “an implicit bias or value judgment” (Shepard, 1987 p.307).

This tendency of a tripartite categorisation, as observed by Rippin (1997), dominates academia in describing the more complex Muslim responses. It includes; traditionalists who accept the full authority of the past and reject any change, modernists who subject religion to change and fundamentalists who use “the authoritative sources of the past to legitimise changes in the present day” (Rippin, 1997 p.29). The simplification of this categorisation does not allow a full understanding of the nuances of the categories and subsumes diverse groups (Taji-Farouki and Nafi, 2014) preventing us from placing individuals in their respective categories with ease in addition to seeing fundamentalists as a category separate from modernists, a problem which has been discussed before. Rippin himself acknowledges that people in life situations “can rarely, if ever, be fitted neatly into one position or the other” (Rippin, 1997 p.28)

Abdel Wahhab El-Affendi offers a broader categorisation made of four general reactions; those who embraced modernity wholeheartedly like Sayyid Ahmed Khan, those who rejected it completely and a modernising or Islamising trends in between (El-Affendi, 2001). While this categorisation is too loose, El-Affendi (2001) does not give examples of those who rejected modernity completely sufficing with that brief allusion to them and concluding that, it is essential for Islam’s return to life as a living religion to subject itself to the pressure of modernity taking the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran as a mark of that return (El-Affendi, 2001); a return that is itself on the contentious modernist terms. El-Affendi (2001) categorisation possibly informed Amineh (2007) who offers four labels for the reaction to Western modernity; modernistic imitation of the West like that of Ataturk, revitalising tradition as in Afghani and ‘Abduh case, combining reconsideration of tradition and imitation of the West simultaneously as in the case of Muslim Brotherhood and Khomeini and finally inventing a new conception of religion that fits the continuous change as exemplified by Arkoun, Soroush and Nasr Abu Zeid (Amineh, 2007). This categorisation makes no mention of a traditional

response and that can be understood in light of its discussion of political Islam but it is not justified in missing the intellectual lineage between Afghani and ‘Abduh on one side and the Muslim Brotherhood on the other; the latter being the intellectual inheritors of the former and their founder Hasan al-Banna is arguably a modernist (Kramer, 2010, Frampton, 2018).

2.6. A Lacuna in The Literature

It is important to note that the above problems of selectivism, non-exhaustiveness, binary presentation and confused or loose pigeonholing are not distinct in the literature; rather, experienced synchronically. The current literature suffers from some or all of them at different degrees. It is not clear whether they possess a consequential relationship or are parallel to one another, but that enquiry is beyond the focus and scope of this chapter. What is evident though is the existence of a lacuna, inaccuracy and lack of symmetry caused by the ample description given to modernity and modernist attitudes so much so that ‘tradition’ and ‘traditional’ are simply defined as ‘not modernity’. Absence of symmetry and presence of inaccuracy in between ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ is best described in the words of Portes: “the contrast between comprehensive descriptions of what modern orientations are like and the stereotyped analysis of tradition arises in part from a closer familiarity with the former” (Portes, 1973 p.251)

This lack of symmetry can be seen in many works but is perhaps characterised best by Rippin (1997) who although offering at least five representations of the modernist trend and two representatives of the fundamentalist trend, discards the traditionalist group, vaguely as a set of “many of the learned scholars” with no real detail offered. In the same vein, while the modernist and radical views are amply described and their narratives are presented in detail,

traditionalist and neo-traditionlist occupy around half a page without any tangible details (Rippin, 1997).

The inaccuracy and bias in the distribution of labels is clear in the frequent presentation of the modernist attitude as the middle path between rigid traditionalism and radical Islamism, forgetting that ‘radical Islamism’ is part of the modernist trend (Armstrong, 2004) and confusing of the term ‘modern’ with the term ‘moderate’ (Nasr, 2004). Across the literature, there is an air of the arbitrary in the using of labels to the level that we are left without explicit and demarcating definitions (Shepard, 1987). At another level, categorisations neglect the intellectual lineage between different trends. The absence of such important elements contributes to making disastrous mistakes in labelling different responses.

2.7. Overcoming Pigeonholes: A Suggested Typological Framework

The mosaic of Muslim responses towards the challenge of modernity can be observed through the lens of the following thick description by Geertz (1971): ““How do men of religious sensibility react when the machinery of faith begins to wear out? What do they do, when traditions falter?” They do, of course, all sorts of things. They lose their sensibility. Or they channel it into ideological fervour. Or they adopt imported creed. Or they turn worriedly in upon themselves. Or they cling even more intensely to the faltering traditions. Or they try to rework those traditions into more effective forms. Or they split themselves in half, living spiritually in the past and physically in the present. Or they try to express their religiousness in secular activities. And a few simply fail to notice their world is moving or, noticing, just collapse” (Geertz, 1971 p.3).

It is a daunting task to encompass in detail such a huge variety of responses of people with different experiences, living under different conditions and challenges to a complicated and

ever-changing ideology like modernity. Diverse to the point of fragmentation, each response will be an interpretation that has its own emphasis and point of departure (Yu, 2014, Taji-Farouki and Nafi, 2014, Masud, 2009). Yet, in order to have a practical benefit and move beyond the mere theorisation and restrictive descriptions, it is necessary for this literature review to suggest a typological framework as a starting point for locating Al-Mashhūr. This will confirm the multi-layered gap highlighted above and serves as a starting point to trace the trajectory of his engagement with modernity; whether changes have occurred to the trend he belongs to and the implications of that.

William E. Shepard (1987) is to be credited for a more comprehensive categorisation. He uses ‘ideological orientation’ as his point of departure and categorises Muslim “responses to the Western impact and proposals for rehabilitating Muslim history” under five main labels; secularisation, Islamist modernism, radical Islamism, traditionalism and neo-traditionalism. He further divides each of the last two ideological orientations into ‘adaptationist’ and ‘rejectionist’. His valuable discussion of these responses is cemented by an attempt of amassing scholarly consensus for his categorisation. He quotes other academic attempts and cross links their categories to his pentagonal model. The following table is a recreation that summarises those attempts using Shepard’s as a default:

	Secularism	Islamic Modernist	Radical Islamism	Traditionalism		Neo-Traditionalism	
				Rejectionist	Adaptationist	Rejectionist	Adaptationist
Leonard Binder (5)	Secularism	Modernism	Later Fundamentalism	Early Fundamentalism			Traditional Islam
John Esposito (4)	Secularism	Islamic Reformists	Neo- Traditionalist			Conservative	
H. Mintjes (4)	Secularism	Modernism	Fundamentalism	Traditionalism			
Stephen Humphrey (4)	Secularism	Modernism		Traditionalism		Fundamentalism	
Yvonne Haddad (3)	Accultuationist		Neo- Normativists	Normativist		Neo- Normativists	
Fazlur Rahman (2)		Modernism (forms)	Neo-Revivalism Neo- Fundamentalism				
John Voll (4)	Adaptionist		Fundamentalism		Conservative	Fundamentalism	Adaptionist

Figure 1

Shepard (1987) acknowledges the multi-layered problem that faces some current labels and make them obstacles rather than a means of understanding; they are used without explicit definitions, lump together differing groups and convey bias or value judgment (Shepard, 1987); many such problems and others I have elaborated earlier in this chapter. Yet, he stresses also the difficulty of making sense of a vast and complex area such as the modern Muslim world unless its manifold phenomena are reduced into a manageable number of categories with suitable designations; so it is a matter of how to use labels rather than a question of using them (Shepard, 1987). In addressing the identified challenges, Shepard (1987) promises to engage in a quest for suitable labels and understanding those who fall under them (Shepard, 1987). Practically, he offers a typology of “ideological orientations” with labels and sub-labels that are not radically novel but, he rightfully contends, reflect “a fair degree of scholarly consensus but it is hoped will refine, clarify and at some points modify it” (Shepard, 1987 p.307). As a suggestive procedure, Shepard (1987) recommends thinking of the types offered as analytical constructs which may or may not correspond in detail to actual cases but help analyse large number of cases (Shepard, 1987). This, in addition to not presenting them as boxes or pigeon-holes, is intended to minimise the dangers of labelling (Shepard, 1987). Thus, the responses are presented as “points on a two dimensional spectrum, one axis of which we may label as ‘Islamic totalism’ and the other as ‘modernity’” (Shepard, 1987 p.307). He does point out that ‘Islamic totalism’ means a tendency to view Islam as a total way of life with guidance for political, economic and social behaviour and ‘modernity’ means a tendency to embrace modern offerings of material technology, social organisation, political arrangement, progress, change and the remaining ideals of modernity (Shepard, 1987).

Shepard’s spectrum serves as an indicator telling us the degree to which each of his five categories (secularism, Islamic modernism, radical Islamism, traditionalism and neo-

traditionalism) contain components of Islam and modernity, whether their overarching reference point is Islam or modernity and how their claims of belonging to each reflect in their ideological choices (Shepard, 1987). In some places he makes some controversial claims. For instance, labelling Turkish secularism as ‘neutral’ (Shepard, 1987) is contentious if we consider that the banning of the call to prayer, the fezzes, the veil and the wholesale secularisation and Westernisation are counted as manifestations of radical secularism (Mishra, 2012, Lapidus, 2014). However, his description of the ideological orientations is accurate and, to a great deal, holds up to the commitment he made at the beginning of his paper. In some places, it suffers from the same problem of limited coverage and thorough and balanced presentation of traditional Islam. He offers an elaborate discussion of secularism, Islamic modernism and radical Islamism (which I consider an extension of modernist thought) over eight pages, but hurriedly covers traditionalism and neo-traditionalism with their sub-types in two. Despite being better placed in showcasing that traditionalism and neo-traditionalism contain diverse groups and nuances, Shepard (1987) model is still severely limited in its discussion and scope.

To make the best use of Shepard’s model, I will adopt its ideological orientation as my core typology but will fine tune two of its labels (‘secularism’ into ‘modernism’ and ‘Islamic modernism’ into ‘reconciliationism’) and modify it to reflect a multi-layered framework with a higher layer called, ‘attitude styles’ and a lower layer called ‘action styles’ with ideological orientations in between. By ‘attitude styles’, I mean the overarching direction that describes the intellectual attitude of the said types and by ‘action styles’, I mean the practical outcome of the said types engagement with modernity. In addition to showing the attitudes and actions displayed by these types, this multi-layered framework, will reveal the intellectual link between seemingly different groups and, in doing so, overcome a deficiency in the current categorisations. As Yu (2014) describes: “Every interpretation should have its own emphasis

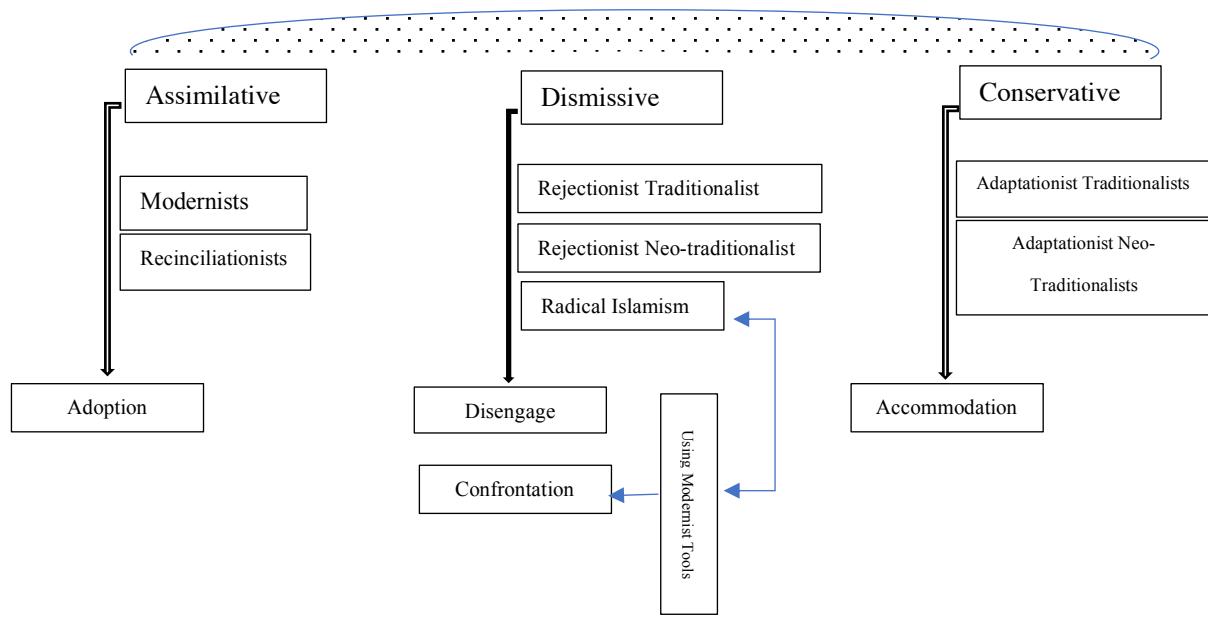
or specificity. However, these interpretations may share a similar direction towards modernism and the differences be only a matter of degree, which in turn constitute their particularity” (Yu, 2014 p.15).

Absence of these layers of ‘attitude’ and ‘action’ styles disillusion the current literature and multiplies the possibilities of mixing very different responses. In my lectures, talks and discussions with average Muslims, they express surprise in hearing that ‘radical Islam’ for example identifies more with ‘modernism’ or even ‘secularism’ rather than tradition; a conclusion which has been explained and evidenced earlier in this chapter and will be discussed more hereinafter. I contend that this is caused by the absence of an overarching framework of attitude styles. Scholars have confirmed this conclusion; as in Humphreys’ words describing Sayyid Qutb as “militantly Fundamentalist in tone, Modernist in content” (Humphreys, 1979 p.6) and Shepard’s (1987), observation that radical Islamism’s tendency “to view Islam as a system is modern” (Shepard, 1987 p.316).

My changing some of the labels makes them more reflective of the core claim of their respective ideologies. For example, those who take modernism as their reference point, regardless of the banner they gather themselves under be it secularist, nationalist, liberal, or progressive, will be called ‘modernists’ (Mura, 2012) since their core principles are taken directly from modernity. Similarly, those who fashion an Islam according to the demands of modernity using an apologetic osmosis to elect new meanings and referents produced originally within European thought and insisting on Islam’s compliance with modernity (Hammond, 2022a, Brown, 2015) will be called ‘reconciliationists’; they are elsewhere known as ‘early-Salafism’ (as separate from Wahhabi Salafism), Islamic movement, reformists, *tajdid*, *Ihya*, *Islah* and Islamic modernism (Kramer, 2010). They are keen on ‘modernising Islam’ via viewing and interpreting principal Islamic texts through the prism of modernity, (Shepard,

1987, Nafi, 2014), while the previous group are keen on ‘modernity’ regardless. These two ‘ideological orientations’ that adopt modern ideas wholly or partly represent an ‘attitude style’ I term: ‘the assimilative attitude’. I argue that ‘reconciliationism’ stems from an absence of confidence in one’s own conviction and thus is a form of assimilation. The model, I am offering here, does not claim exclusivity and is far from ending the ongoing debate but hopes to provide a balanced and nuanced framework that covers most of the current responses despite the unavoidable blurring of lines between individual respondents.

The attitude styles are; (a) the assimilative attitude (b) the dismissive attitude and (c) the conservative attitude. Under each of these, the modified version of the ideological orientations originally suggested by Shepard (1987) will be presented. At the beginning of this discussion, I will present the framework in a diagram format for clarity and ease. At the end of the chapter, I will include a table that covers the ideological orientations mentioned here and their variant sub-types and other names commonly mentioned in other literature. It will be too optimistic to claim exhausting all the literature but I will present the most common names and, by doing so, the already fragmented picture will become much clearer.



2.7.1. The Assimilative Attitude:

This attitude characterises groups that either admire Western modernity and embrace it in total or try to empower the narrative of Islam's relevance as a system of life by adopting modernist ideas. The defining characteristic of this attitude is the self-conscious adoption of modern values to replace or repair Islam (Kurzman, 2002). The difference between the two groups included underneath lies in their preference. While the “modernists” preferred “undiluted modernism”, using Rahman (1984) term, and downplayed Islam in the modern world privileging nationalism, secularism and other ideologies (Kurzman, 2002), “reconciliationists” espoused modern values to create a humanist or Protestant form of Islam. Whether totally or partially embracing, admiration or justification, selective or apologetic, these groups share an attitude style even when they differ in the components of their ideologies and their members are sometimes critical of one another as is noted by (Kurzman, 2002, Tayob, 2009). We can trace this attitude back to as early as Rifā‘ah Rāfi Al-Tahtāwi (1801 -1873) who, having spent five years in Paris, wrote an elaborate account of the French society its political, economic and legal system and admiringly observed that “French people are equal before the law despite their difference in prestige, position, honour and wealth” and inspired following generations of nationalists and reformists (Mishra, 2012 p.51, Moosa, 2009, Hopwood, 1998, Newman, 2011). The early pioneers of this attitude can be found amongst the students, activists, scholars, political elites and intelligentsias whose contact with Europe stirred fascination and a desire to question Islam’s sufficiency and its inherited tradition followed by repair, reconciliation or adoption projects (Hopwood, 1998, Hefner, 2010, Lapidus, 2014, Kurzman, 2002, Masud, 2009, Adams, 2010). In short, moved by the state of the Muslim world and the might of the West, they tried to find strength in the modern West either by embracing it or appealing to it. We can list under this attitude the following ideological orientations:

2.7.1.1.Modernists:

Modernists are those who “openly follow an ideology other than Islam in public life” and “downplay its importance in the modern world” (Shepard, 1987 p.309, Kurzman, 2002 p.4). Shepard (1987) chooses to call them ‘secularists’ possibly due to the fact that secularism is an integral part of their modernist thinking, but I argue that calling them ‘modernists’ is more reflective of what they mainly identify with. This ideological orientation contains groups that vary in their position towards religion from complete dismissal and antagonism to accommodation with conditions. They vary from ‘radical secularists’ to ‘neutral secularists’, from ‘liberalists’ to ‘nationalists’, from ‘socialists’ to ‘capitalists’ all of which are components of modernity. They may self-define as ‘progressive’ or ‘secular’ (Bennett, 2005, Kurzman, 2002) but terming them ‘modernists’ captures the common reference point they share. Haddad (1982) refers to the variance of the groups that fit under this label as “some who seek a thoroughgoing Westernisation. They are willing to ascribe to religion a personal status that has bearing only on the individual life divorced from the social and cultural context” (Haddad, 1982 p.9) and others who are “ready to surrender to Western influences and compromise with Western ideology. They see themselves as vanguards of a modern revival....in this process, they abandon the principles upon which the society is structured and acquire a new world view in which Islam is essentially left out” (Haddad, 1982 p.10). In short, the modernist discourse blames adherence to religion and tradition for Muslims’ backwardness (Masud, 2009) and therefore looks for an alternative; that is to embrace the modernist ideology in its definition of life and religion. Secularism is a common feature of all modernist groups even though they vary in the strength of their degree of secularism (Al-Omari, 2014, Shepard, 2014). We can count amongst the names of modernists; Tāha Ḥusayn, whose book ‘*On Jahili Poetry*’ provoked a storm of hostile criticism at the time as undermining the foundations of the Islamic faith by casting doubts about the genuineness of pre-Islamic poetry and calling the Qur’anic

linguistic miracle itself into question (Adams, 2010, Lapidus, 2014). The former Grand Shaykh al-Azhar Muhammad Al-Khidr Hussain wrote a response to it calling its premises unfounded fables (Hussain, 2011). Another name is ‘Ali ‘Abd Al-Rāziq, a protégé of the reconciliationist Muhammad ‘Abduh. Impacted also by the ideas of the Turkish modernist Seyyid Bey (1873-1925) ‘Abd Al-Rāziq, wrote “*Islam and the Principles of Government*”; a book for which he was defrocked as a judge and a ‘*ālim* (Adams, 2010, Hassan, 2016, Shepard, 2014). A third name is the positivist Ismā’il Mazhar (1891-1962), the little known translator and proponent of Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* (Elshakry, 2016). Other names include Mohammad Arkoun, Ahmed Sa’id Adonīs, Nasr Hāmid Abu Zeid, Muhammad Shahrūr and Hasan Hanafi in addition to nationalist and secular leaders and groups like Atatürk, İsmet İnönü and Reza Shah Pahlavi. Modernist thinkers see the solution for Muslim trouble to be; secularisation of life and values and the historicisation of sacred texts as products of a historical context that is no more there (Brown, 2015). This effectively means cutting the Qur’an from directing modern life.

2.7.1.2.Reconciliationists:

As an ideological orientation, reconciliationism insists on the necessity of Islam’s presence in public life and its ability to guide it. It stresses Islam’s flexibility to meet all needs of the modern world through its vibrant tool of *ijtihad* and the interpretationability of its texts (Shepard, 1987, Hunter, 2009, Hopwood, 1998). In their ideological answer to the question ‘what went wrong with Islam?’, reconciliationists decided that it was the neglect of the essential principles of Islam and its core values that caused the Muslim predicament, took as their mission the identification of these principles through which Islam can lead a positive dialogue with the West and be placed with it on an equal footing (Yusuf, 2012, Shepard, 1987). For them, identifying these core values, removing the obstacles that block positive dialogue meant a service for Islam and the way forward was use of rationalism (Shepard, 1987, Hunter,

2009, Rippin, 1997, Hopwood, 1998). But how has this manifested practically? Claiming that the gates of *ijtihad* were closed by traditional scholars and, under the guise of reopening them, reconciliationists travelled away from the tradition or rather abandoned it, engaging in a process of rationalist reinterpretation of the primary sources of Islam and granting that access to anyone with no regard for adequacy of their qualifications (Hunter, 2009, Shepard, 1987, Abou El Fadl, 2017, Masud, 2009, Quadri, 2021). In what seemed a process for producing a flexible Islam, reconciliationists appealed to a knowledge modelled on scientific enterprise rather than the authority necessary for a tradition (Quadri, 2021). They adopted three ways: **(1) Reductionism:** Reconciliationists decided that authority is to be reduced only to the text Qur'an and Sunnah and not the nuanced interpretative tools of the '*ulama* tradition, preferring a selective notion of rationalism in which traditional theology was poorly characterised as narrow dogmatism (Hunter, 2009 p.15, Elshakry, 2016). This early reductionism also meant abandonment of traditional *madhhabs* (legal school) in favour of a layman-centred approach which underscored a universal right to interpret Islam (Yusuf, 2012, Sedgwick, 2010). In later generations of reconciliationists, some decided to deny the non-mutawātir Sunnah, others to suffice with Qur'an only and a third group to suffice with the Makkan Qur'an that contains the universal principles and appeals more to humanist modernity (Rippin, 1997, Shepard, 1987, Sonn, 2009, Brown, 2015). **(2) Re-interpretation:** This tool was directed to the Islamic tradition as and when it seemed to conflict with modernity. Fervent re-interpretation was reconciliationists' justification in their borrowing of modernist views while claiming commitment to Islam (Yusuf, 2012, Haddad, 1982, Shepard, 1987). Elshakry (2016) gives an example of how “Abduh seemed to go out of his way to demonstrate the potential compatibility of the Qur'an with contemporary ideas of evolution. He did so primarily by appealing to a broad range of flexible interpretive strategies. Take, for example in his treatment of the verse ‘O men! Fear your Lord who has created you of one soul’, ‘Abduh claimed that

there is no reference specifically to Adam and concluded that since God left the matter indefinite, it matters little if humans claim their father is Adam or a monkey or something else” (Elshakry, 2016 p.175). Sometimes, re-interpretation meant selecting an anomalous view or leaving the tradition altogether in favour of a liberal understanding. Examples of re-interpretation cover concepts like jihad, penal punishments, polygyny and even prophetic miracles which were rationalised to fit within materialist Western paradigm (Shepard, 1987, Saleh, 2015, Brown, 2015). The apparent rationalist tendency was characteristic of the originators of reconciliationism; Al-Afghani (1838 -1897) and ‘Abduh who resorted pragmatically adopted Mu’tazilite and pantheistic views to serve their interpretative strategies (Hunter, 2009, Wain, 2016, Yusuf, 2012). ‘Abduh insisted on refusing to be bound by tradition and repeated that unless the established meanings of the Qur’an conform with modern human reason, such meanings are to be abandoned and search for new rational ones becomes a must (Wain, 2016, Sedgwick, 2010). Placing reason over revelation, as evident in his *Risalat al-Tawhid*, ‘Abduh was declared heretical by many traditionalist ‘ulama including Shaykh Muhammad ‘Ulaish who openly accused him of being a Mu’tazilite (Elshakry, 2016, Brown, 2015, Adams, 2010). To his followers, he was reframing Islam in a modern idiom to make it relevant (Wain, 2016, Yusuf, 2012, Adams, 2010) but he twisted it to do so. (3) **Apologetic:** This tool, which inspired the process of reinterpretation, was to link aspects of Islam to modernity or claim that modernity has Islamic roots; if this was the theory, interpretation was the praxis. Especially striking was Al-Afghani’s acceptance of the French critic of Islam Ernest Renan’s proposition that Islam was hostile to science and philosophy; an acceptance that gained him Renan’s praise as an infidel who is free from the prejudices of Islam (Sedgwick, 2010). Modernist ideas were given Islamic names or vice versa; democracy became synonymous with Shūra and the annual UN meeting became a model similar to the Hajj (Shepard, 1987). In spite of their claims of following the spirit of Islam, reconciliationists had

much in common with pure modernists and secularists so much so that they were paradoxical (Yusuf, 2012, Shepard, 1987, Masud, 2009). It is therefore not surprising to see reconciliationists labelled as “modernists” or “Islamic modernists” in works like Shepard (1987), Kurzman (2002), Lapidus (2014), Elshakry (2016) and Sedgwick (2010). In terms of intellectual genealogy, Abduh’s and Al-Afghani’s reconciliationist ideology nourished two essential orientations; one is purely modernist and the other is radically Islamist. This ideological link can be seen through the names of figures who were amongst Abduh’s students and admirers; ‘Ali Abd Al-Rāziq (1888 – 1966) and Tāha Husayn (1889 – 1973) categorised above as modernists and Muhammad Rashid Rida, (1865 -1935) ‘Abdu’s inheritor and promoter (Sedgwick, 2010), who represents the other trend. Rida, who “lacked religious and scholarly credentials” (Sedgwick, 2010 p.122), took reconciliationism a step further towards Islamism. He cherished an affinity for the radical Wahhabi movement (which like ‘Abduh was anti-Madhhabs) as well as the radical rationalism, anti-imperialist nationalism and revolutionism of Al-Afghani (Cole, 1983, Sedgwick, 2010) and, blending these intellectual streams, he formulated what became known at the time as the *salafiyyah* movement which, in turn, impacted Hasan Al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood; a diligent reader of *Al-Manar* magazine (Kramer, 2010 p.16, Sedgwick, 2010), the mouthpiece of Rida. Al-Banna, not an original thinker, served to translate Rida’s ideas into an organisation in his capacity as an activist (Kramer, 2010, Frampton, 2018).

2.7.2. The Dismissive Attitude:

The defining feature of this attitude is adopting a ‘disengaging’ or a ‘confrontational’ narrative that focuses on Western hegemony and offers a monolithic interpretation of Islam. In doing so, I, like Quadri (2021) affirm the danger of historical characterisations of scholars as reactionary or obstructionist (Quadri, 2021) and insist on the specificity of this attitude whose representatives are now quite limited and predominantly found within the ranks of radical Islamism. What follows is a discussion of the groups included in this attitude with examples of figures associated with each.

2.7.2.1. Rejectionist Traditionalism:

According to Shepard, a traditionalist is someone who “gives lower priority to modernity while at the same time has a strong loyalty to the particular religious forms they have inherited from the past” (Shepard, 2014). More simply, Sedgwick (2004) states that a traditionalist is someone who prefers specific established practices over something that replaces them (Sedgwick, 2004). Despite their limitations, these definitions can serve the purpose of our discussion here since they identify an outsider to the tradition; rather than allowing what Quadri (2021) criticises as an etymological overlap between ‘tradition’ and ‘treason’ where betrayal of a tradition is accommodated as part of it (Quadri, 2021). Broadly speaking, Sunni traditionalists have emphasised the respect and adherence to one of the four schools of law, the Ash’ari or Maturidi schools of theology, and any of a number of Sufi orders (Al-Azami, 2019). Trevathan (2014) argues that the traditional response “was based on withdrawal and non-cooperation but not in any violent sense” (Trevathan, 2014 p.121), both Voll (1992) and Shepard (1987) agree that it went through a phase of military resistance and another of mediatory communication between rulers and masses before becoming a maintainer of “traditional identities while

avoiding open social conflict” (Voll, 1992 p.67). It may be argued that such a mediatory role is what made traditional ‘*ulama* the subject of attacks from secular and modernists alike (Esposito and Voll, 2001, Trevathan, 2014). The initial rejection addressed here stemmed primarily, not from rejecting change, but from a view that Islam carries within it the seeds of its own revision and a deep sense of respecting centuries of scholarship and grounded interpretative work (Trevathan, 2014, Shepard, 1987). Another reason that can be added is that in the early stages of Western-Muslim contact; the modern West was seen as inferior. This aversion led the Cairene historian Al-Jabarti who gave a full account of Napoleon’s incursion to neglect any enquiry into the ideas of the French Revolution and rather suffice with mocking the French for their toilet habits (Mishra, 2012). Failure of the rejectionists “to reform the understanding the Sharī‘ah or to extend it in practice to areas of life where it had traditionally held less sway, or to assert its relevance to distinctively modern issues” (Shepard, 1987) has led to much internal debate and clash, so much so that it bore changes that were later, wrongfully, credited to modernists (Gesink, 2010). It is safe to argue thus, that in the core of the rejectionist traditionalism, lies an impulse of change but within the traditional ways (Trevathan, 2014, Rippin, 1997, Shepard, 1987). Examples of rejectionist traditionalism include some early scholars and Sufi brotherhoods that existed in the nineteenth century like the Qādiriyah of Emir Abdul-Qadir of Algeria, the Sanūsiyyah of Libya, the followers of Ahmad ibn Idrīs in addition to lower classes and less educated groups of Muslim societies who, being away from urban elites, have not been exposed to the challenge of modernity (Shepard, 1987, Voll, 1992, Rippin, 1997, Shepard, 2014). As Shepard (2014) argues, there are probably few if any pure traditionalists left, of them he counts Taliban, since they were replaced by neo-traditionalists (Shepard, 2014).

2.7.2.2. Rejectionist Neo-Traditionalism:

What differentiates neo-traditionalists from traditionalists is their exposure to the modernist challenge and the proposals of modernity and having an understanding of their depths (Shepard, 1987, Haddad, 1982). Having understood the reality and accepting the need for manifestations of the modern world like technology might drive neo-traditionalists to be more selective in accessing these manifestations as appears in Nasr (2003) who describes the modern world as one that corrodes a Muslim's faith and thus is to avoid what can be avoided and shun acts of individual rebellion against Allah (Nasr, 2003). A rejectionist neo-traditionalist engages with a desire for taking an action towards modernity by referring back to the tradition, rather than modernist methods. Its rejection of modernism is directed chiefly the materialistic nature of modernity; itself making an involvement in it tantamount to deifying God's authority (Haddad, 1982). For instance, Abd al-Qādir Al-Sufī's (1930-2021) response to the failure of modernity was the establishment of the Murābiṭūn Movement of which pillars are the restoration of zakat and minting gold and silver currencies to face the modern fiat money (Asvat, 2015). Another essential reason for their rejectionism is the disregard for established scholarship amongst the ranks of modernist and their intolerance that invalidates claims of liberation and empowerment of man. For example, in his modernising efforts, Shah Pahlavi ordered his soldiers to shoot peaceful demonstrators who were protesting against Western clothes being forced upon people. In the same way, at his ascendency to political power Ataturk modernised Turkey by closing down religious schools, forcing Western dress code on men and women and banning people from wearing *hijab* (Armstrong, 2004). Representatives of this orientation include in addition to the above; Western figures of the René Guénon's traditionalist movement like Frithjof Schoun (1907-1998), Martin Lings (1909-2005), Charles le Gai Eaton (1921-2010) in addition to some scholars who, aware of modernist discourses, rejected and refuted them by engaging deeper with the tradition like Muhammad Zahid Kavseri

(1879 – 1951) and shaykh ül-Islam Mustafa Sabri (1869 – 1954). Chased out of his home country due to his intellectual clashes with the modernist Kemalists, Sabri eventually found safe haven in Egypt. However, he found himself in face with currents of modernist ideas inherited from ‘Abduh and gaining currency amongst intellectual and religious elites. In his seminal work *Mawqif al-‘aql wal ‘ilm wal ‘ālam min rabbil ‘ālamīn wa min ‘ibadihi al-mursalīn*, Sabri attacked Western ways that lead only to misguidance and the following of which makes Muslims lose their *akhirah* (next life) after they have lost their *dunya* (transient life); he rebuked ‘Abduh for falsification of Islam’s ideas and their replacement with what Europe wants for Muslims (Sabri, 1950, Al-Qusi, 1997, Hammond, 2022a). He refused democracy as based on deception and communism as based on misleading campaigns calling upon Muslims to desist from imitating the West. He also engaged in proper philosophical discussions showing his expertise in understanding Western ideas (Sabri, 1950, Al-Qusi, 1997)

2.7.2.3. Radical Islamism:

In his map of ideology, Shepard (1987) places radical Islamism at a point that represents two extremes; one being Islamic totalism and the other being ideological exclusiveness; and rightfully argues that it has arisen out of a modernist/reconciliationist context but is more insistent and purist (Shepard, 1987, Shepard, 2014). Radical Islamists are sometimes called ‘fundamentalists’ (Rippin, 1997, Nasr, 2004), a label that has its problems as explained earlier in this chapter. Though radical Islamists are described as conservative, their radical dissatisfaction with the existing conditions which is the antithesis of what conservatives do, puts them outside a conservative position (Voll, 1992). If anything, radical Islamists are ‘modernists’ in that they borrow extensively from the modern and the secular against which

they apparently react (Armstrong, 2004, Shepard, 2014). Radicals extend the concept of ‘submission’ from its theological sense to politics and beyond; for them Islam is a unique system in a totally particularistic way (Moussalli, 1992, Kramer, 2010, Shepard, 1987, Tayob, 2009).

Radical Islamists owe a big part of their ideology to the leading reconciliationists ‘Abduh, Al-Afghani and Rida in the sense that they were reductionists who neglected the Islamic tradition (Mishra, 2012, Tayob, 2009). Al-Afghani’s ideas influenced Islamist thinkers like ‘Ali Shari’ati, the ideologue of the Iranian revolution and Sayyid Qutb (Lee, 1997, Mishra, 2012). From left-wing secularists, through Pan-Arabists to Islamists, Al-Afghani, who adopted this name to distance himself from his Shi'a roots, is arguably behind the ignition of many conflicting ideas, including links with Baha'is which even ‘Abduh and Rida maintained (Mishra, 2012, Al-Bouti, 2008, Cole, 1983, Sedgwick, 2010, Kurzman, 2002). As a freemason in Egypt and a Russian agent against the British, Al-Afghani was neither a traditionalist nor an unthinking Westerniser; rather, a strategist revolutionary who put anti-imperialist and pan-Islamic project as his top priorities but kept changing his specific positions; the one position that remained unchanged was Muslims’ need for a modernist thought (Al-Bouti, 2008, Mishra, 2012, Kurzman, 2002). These themes were embraced by Hasan Al-Banna (1906 – 1949), another man seen by his critics as obscure, as the way forward; he offered the characteristic blend of Islam and modernity, with a new component of ‘militarism’ and struggle (Mura, 2012, Kramer, 2010, Frampton, 2018). Al-Afghani’s and ‘Abduh’s ideology was inherited by Al-Banna, hardened later by Sayyid Qutb and Abul Al-‘Ala Al-Mawdūdi, making up the three fathers of radical Islamism (Bennett, 2005, Gray, 2003). One should be careful that ideas that may seem moderate carry in them seeds of radicalism and inadvertently contribute to it (Yu, 2014). As highlighted earlier, Al-Banna was not an original thinker rather an activist or an

executor of ideas (Kramer, 2010).

The dissatisfaction of Al-Banna with Muslim's *status quo* and the stress for change which he inherited from Al-Afghani featured in the epistemic trajectories of radical Islamist thinkers like Qutb and Al-Mawdūdi (Kramer, 2010, Mura, 2012, Mishra, 2012, Humphreys, 1979, Moussalli, 1992). However, these are essentially modern themes (Voll, 1992) and borrowed from the West; something which puts the radical Islamism claim of authenticity in an awkward position. Shepard correctly notes this contradiction: "In spite of its conscious stress on authenticity, radical Islamism accepts much that is borrowed from the West. In some ways, this is hardly surprising since it arose primarily as a reaction against Westernising trends" (Shepard, 1987). This argument is also proposed by Gray (2003) who writes, that "radical Islam is a symptom of the disease to which it pretends to be the cure" (Gray, 2003 p.26) and by Tayob (2009) who contends that "Islamist identity is dependent on modernist identity in an unmistakable manner" (Tayob, 2009 p.269) Rejecting tradition with its diversity, attack on the '*ulama* as causes of stagnation, revolution in the guise of revival, calls to give direct access to the sacred sources to everyone, confrontation and violence all place radical Islamism in close proximity to both Protestantism and modernism (Shepard, 1987, Moussalli, 1992, Tayob, 2009). Qutb, who started as a secularist writer and member of the literati, moved from unreservedly encouraging Muslims to borrow from Europe and blaming the traditional Muslim scholars as backward and reactionary to the other end of the spectrum criticising Europe but Islamising its idea of progress as a model (Haddad, 1982, Mura, 2012, Moussalli, 1992, Shepard, 1997). He wove both Al-Banna and Al-Mawdūdi into an angry refusal of any authority except that of God (*hākimiyah*) and a fervent call to reinstate that authority through the creation of a believing vanguard that rejects and confronts the Muslim societies return to pre-Islamic ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*); these two concepts have been the cornerstone of his

thinking and that of subsequent radical groups from Hizb al-Tahrir to Dā‘ish (Zubaida, 2009, Shepard, 2003, Shepard, 2014). These concepts are deeply rooted in a worldly, profane and secular tradition. Not only that they borrow from modernity’s tools of change, but also its terminology. Qutb whose writings despise the West and attack its emptiness of morality, “borrowed many of his ideas from Western sources” (Gray, 2003 p.24); rather than classical Islam. The only difference is that it is to reinstate the power and law of God (Shepard, 1987, Mura, 2012, Shepard, 2003), so he claimed.

This emotional language and apparent rejection of the ‘corrupt’ imperial West made radical Islamism appealing to semi-educated or modern school graduates whose ungrounded-ness in tradition left them easy victims of such furious language itself coming from theorists with equally limited or no religious knowledge (Hunter, 2009, Shepard, 1987, Zubaida, 2009, Roy, 1994). In their attempt to replace the system of disbelief with the system of God, radical Islamists forgot that the word ‘system’ is borrowed and, in his refusal of ‘democracy’ as a Western concept, Al-Khomeini – the radical Shī‘a father of the Iranian Revolution- still saw it fit to call the new state, with the guardianship of the jurists, a ‘republic’ (Shepard, 1987, Shepard, 2014). In short, radical Islamism gives an outward impression that it rejects modernity in total and that is why it is placed here but behind this rejection lies a genealogical link with core modernist concepts (Shepard, 1987, Lee, 1997, Rippin, 1997, Gray, 2003, Tayob, 2009).

2.7.3. The Conservative Attitude:

The main features of this attitude are ‘confidence’ and a ‘critical tone’. These stem from confidence in Islam as a defined and complete way which has a tradition of diversity that is not in need of reformation, incorporating within itself its own critique and revision (Trevathan, 2014) precisely because “tradition should be thought of as a framework of enquiry rather than a set of unchanging doctrines” (Haj, 2008 p.4). Conservatives see that the underpinnings of the

modernist campaign against traditions are different from modernists declared justifications; their complaints about the stagnation are simply a means to drift away from methodological scholarship to a newly crafted tradition of utilitarianism rooted in a Europe (Gesink, 2010). For an adaptationist, the question of what went wrong with Islamic civilisation is a result of a unilateral view of both tradition and modernity (Bowering, 2011). Under this attitude we can identify two groups:

2.7.3.1. Adaptationist Traditionalism:

Shepard (2014) view that adaptationist traditionalists are those who decided to use delaying tactics rather than complete opposition of modernity (Shepard, 1987) does not befit the label itself. Therefore, I argue that a modified use of Quadri (2021) - as those scholars whose recourse for solutions to challenges of modernity is mediated by the past through investigating knowledge and interpretative methods transmitted from one generation to the next where the agents of such transmission are men rather than books (Quadri, 2021) - can give a better understanding.

Examples of this category can include scholars who, while opposing the modernist narrative, engaged with the tradition to respond to challenges posed by modernity and whose biographies can show how accommodative traditionalists were as opposed to the dramatic account given by modernists (Quadri, 2021, Mosaad, 2022). Amongst them we can count Shaykh of Al-Azhar, Shams al-Dīn al-Inbābi who ruled in favour of teaching scientific subjects in Al-Azhar and the chief Mufti of the Maliki school Shaykh Muhammad ‘Ilish whose defence of the tradition against ‘Abduh’s is well documented (Elshakry, 2016, Gesink, 2010, Mosaad, 2022). Another figures to be included here is the Hanafī scholar and chief mufti, Shaykh Muhammad Bakhīt al-Muṭīi whose fatāwa on photography, the phonograph, insurance, smoking, translation of the Qur’ān, and the permissibility of relying on reports transmitted through the

telegraph to celebrate Ramadan and Islamic festivities all display how traditionalist scholars were accommodative of many of the demands of modernity (Quadri, 2021, Al-Muṭṭī, 1932). This active engagement with the demands of the time did not prevent al-Muṭṭī becoming an ardent critic and opponent of ‘Abduh and Abd Al-Rāziq (Sedgwick, 2010, Quadri, 2021). I argue that current traditional scholars and students who do not keep a deep awareness of modern philosophical and intellectual challenges but have a mastery of the tradition can be included here.

2.7.3.2. Adaptationist Neo-Traditionalism:

Like traditionalists, neo-traditionalists have emphasised the respect and adherence to one of the four Sunni schools of law, the Ash‘ari or Maturidi schools of theology, and any of a number of Sufi orders or at least taking a positive emphasising position towards it (Spannaus and Razavian, 2018, Al-Azami, 2019). Neo-traditionalists are those who have a more nuanced understanding of Western ideas and the nature of modernity and thus are able to see the ills of modernity, stress the value of tradition and draw on the wealth of the past, both traditions of learning and popular customs; they have a reasonable appreciation of modern innovations and tend to be more appropriately equipped in their appreciation and application (Shepard, 2014, Shepard, 1987). An adaptationist neo-traditionalist reworks alternatives based on a rooted understanding of both tradition and modernity unlike a traditionalist whose knowledge of the modern was not well rounded. Shepard (1987) argues that adaptationist neo-traditionalism may provide the best framework to place Islamic tradition in the modern world (Shepard, 1987). Amongst neo-traditionalist adaptationists, we can count Western Muslim scholars like Hamza Yusuf, Tim Winters, Umar Faruq Abd Allah, the Malaysian thinker Sayyid Naquib Al-‘Attās in addition to the former mufti of Egypt, ‘Ali Gomaa, Abdullah b. Bayyah, the current Shaykh of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyib in addition to the Moroccan philosopher Abdurrahman Taha

(Hallaq, 2019, Spannaus and Razavian, 2018, Razavian, 2018, Mathiesen, 2013, Al-Azami, 2019, Al-Aktiti and Hellyer, 2010).

It is important to note here that one of the limitations faced by this framework is finding examples for the traditionalist and neo-traditionalist categories due to the limited studies that investigate this response. Yet, this framework's attempt to set out the examples mentioned above puts it in a position to become a reference for researchers on this subject who can identify more examples and back their choices by academic studies. One other benefit of this framework in addition to becoming a reference to studies on Muslims responses to modernity is its functionality as an indicator of which trends are in decline and which ones are on the rise.

Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr's (1947-2022) thought and criticism of modernity places him in this under-represented and less explored category. Grappling with a variety of its components, Al-Mashhūr offers an alternative project; the aim of this thesis to study. In light of its addressing a lacuna in the literature of Muslim responses to modernity and other justifications laid out in the previous chapter, studying Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity is of prime importance.

2.8. Why the Previous Typology

While the above typology can serve as a framework for researchers willing to look at examples of neo-traditionalist scholars who have engaged, at different degrees with modernity, its direct utility for the current thesis is manifold. At one level, it supports the foundational argument for the under-representation of tradition in studies investigating Muslim responses to modernity and highlights the possibility of variant responses amongst and beyond the scholars mentioned here. Equally important, it is essential to the process for inclusion and exclusion that was a foundational step in selecting the subject of this thesis. While this typology has not offered an exhaustive list of neo-traditionalist scholars who can be subjects for future studies, it has

uncovered the vastness of the under explored area of neo-traditionalism and the difficulty of covering it in one thesis let alone summing it up in the abrupt descriptions that have dominated the current academic narrative. It is through offering that non-exhaustive list that an inclusion is performed. Subsequent to this inclusion, the typology reveals that the existence of variant scholars requires in-depth study of each such that we become aware of the variety of responses that exist within the tradition and this justifies the selection of a single case study; that is the exclusion step. It is moving from inclusion to exclusion that this typology offers that can facilitate for future comparative studies and nuanced reading of trends and strands within the tradition to emerge. It is depth before breadth (Yin, 2012, Yin, 2014) that this typology points to in essence and that is a *sine qua non* for this thesis.

2.9. Conclusion:

As the above discussion shows that the current literature suffers multi-layered problems, the way forward, in addition to suggesting alternative ways of looking at and analysing Muslim responses to modernity, is to shift the focus to the less explored area of traditionalist and neo-traditionalist responses to modernity. This shift aims to balance academic understanding of how Muslims responded to and engaged with the modern; a much-needed balance to display the variety of those responses beyond the current abrupt descriptions and binary categorisation and add credibility to the academic evaluation of Muslim responses. Evaluations that augment one narrative at the expense of multiple others merit very little credibility if any.

Following the current limited works that study traditional Muslim responses to modernity, I argue that the current narrative will be challenged and changed with this shift. This thesis looks at Abu Bakr Al-‘Adni b. ‘Ali Al-Mashhūr, a neo-traditionalist Yemeni scholar and educationist

who lived in colonial and post-colonial Yemen. Al-Mashhūr and his father ran a school which was inspected and supervised -at a certain stage- by British colonial authorities and later by the post-colonial Marxist regime, before it was closed down. With Yemen coming under a Marxist regime, Al-Mashhūr had to escape the country to KSA where he settled until Yemen left Marxism. He returned to Yemen frequently and established multiple educational and social institutions while writing about his experience in colonial and post-colonial Yemen and KSA. In his writings, Al-Mashhūr engages with modernity offering a religious critique of its themes and components. This background makes his response worthy of study since it does not only belong to the less-explored category, but it also emerges in the post-colonial Muslim world; a much less explored period the study of which reveals the changes, if any, that occurred to the responses that belong to an already under-discussed category.

	Modernists	Reconciliationists	Radical Islamists	Rejectionist Traditionalists	Rejectionist Neo- Traditionalists	Adaptationist Traditionalists	Neo- traditionalist Adaptationists
Other Names	Secular	Islamic Modernism	Fundamentalists	'Ulema	Traditionalists	Traditionalists	Conservatives
	Modernists	Reformers	Jihadists				
	Reformist	Modernists	Terrorists	Popular	Perennialists	Classical	Traditional Islam
		Islamic Reformists	Later	Muslims	Maryamiyyah	'Ulama	
		Tanwīr	Fundamentalists				Adaptationist
		Islamic		Fundamentalists	Islamists (in	Conservatives	
		Protestantism			case of Mustafa		Neo-Sufis
Variations	Secularists	Salafiyyah (early)	Da'esh		Kevseri)		Sufis
	Nationalists	Political Islam	Islamic State	Traditionalists		Scholarly Elite	
	Progressive	Nahda	Extremists		Conservatives		Traditionalists
	Liberals	Islamist	Jihadism	Normativists			
	Leftist	Islamic Activism	Islamist	Classical Islam	Neo-		Traditionalist
	Marxist	Awakening	Traditionalism		Normativists		Movement
	Neo-	Tajdid- Islah – Ihya-	Neo-	Early			
	Mu'tazilism	Mu'asir – Genç	traditionalism	Fundamentalism	Fundamentalists		
			Neo-				
			Normativism				
			Revivalism				
			Neo-Revivalism				

Figure 3: Variant Names of Trends

3. Research Approach and Methodology

This chapter is organised in four main sections and a conclusion. Through its four sections, it lays out how this research is conducted and justifies the choice of the research approach. In its first section, I present social constructionism as the philosophical approach I will adopt alongside a justification of its suitability for this kind of research. The second section argues for the complementarity between social constructionism as a philosophical approach and critical discourse analysis as a methodology. This is followed by a section on how critical discourse analysis is conducted as a process, while the fourth section of the chapter discusses at length how the aforementioned process is carried out in this specific research project to ensure systematic analysis and objective evaluation. The conclusion summarises the sections and affirms the validity of choice and process.

3.1. Research Philosophical Approach

The conversation between religion and modernity has been ongoing for more than two centuries and while modernity has become a lived reality (Hefner, 2009, Appadurai, 1996, Smith and Vaidyanathan, 2011, Cox, 1984), religion continues to inform our interaction with the modern and bring it to the sphere of public debate. For many, religious experience informs behaviour, opinions, decisions, engagements, relationships and many other social, economic and political functions we perform as individuals or communities; and can be studied as such. It makes sense then to seriously investigate religion as a social reality in no lesser way than we investigate the social reality of race, gender, politics or the market (Dressler, 2019, Beckford, 2003). This enterprise faces, amongst other things, the challenge of choosing the most suitable approach. I mean by this, the epistemic approach we take to identify and validate the kinds of knowledge we deal with, their sources, the devices by which we gain knowledge and how ought we proceed in order to acquire it? (Jensen, 2014, Stausberg and Engler, 2016, Dressler, 2019,

Stausberg and Engler, 2014). I argue that the best epistemological approach for this kind of study is social constructionism; an approach which sees “social conditions and forces as responsible for our knowledge and knowledge-forming processes” (Jensen, 2014 p.42, Menchik, 2017, Upadhyay, 2010, Beckford, 2003, Engler, 2004). The term “constructionism” is preferable to ‘constructivism’ which is used to refer to a version of intuitionism in the philosophy of mathematics, to a theory of a cognitive psychology and to the tradition of Soviet and European art” (Engler, 2004 p.292)

As a philosophical approach in the study of religion, constructionism has a pragmatic viability in many ways; it covers a plethora of strands ranging from radical social constructionism to weaker social constructionism (Jensen, 2014, Dressler, 2019, Berger and Luckmann, 1991, Schwandt, 1998, Bettiza and Dionigi, 2014, Menchik, 2017, Ibhakewanlan, 2014). While the common feature of constructionism lies in its consideration of social and historical contexts as forces contributing to the knowledge-forming processes, it places weight on the human as maker of meaning and an active agent in the knowledge production; in this way it stresses the importance of being attentive to both contextuality and positionality (Archer, 1998, Dressler, 2019, Zinnbauer and Pargament, 2000, Dornisch, 1989, Schwandt, 1998, Engler, 2005, Evanoff, 2004, Engler, 2004). As much as this can be seen challenge when working with a knowledge framework that includes revealed knowledge, the challenge is resolved when we understand that, through their respective contexts, people make meaning of religious revealed knowledge and produce mediated interpretations of the ‘revealed knowledge’; it is these mediated interpretations and their contexts that are of concern for studies like the current one. This means that a researcher needs to investigate the context in which the agent has produced the knowledge while being aware of the site they are theorising from; a consideration that justifies why this study will present a critical biography of Al-Mashhūr as part of investigating

his context and the position he was writing from. Evidently, such context and position contain biases but the existence of those biases does not delegitimise studying them because it is hard to claim that anyone can be free from some sort of bias. It is rather being aware of those biases that need to be taken into consideration and a social construction of reality approach is what enables us to do this.

The social constructionism approach adopted here distances itself from radical constructionism that focuses only on the process or what McCutcheon (1997) calls ‘manufacturing’ (McCutcheon, 1997, McCutcheon, 2023). Rather, it is a soft one that while agreeing with the importance of shedding light on the process of meaning production (construction), it does not abandon the study of the products of this construction and pays attention to the content (Schilbrack, 2017, Schilbrack, 2012, Dressler, 2019, Beckford, 2003, Engler, 2004, Burr, 1995). This soft constructionist position also accommodates a line of realism, one that presupposes that there is a reality of religion beyond the discourse on religion and that these two are not necessarily incompatible; for constructionism is not necessarily anti-realist (Engler, 2005, Schilbrack, 2012, Schilbrack, 2017, Engler, 2004). In this vein, the strand of social constructionism adopted here (social construction of reality) acknowledges that while “reality itself may have independent existence, its representation as ‘knowledge’ depends on how those facts are connected and constructed” (Archer, 1998 p.88, Schilbrack, 2017). This refined approach aims to avoid the slippery slope of falling into complete relativism or scepticism; something that renders this knowledge enterprise useless. While this approach is not concerned with ‘trueness’ or ‘falsity’ of religious beliefs, it seeks to establish reliability and validity of its findings by expressing its epistemic commitments and limitations and arguing for its replicability. This can be secured by counting as our best knowledge that which fits with available evidence and the theories we currently hold to be valid (Haack, 1995, Jensen,

2014).

Integral to our epistemic approach, is deciding the focus and scope of the knowledge enterprise we are engaged in. In doing so, we are faced with a range of options including comparative study, random samples, entire population or single case study. Considering that we are dealing with mediated knowledge which is constructed socially and informs communities and groups, an elite discourse is a should be our focus, as masses do not produce differing types knowledge since their knowledge is decontextualized. Impactful and contextualised, a single case study of an elite discourse allows for proper depth since it concerns itself mainly with ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions (Yin, 2014, Yin, 2012, Gerring, 2017). Even though ‘what’ features amongst the research questions of this study as shown in the introductory chapter, it is an ‘exploratory what’ that serves the ‘explanatory how and why’ essential research questions; single case study can be both exploratory and explanatory at the same time (Yin, 2014). Single case study looks into how individuals or groups make sense of contemporary events, why they take decisions and how, it investigates cases when the boundaries between context and decisions are not clearly evident (Yin, 2014, Yin, 2012). Considering that Al-Mashhūr’s response to modernity is a ‘decision’ that he took informed by his context, a case study is an inquiry that gives us the needed depth of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of this decision.

Despite its focus, single case study insists on validity, reliability and generalisation as tests for the quality of its research. Validity is secured through addressing rival explanation and pattern matching doing (creating codes for example) while reliability is demonstrated through ensuring the replicability of the study via documenting its procedure to minimise errors and biases (Yin, 2014, Flyvbjerg, 2006). In terms of generalisation, single case study strives for “generalizable findings i.e. analytic generalisations that go beyond the settings for the specific case; they can form a working hypothesis that can applied in reinterpreting the results of existing studies or

to define new research focussing on yet additional cases” (Yin, 2014 p.41, Cronbach, 1975). This analytic generalisation involves two steps; “one, showing how study’s findings have informed relationships among a particular set of concepts, theoretical constructs or sequence of events, and the second is applying the same theoretical propositions to implicate other situations outside the completed case study, where similar concepts, constructs, or sequences might be relevant” (Yin, 2012 p.18). As the literature review chapter has shown that current literature on Muslim responses to modernity suffers from multiple problems including inaccurate categorisation, selectivism or generalised judgment of the neo-traditionalist school, I argue that, selecting a key representative of this school as a case study secures the needed depth of investigating this school before focusing on breadth to build a nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of responses within the school itself. As a critical test of prevailing theories or intellectual trends, a single case study can thus represent a significant contribution to knowledge by “confirming, challenging or extending” (Yin, 2014 p.51) our current knowledge. An accusation of being selective does not apply to this case because while the current narrative suffers from being selective in its focus. In other words, it focuses on modernist voices in its selection; a focus which empowers one trend over the other and leads to imbalance in representation. This single case study aim to address this imbalance by shifting the focus of its selection towards the overlooked trend.

3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis as Methodology:

In social constructionism, understanding the world of meaning requires one to interpret it; such that “an inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer’s construction of the constructions of the actors one studies” (Schwandt, 1998 p.222). These

words work perfectly in highlighting the strong relationship between constructionism as an epistemic approach and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a methodology of putting it in motion and action. Constructionism places central importance on the role of discourse in constituting ideas (Engler, 2004, Menchik, 2017, Hodges et al., 2008), and it is the analysis of this discourse and its surrounding process that place us in a position to study, engage and evaluate the ideas embedded in it.

Critical discourse analysis is a methodology of critically examining how actions are given meaning, how relationships, identities, events and views are produced in language; such that discourse analysts investigate processes of social construction (Hjelm, 2014a, Phillips and Hardy, 2002, Fairclough, 1995, Locke, 2004). In critical discourse analysis, a researcher focuses on ideology in discourse i.e. how ideas are built, how relations are reproduced, how language is used as a toolbox to construct manifestations of the reality without forgetting the mediation of the human agent who makes those manifestations. Since, the word “discourse” is prominent here as a subject to the analysis, it is important to explain what we mean by it since that can explain why it should be the focus of our analysis. Fairclough (1992) defined discourse as a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning (Fairclough, 1992). Drawing on this definition, we can say that a discourse analysis opens a window into this world of meaning and enables us to engage with them, the process of constructing them, the ideologies and the modes of power behind them. The three words that stand out in the above definition are; ‘construct’ which points to the process necessitated to build a discourse, ‘constituting’ which shows that discourse is an active relation to the reality to make the world meaningful, and ‘practice’ which implies ways of being, doing and signifying (Locke, 2004, Fairclough, 1992). This last feature of discourse as a practice shows that discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking,

believing; they are ways of being and include more than language (Gee, 2015, Hodges et al., 2008, Brown and Yule, 2012).

The second prominent word is ‘analysis’ which is a systematic examination carried out to arrive at the underlying principles of the discourse; it is an activity that is concerned with meanings and the way they are constructed (Locke, 2004). Borrowing Talal Asad’s term of ‘authorising discourses’ (Asad, 1993), the analysis here is directed to the meanings, ideas, relationships, identities, events as deposited in the discourse and the discourse as used in ‘authorising’ certain interpretations and constructions of reality. This analysis, as previously stressed, considers the context, the process and the product while remaining attentive of the maker of those interpretations (i.e. of the discourse) and the researcher, also as a constructor of a constructed reality. Since analysis as an enterprise here focuses on meanings and those meanings are socially constructed via the mediation of language, it cannot be separated from interpretation and analysts, as Fairclough (1992) points out, need to be sensitive to their own interpretative tendencies and social reasons for them (Fairclough, 1992, Locke, 2004). This last point of ‘being sensitive to one’s own interpretative tendencies’ lead us to the third prominent word of feature of the analysis which is its being ‘critical’. The term ‘critical’ has been endowed with different shades of meaning; yet it is basically as having a distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly and a focus on self-reflection as scholars doing research (van Dijk, 1993, Wodak, 2001). It is important to note a challenging point related to distance here that is the vigilance not to turn the distance into “disdain and produce a guileless distortion instead of a privileged communication” (Lawrence, 1990 p.11)

Al-Mashhūr’s response to modernity -which is the focus of this research- is not an outcome of an intellectual behaviour that has grown in a vacuum. It is a combination of his identity, interests and worldview which are were constructed within social, political and religious

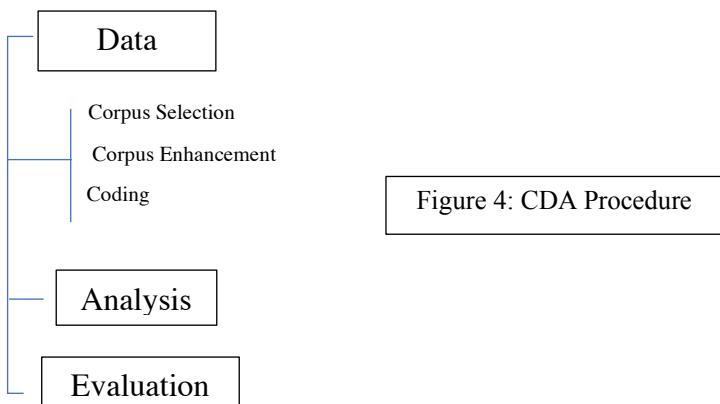
contexts that all contribute to his discourse; here being his response to modernity. These humanly constructed meanings or knowledge products both summarise and inform culture and society; they tell us essentially that humans -individually and collectively- are driven by reasons whether they know it or not, acknowledge it or not (Jensen, 2014 p.43). Al-Mashhūr's thought and views are deposited in his books; his speeches and lectures were more of a preaching nature than intellectual engagements. As he was continuously writing, his books sufficed from having to interview him as they contain his discourse that is of concern to this study. In addition, his books, published over four decades of his life, depict the trajectory of his intellectual project, the turns and shifts, if any, that his intellectual project went through. It is under CDA that these books are brought together and their texts, relationships and ideologies are critically analysed since CDA is useful for revealing the discursive substratum beneath the relatively opaque surface of texts. As Locke (2004) notes that “the aim is not to reveal some sinister or manipulative hand aiming to impose power over others, but to provide opportunities for critical detachment and review of ways in which discourses act to pervade and construct our textual and social practices in a range of contexts” (Locke, 2004 p.89). This access to discourses at this level can be reliably done with the powerful tool of critical discourse analysis.

3.3. How is Critical Discourse Analysis Conducted?

It is beneficial to state that a complete discourse analysis -of small or large corpus- is practically not possible and that one of the challenges that will face a researcher in interpretation turns out to be not on evaluation of data but on the data selected for evaluation (van Dijk, 2001, Lawrence, 1990). Each discourse analytical study needs, as Hjelm (2014b) rightly suggests “to be designed individually” (Hjelm, 2014b p.860) and that adds to its usefulness and viability. This does not mean though that a CDA process is without core components or that there is no essential shape of a CDA enterprise. To the contrary, Hjelm (2014b) and Blommaert and

Bulcaen (2000) refer to Fairclough (Fairclough, 1992) as providing a leading blueprint for critical discourse analysis in practice and how to do it (Hjelm, 2014b, Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000, Fairclough, 1992). Different from formal linguistic discourse analysis which is a microanalysis that focuses on the text to find the underlying rules of linguistic or communicative functions behind it, critical discourse analysis is a macroanalysis that encompasses all of the social practices, individuals and institutions that make it possible or legitimate to understand a phenomena in a particular way, and to make certain statements about what is true (Hodges et al., 2008). This characterisation of critical discourse analysis justifies not only my use of it a researcher methodology that, I argue, is well fitted for this study but also explains why a biography of Al-Mashhūr is legitimate as an essential step of going beyond the text to the individual who, in our case here, is part of the discourse and necessary to an analysis of the process of discourse-making.

On a practical level, this study will adopt a modified design of Fairclough's suggestive procedures for doing CDA even though he acknowledges that his procedure is not set in stone and that the nature of the project and the researcher are two factors responsible for selecting the particular procedure (Fairclough, 1992). For the sake of clarity, I will introduce the procedure a diagram form and then explain in detail its components.



At a procedural level, the process of analysis necessitates an object to be analysed; that is data. The data here is selected and prepared in three stages; selecting the corpus, enhancing it and coding its content to prepare for analysis. Selecting the corpus is a stage that is decided, above all, based on defining the study project. Knowing what is available, and how to get access to it, the time span available all contribute to corpus selection and size; yet, it is the decision of the domain or overarching theme of the project one is researching that contributes the most to corpus selection (Fairclough, 1992). In our case here, research questions were an essential factor in determining the corpus. Corpus enhancement is the second stage which includes arranging the material according to length, relevance or chronology. Fairclough suggests interviews as one of the ways of corpus enhancement to allow a researcher to probe into issues which go beyond the corpus samples (Fairclough, 1992). However, I argue that as the current study researches the thoughts of Al-Mashhūr and his intellectual project is embedded in his books, there is no need for an interview. As a thinker, Al-Mashhūr was more of a writer than an orator or a speaker. Later in this chapter, I will speak at length about the various actions taken to enhance the corpus and ensure its sufficiency for the study. The third stage in preparing the data is coding which is a tedious process of organising and classifying the content of the corpus into themes and sub-topics under the overarching project. Coding is important in the sense of testing claims and identifying the inter-textual relationships, the flow of ideas and change of views. In addition to enabling the researcher to pay attention to explicit content, implicit content and pragmatic structures, coding helps produce an accountable record that can be referred to form and convey critical interpretations, convincingly, reflexively and with care (Ziskin, 2019). I will mention later how I carried out the coding process and how I used it to delve into the multiple layers of meaning and pragmatic structures. I argue that coding is itself part of analysis and one challenge

associated with it is the continuous need to make sure that the codes are a genuine depiction of the author's narrative. Coding is itself a form of interaction with and mediation between the original producer of the narrative and the reader of the re-constructed narrative. The space for this are texts which as Fairclough (1995) notes "are social spaces in which two fundamental social processes simultaneously occur; cognition and representation of the world and social interaction" (Fairclough, 1995 p.6).

The process of analysis is the most challenging one; it is a continuous job that starts with coding itself. It includes what Fairclough (1992) notes as progression from "analysis of discourse practices at a macro level focussing on the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of the coded samples; to analysis of texts and paying attention to micro aspects of discourse practice; to analysis of the social practice of which the discourse is a part" (Fairclough, 1992 p.231). These three dimensions will overlap and sometimes move together in parallel. I will give more details later of the analysis process followed in this particular study. Rigorous analysis is essential for reliable evaluation; evaluation here is not concerned with trueness or falsity as explained earlier; rather, a statement of patterns of powers hidden in the discourse and what they can tell us about the discourse itself, its coherence, its narrative, what is taken as given, its assumptions and biases. It is these points of evaluation that can make a piece of research a gateway or a starting point for further research rather than a final stage in a research enterprise.

3.4. From Methodology to Method

In this and the coming pages, I will describe how the aforementioned methodology was carried out in this specific research project. While the description here covers the procedures referred to above in more detail, it also displays the chronological development of the project itself and

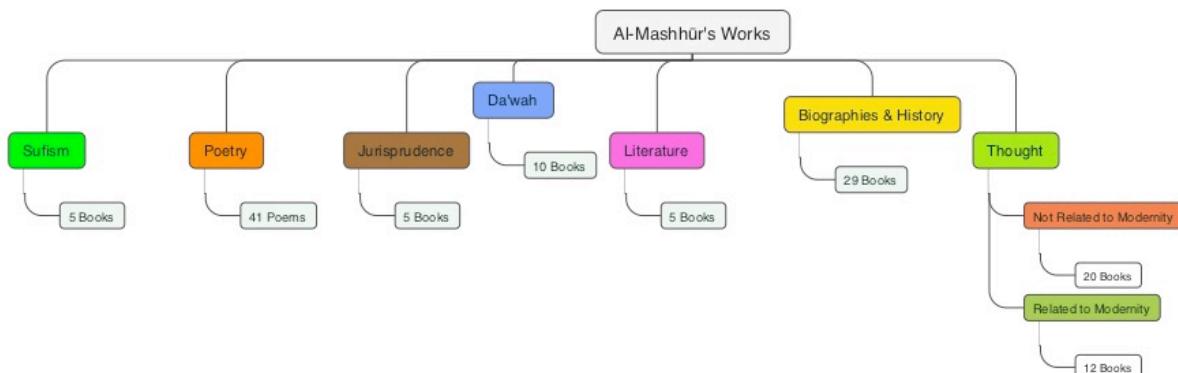
justifies each stage. For ease and clarity, I will use the above procedures as headings and elaborate how each one was practically carried out in this project.

3.4.1. Corpus Selection and Enhancement:

Choosing the corpus required the creation of a full list of Al-Mashhūr's books; a codex which will appear at the end of this thesis. However, a partial screenshot of the list will be at the end of this section. As a prolific writer, Al-Mashhūrs works are 128 books in total; distributed between 7 subjects; *sufism*, jurisprudence, *da'wah*, didactic poetry (*manzumāt*), literature, hagiographical history and thought. While the book titles, as is shown in the below diagram, appear uneven in their distribution amongst the categories, I argue that the size of the books themselves contribute to such impression. Didactic poetry books, for example, that account for almost one third of the total number are small epistles that range between 20 and 50 pages each and make a total of two large size books. Al-Mashhūr uses poetry as an educational tool to teach young generations about the lives of scholars, saints, other important figures and events in Muslim history and connect Muslims with their history through the recitation of such poems in gatherings conducted to celebrate the lives of those figures and remember those events (Al-Mashhūr, 2020, Al-Mashhūr, 2012). Al-Mashhūr's works that focus on intellectual topics are 32; this represents around 25% of his total works. As the focus of this thesis is Al-Mashhūr's engagement with modernity, the main criteria for choosing which works to include in the corpus was the work's discussion of modernity or some of its themes. This criterion itself shortened the list to 12 works which are totally dedicated to themes of modernity or deal partially with it. Repetition of the same ideas and thoughts in addition to the size of related content were two other reasons why 3 out of these 12 works were not on the list of the coded corpus. However, I refer to them in the discussion and quote them in support or elaboration of ideas presented in his main 9 works that were selected as the corpus here.

The nine selected books that formulate the main corpus for this research project are: (1) *Iḥyā' Lughat al-Islam al-Ālamiyah* “Reviving the Universal Language of Islam” (2) *Maqālat Paris* “Paris Essays” (3) *Al-'Uṭrūḥah: Wujhat Naṣar Taḥlīliyyah li Maḥw al-Ummiyah al-Dīniyyah al-Muṭbiqah 'ala al-Wāqi'* *al-Ilāmī al-Mu'āṣir* “The Thesis: An Analytic Perspective to Eliminate Religious Illiteracy Dominating the Current Media Reality” (4) *Al-Mustashriqūn wa al-Tanwīriyyūn: Tadafur Mubham fi Marhalat Al-Ghuthā' Nahw Hadaf Mushtarak* “The Orientalists & the Enlightened: Dubious Collaboration in the Phase of Worthlessness towards a Common Objective” (5) *Al-Idāh wa al-Ishārah lima Aṣab al-Ummah min Hazā'im al-Suqūf al-Munhārah* “Clarification & Indication of What Afflicted the Ummah from the Defeats of the Collapsing Ceilings” (6) *Al-Rumūz wa al-Asābi' bayna Qaramiṭat al-Ams wa Qarāṣinat al-Yawm* “Symbols and Fingers: Between the Qarmatians of Yesterday and the Pirates of Today” (7) *Al-Muslimūn fi Mujtamāt al-Dhillaḥ bayna Siyasat al-Dajal wa 'Ibadat al-Ijl* “Muslims in Humiliation Societies between Deception Politics and Calf Worship” (8) *Al-Dala'il al-Nabawiyyah al-Muabbirah 'an Sharaf al-Madrasah al-Abawiyyah* “Prophetic Indications to the Honour of the Fatherly School” (9) *Iḥyā' Manhajiyat Al-Namaṭ al-Awsaṭ* “Reviving the Methodology of the Middle Path”. In these nine books, Al-Mashhūr discusses various themes of modernity including; colonialism and its impact, loss of authority, Islamisms, sectarianism, extremism, nationalism, nation-state, democracy, political change and revolution, scholars and politics, production of knowledge, autonomous reason, religion and science, secularisation, modern and traditional education, orientalism and anthropology (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). These themes have been identified already in our discussion in the first chapter about approaching modernity through its components as well as the discussion that followed in the literature review chapter; this identification process has also been guided by referring to Al-Mashhūr's biography. For example, Al-Mashhūr's discussion of colonialism and its impact on traditional education and

his views on modern education are put in context when we read in his biography about his role as an educator, the school that both he and his father established and their interaction with colonial powers who tried to impose modernist views on the school (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Similarly, we can understand why Al-Mashhūr discusses Marxism and materialism when we read his autobiographical works on his own experience in Marxist Yemen and the process of secularisation as part of modernisation (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). He also offers his evaluation of other forms of Islam that emerged in response to the question of ‘what went wrong’ like political Islamism, Wahhabism and modernist Islam and offers his own project of how Muslims should deal with modernity or whether they should ask that question. He justifies his critique as much as his proposals and defends his thesis against expected criticism. The selected works, I argue, include his full response to modernity and cover all his ideas in this field. These nine works are 1382 pages in total and, as explained earlier, include the substance of his engagement with the themes of modernity. The remaining three works are either repetition or elaboration of already saturated ideas and, sometimes, touch on modernity in a brief one or two references. However, to maintain the rigour and depth of this study, I have read the remaining three books and an extra intellectual work of Al-Mashhūr which, despite focussing on the Ba 'Alawi ḫifi *tarīqah*, touches in two places on the relation between religious scholars and politics, a topic which can be remotely related to his larger discussion of modernity.



For the enhancement of the selected corpus, I have arranged the corpus chronologically according to which stage in his life, Al-Mashhūr wrote these books. This is to ensure that they reflect his thought trajectory in an adequate manner, development of ideas embedded in them can be traced, comparison of his initial project and its last version can be facilitated. Enhancement continued throughout since questions that emerge during analysis lead the researcher to continually enhance the corpus and reflect on it (Fairclough, 1992). The process of coding has shown me that themes of modernity are discussed in certain works more than others and therefore I arranged the works in this way; so much so that we can say that the works can be arranged in a chronological manner as well as in a focus-based manner. The above order of the nine works is based on their focus on modernity i.e. the presence of such engagement in them. An exact chronological order face multiple challenges; first, Al-Mashhūr did not publish his books as he wrote them possibly because of his forced migration and lack of settlement early in his life; they would remain unpublished for years before he had the opportunity to do so. I noticed two points in his life where there was a surge in publishing his works; 2002 when he published, numbers 3 (3rd edition), 4 (1st edition), 5 (1st edition), 6 (2nd edition) of the works featured above, in addition to many other works, and 2015 when he published many other books not listed amongst the above nine. The remaining five books mentioned above were published in this order; 2004 number 7 (1st edition), 2005 number 1 (2nd edition), 2009 number 9 (2nd edition), 2010 number 8 (2nd edition) and 2014 number 2 (a manuscript). I had to trace the actual date of writing these works in Al-Mashhūr's autobiographical works, another reason why his biography is important for locating his thought and needs to be included in this thesis. I noted that some works are reprinted in the same edition at two dates that are 10 years apart. For example, *al-Usus wa al-Munṭalaqāt* was published in 3rd edition once in 2006 and another time in 2015. Despite seeming of a negative impact, I argue that this shows that Al-Mashhūr did not change his views on the topics discussed in many of these books as the content remained

the same in the reprint. Through Al-Mashhūr's autobiographical works, I was able to locate the dates during which certain works were actually written despite being published much later. I noted that despite being a prolific writer, Al-Mashhūr was not quick to publish his thoughts and sometimes, he took a long time to complete one book while working on other books simultaneously. For example, his book *Al-Rumūz wa al-Asābi' bayna Qaramīyat al-Ams wa Qarāśinat al-Yawm* number 6 in the above list, was written over the period of 1978 to 1985 but published 16 years later in 2001. Since he settled in KSA in 1980 and until his death in 2022, Al-Mashhūr was continuously writing and many of his unpublished works, which are also included here, carry the watermark 'a copy under development' which made obtaining the final edits and tracing the last version a challenge. However, I have always ensured that I have the final copy by asking Al-Mashhūr's archiver (and son-in-law) to provide it and as this research project was carried out in the last 6 years of the life of Al-Mashhūr himself, I was assured that no further development was carried out on the manuscripts that I have. As part of enhancing the corpus, I have thoroughly revised the full list of works, provided the publishing dates, the edition and the date in which Al-Mashhūr has written the book if different from the publishing date. For this last action I depended on the date Al-Mashhūr mentioned at the end of his introductions, at the end of the manuscript or the mention of the book he makes in his autobiographical works. To the best of my abilities, I have covered all the works that relate to his engagement with modernity and beyond. However, there remains multiple works especially the *manzūmat*, for which finding the date was extremely difficult. Al-Mashhūr would include the date sometimes but most of the time he would not, sufficing with the fact that since these poems are meant to be recited at recurring gatherings and as their theme was not particularly descriptive of any historical stage, writing their date was not of prime importance.

Transliterated Title	Translated Title	Publication Year
<i>Al-Hāfi' ala Jidār Al-Dhākirah: Rihlat Al-Hayāh Bayn al-Wāqi wa al-Qawāqī</i>	Engraving on the Wall of Memory: A Life Journey between Reality & Shells	1986
<i>Shurūt Al-Itṣāf li man Yurīd Al-Muṭāla 'ah fi Kutub Al-Aslāf</i> <i>Bayna Yaday Al-Dajjāl</i>	Prerequisites for Those Who Want to Read the Books of the Predecessors Before the Advent of the Dajjāl	1995 1996
<i>Qabasāt Al-Nūr fi Iḍāh Ḥayāt Sayyidi Al-Wālid' Ali b. Abi Bakr Al-Mashhūr</i>	Glimpses of Light: A Biographical Account of My Father Ali b. Abi Bakr Al-Mashhūr	1996
<i>Jany Al-Qitāf fi Manāqib Al-Ḥabib' Abd al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf</i>	Reaping the Fruits: A Biographical Account of the Virtues of Ḥabib' Abd al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf	1998
<i>Al-Rumūz wa al-Asābi bayna Qaramiṭat al-Ams wa Qarāṣinat al-Yawm</i>	Symbols and Fingers: Between the Qarmatiyah of Yesterday and the Pirates of Today	2001
<i>Al-Khurūj min al-Dā'irah al-Ḥamrā'</i>	Leaving the Red Circle	2001
<i>Al-Abniyah Al-Fikriyah Al-Jāmi'ah li Thawābit Al-Tarīrah Al-Ālāwiyah</i> <i>Al-Idāh wa al-Ishārah Lima Aṣab al-Ummah min Hazāim al-Suqūf al-Munhārah</i>	Intellectual Structures Encompassing the Foundations of the Alawi Path Clarification & Indication of What Afflicted the <i>Ummah</i> from the Defeats of the Collapsing Ceilings	2001 2002
<i>Al-Muṣṭaḥriqūn wa al-Tanwīriyyūn:</i>	Orientalists & Enlighteners: Dubious Collaboration in the Phase of Worthlessness towards a Common Objective	2002
<i>Al-'Uṛūjah: Wujhat Naẓar Tahlīliyyah li Maḥw al-Ummiyyah al-Dīniyyah al-Muṭbiqah'ala al-Wāqī al-Ilāmīt al-Mu'aṣir</i>	The Thesis: An Analytic Perspective to Eliminate Religious Illiteracy Dominating the Current Media Reality	2002
<i>Al-Tanṣīṣ Al-Mathbūt li Ibrāz Al-Mawāqif Al-Ālamīyyah fi Manhaj Āl Al-Bayt bi Ḥardamawt</i>	A Documented Demarcation: An Exposition of the Universal Stances of the Way of the Prophetic Household in Ḥardamawt	2002
<i>Al-Muṇāṣarah wa Al-Mu'aṣarah li Kāffat Mansūbi Madāris Āl Al-Bayt fi Al-Marḥalah Al-Mu'aṣirah</i>	Assisting and Supporting Those Attributed to the Schools of the Prophetic Household in the Current Stage	2002
<i>Al-Muhājir ila Allah: Aḥmad b. Īsā</i>	Aḥmad b. Īsā: The Migrant to God	2002
<i>Ubayd Allah b. Al-Muhājir</i>		2002
<i>Al-Imām Muḥammad Ali Bā' Alawi</i>		2002
<i>Al-Ashraf Banū Jadīd</i>	The Sharifs of Banu Jadīd	2002
<i>Al-Ustādh Al-Ā'ẓam Al-Faqīh Al-Muqaddam</i>	Al-Faqīh Al-Muqaddam: The Senior Teacher	2002

Figure 6: Partial Screenshot of Al-Mashhūr's books

3.4.2. Coding and Analysis:

At the onset of the coding stage, I faced a challenge finding the right coding software. The commonly used Nvivo qualitative analysis software does not handle Arabic texts and therefore there was a need to look for an alternative. I found ATLAS.ti; a similarly powerful qualitative analysis tool used for coding, analysing, creating network diagrams and notes and data visualisation. Having added the above nine documents to the Atlas.ti software, I engaged in a coding enterprise in parallel with writing notes and memos of similar ideas and references that will be of importance for the analysis process. Since the process of coding was taxing at times, I invested the breaks in tasks of writing around certain themes that I have collected bulk of quotations on. I was aware that these writing tasks remained incomplete as long as the coding process was going on. However, this initial attempt of structuring a cohesive body of Al-Mashhūr's views on certain themes of modernity proved beneficial much later when the coding was complete. It was of great help for the overall visualisation of the networks of those codes and the inter-relationality of certain ideas. After coding was complete and while writing up was underway, I created mind maps and networks identifying the areas of modernity that he deals with, a step which, in addition to its vitality for the overall enhancement of codes, helped me conceptually structure the final chapters, ensure the flow and the interconnectedness of the intra-chapter arguments, identify underrepresented topics and note the main focus of his project. In the final stages of writing up, for instance, the initial number of codes was reduced from 125 upon completing the coding process down to 71 due to the continuous process of enhancement, merging the codes and creating networks that identifies relations between them and helped me avoid repetition and sharpen the focus of the project. To ensure rigour, I have also created a statistical excel sheet where I listed the areas of modernity that he deals with as well as his project, included the number of codes in each, grouped these codes together with the number of quotations underneath each group in addition to the total number of quotations

that cover this respective area of modernity. This exercise has confirmed my early findings through the enhanced coding process and the code networks and I will refer to details of this in the conclusion in addition to including a screen shot of the list itself in the following pages. I will also include at the end of this thesis a full list of the codes created, samples of codes with their quotations, sample of code network diagrams. However, a partial screenshot of the codes, the interface of Atlas.ti in action can be found [here](#).

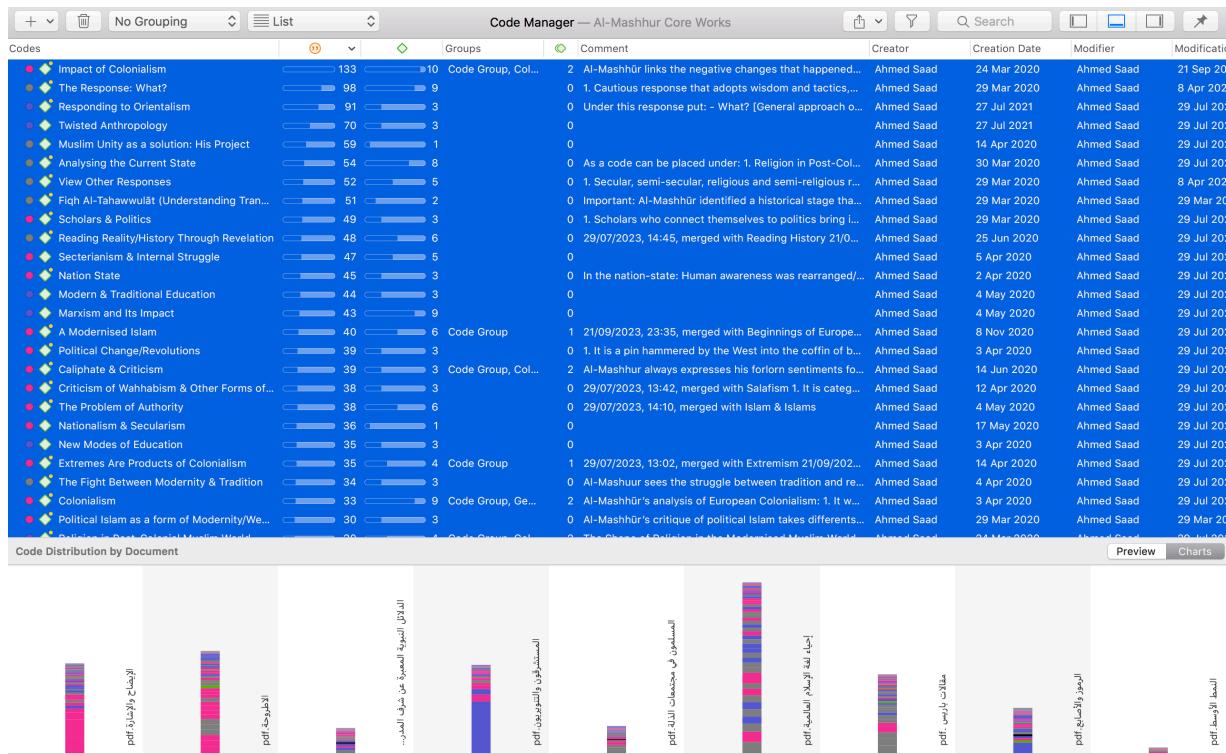


Figure 7: Partial Screenshot of

Codes, comments and books from Atlas.ti interface

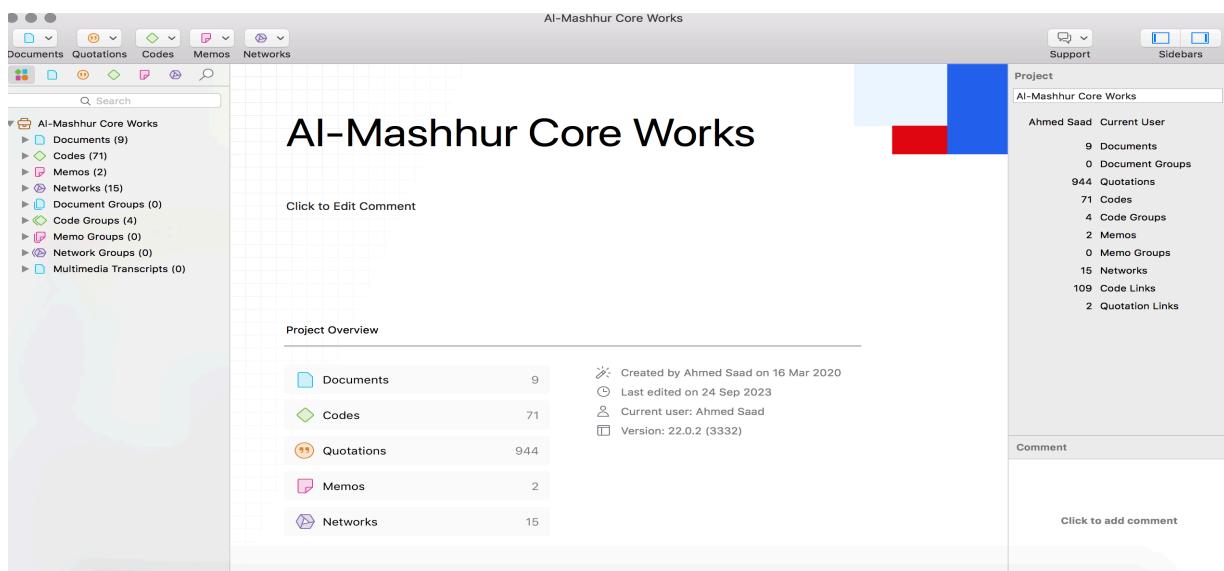


Figure 8: Partial Screenshot Atlas.ti interface showing the total number of

documents, codes, quotations, groups and networks

Table 1

Theme	Codes	Quotations	
Philosophical Modernity	23	565	
	Education and Similar (4 Codes)	126	
	Orientalism- Anthropology (3 Codes)	189	
	Production of Knowledge and Similar (16)	250	
Political Modernity	18	699	
	Colonialism, Impact..etc (3 Codes)	184	
	Caliphate & Loss of Authority (2 Codes)	81	
	Nation-state, democracy, nationalism, revolution (4 Codes)	128	
	Islamisms-Secterianism..etc (9 Codes)	308	
Shape of His Project	22	628	
	Analysing the Current State (5 Codes)	143	
	What.. (2 Codes)	101	
	Moral Components (4 Codes)	140	
	Intellectual Components (5 Codes)	146	
	Why.. (5 Codes)	90	
	Knowledge about the West- limitation (1 Code)	9	
Individual-Other	7	50	
	Capitalism-Communism (3 Codes)	27	
	Symbolism (1 Code)	13	
	Women Issues (3 Codes)	10	
Total Number	71	1942	

Figure 9: Screen shot of excel sheet showing the areas of modernity, codes of each, total number of quotations, code groups (number of codes), number of quotations in each group – NOTE: total number of quotations include repeated ones

The coding process was a continuously enhanced process which required re-exploring the coded works and thoroughly reflecting on them. Similarly, it was part of the analysis process as it unveiled the interlinks between ideas and the direction Al-Mashhūr's response takes. Colonialism and its impact, for example, featured heavily in the project and that was discovered through the amount of quotations that fall under this code. Causal and consequential themes were also discovered through the coding process and made visual through the code networks. Writing notes and reflections on the codes and the quotations themselves was an activity where coding and analysing merged as part of analysis process. Selection of limited works, continuous enhancement of the codes themselves, deleting some, adding some, merging some and separating some was instrumental in an in-depth analysis and as Hjelm (2014a) argues, gave discourse analysis the space to perform at its best (Hjelm, 2014a). Another important function this coding process has provided was discovering how Al-Mashhūr's life and journey have impacted his ideas and engagement with modernity. Growing up as an educationist, as shall be shown later, had a direct impact on how he saw modernity's impact on traditional education; his discussions of education and the impact of colonialism on education are prominent in his discussion (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Al-Mashhūr's continuous reference to Marxism and communism, something that the coding process unveiled, emerged from and was constructed through his experience in Marxist Yemen where he was alienated, ridiculed and forced to leave (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). As part of the analysis, the coding process has also shown me that modernity is something experienced and while this experience is recoded in his biographical works, the impact of the experience and the intellectual engagement with it are expressed in his books. This realisation was another reason why a critical biography was necessary for this research since the engagement ensued from the experience which is depicted in the autobiographical works.

3.4.3. Evaluation:

An evaluative stage does not start after an analysis, it starts with it; it starts as a researcher decides which parts of the discourse are more important and worthy of attention. This evaluative process is building a discourse through engaging with discourse; or what van Dijk (1984) terms as discourse becoming the object, the product and the method of investigation (van Dijk, 1984). It is important at the stage of evaluation that a researcher is aware of their own ideological imperatives that inform their evaluation (Locke, 2004). I started this research project driven by an interest in Al-Mashhūr's ideas as unexplored individual case of a post-colonial Muslim intellectual; and having a direct access to Al-Mashhūr was helpful for facilitating many reference and works that are not available to other researchers. I am aware that a human sense of appreciation and gratefulness lies between the lines of this research; but, as much as some may preview this as a bias, I preview it as a privilege because what makes us interested in engaging with ideas is a sense of appreciation for the people who bore them. What matters then is, what follows during dealing with those ideas.

At a practical level, the evaluation of this project engages in a multi-layered questioning of its proposals in relation to other critics of modernity, the premises on which it engages with modernity, are they rejectionist, accommodationist or pragmatic. What is the shape of a critique of modernity stemming from within the context of modernity; in other words, how can modernity be the space of constructing a critique for itself; a system of questioning itself? Evaluation here is a process of distancing oneself from the discourse to remain committed to the critical engagement with it. In this specific case, evaluation will include closing two circles; a small circle of Al-Mashhūr by placing his discourse in its place of the spectrum of Muslim responses to modernity and a larger circle of what can that tell us about Muslim responses and what does that mean to academia and how does it contribute to changing our perception.

Essential part of the evaluation is questioning Al-Mashhūr's knowledge of modernity; his construction of the modern that exists beyond his context, how is or would it be different? It will also investigate his performance of action with words, use of words as symbols, the continuous tone of persecution and his prejudices. I acknowledge the multiplicity of understandings that can emerge from variant properties of texts as well as those interpreting them (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999) and I argue that coding, enhancement of codes, awareness about biases are effective and crucial methods that deal with that challenge as they secure a proper degree of objectivity. An essential part of that process towards objectivity is reflecting on my positionality and its impact on my research. Due to its significance, I dedicate the following final section of this chapter to 'positionality'.

3.4.3.1. Positionality

Put plainly, there is no way one can escape the social world he lives in to study it (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, Malterud, 2001). Instead of attempting to do so, I lay out my positionality here and examine how it affects my research. I proceed in a tripartite fashion. I explain first my relation to the subject matter generally, namely traditionalist Muslim responses to modernity. Secondly my relation to the particular subject namely Al-Mashhūr and thirdly, how my background affects my research. I am a traditionally trained, traditional Islamic scholar and a graduate of Al-Azhar, a centrally important historical and contemporary centre of traditionalist teaching and learning. In addition to my training here, I have spent time studying under the tutelage of traditionalist scholars in the religious sciences for more than twenty years, Al-Mashhūr amongst them. This grants me - to a limited extent - the position of an insider when considering traditionalist Muslim responses to modernity more generally, and Al-Mashhūr's project more specifically. I am an insider in that I identify with the teachings of traditionalist Islam, and in that I was interested by Al-Mashhūr's ideas even before I met him.

This status has conferred significant advantages (Savvides et al., 2014) that have allowed me to conduct my analysis to a great degree of depth; it is due to my relationship with him and by extension his literary executors that I was able to access a significant volume of unpublished and untranslated biographical and theoretical primary source material. It is crucial to note that my interest in his ideas does not equate to fascination or agreement, and that in fact, subjecting his views to this systematic coding process, evaluating them by referencing other intellectual stakeholders who belong to a variety of schools and intellectual attitudes reduces researcher's personal biases and ensures what Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) and Hufford (1999) call, a continual demarcation of the difference between the personal voice and scholarly one (Hufford, 1999, Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999).

In addition to my sharing a commitment to traditional Islam as a practice, there are significant metaphysical and theological commitments which position me as an insider from these perspectives; adherence to the dominant theological and legal schools of Sunni Islam (explained in my biography of Al-Mashhūr) entail commitments to an orthodoxy and an orthopraxy, both of which inform my own outlook. These are further buttressed by a commitment to the moral, largely Mosaic architecture of the Islamic faith (shared generally by the religions of the Abrahamic triad), again influential in my own analysis of the effect of the modern on contemporary societies and the responses available to it. Whilst the Weberian ideal of value-neutrality is beyond my reach as it is most academics (Weber, 1949, Johnsen and Fitzpatrick, 2022), I have put into place mechanisms in dealing with much of the primary source material I was able to access to ensure my background and theological/metaphysical commitments are prevented from adversely colouring my analysis as far as possible (Nagel, 1986).

As an insider, a commitment to methodology in a qualitative research like this thesis, allows

richness of understanding since qualitative research presupposes a closer relationship to the subjects and, rather than denying an insider the possibility of researching a religious experience, it sets out requirements to evaluate the success of a research project; these are reliability, validity and generalisability (Stausberg and Engler, 2016, MacIntyre, 1999, Stausberg and Engler, 2014). While an emic (or internal view) allows an insider ability to function within the system of concepts (or religion) and provides the advantage of a rich interactive process, a commitment to methodology and set of methods make their research impervious to bias and distortion (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, Pike, 1999). This is achieved through documented systemised analysis that secures reliability and replicability, relevant sufficient data with clear criteria for inclusion or exclusion and strict observance of patterns to ensure transparency, trustworthiness and validity, and continuous analysis and investigation of resonance to ensure generalisability (Guba and Lincoln, 1983, Stausberg and Engler, 2014).

My position as an insider is not absolute - in fact, there are significant points of divergence in my own experience which impact my research positively. Whilst I adhere to traditionalist Islam, I am not an insider to Al-Mashhūr's project in terms of his background and context (which I identify later as influential in shaping his thought). Born in Egypt where I also spent the first twenty-five years of my life, I have not experienced the political or social changes Al-Mashhūr did and references heavily, and have had no direct contact with the radical revolutionary political organisations like the Marxist factions Al-Mashhūr encountered before his exodus from Yemen. In addition, my experience in living, studying, and settling in Britain is at odds not only with Al-Mashhūr's experience, but many other traditionalist Islamic scholars who have not spent significant time residing outside the Muslim world, meaning I am something of an outsider when considering the subject's context. My experience of modernity thus differs significantly to that of Al-Mashhūr. During my time in Britain and the West more

widely, I have, through various teaching engagements, encountered and taught Muslims from various denominations and ethno-cultural backgrounds. In unique ways, these communities (often descended from migrant communities from Muslim countries) have grappled with modernity as it instantiates itself in contemporary Britain. Such experiences are rooted not only in the post-colonial Muslim world, but also in the post-imperial, post-industrial West (where Muslim communities rarely if ever form demographic majorities in their locales). My engagement with these communities have been concerned with and reflexively informed by these experiences, setting me apart from Al-Mashhūr and many other traditionalists who have spent little or no time outside the Muslim world.

Whilst I make every effort to engage with my own positionality, I am acutely aware that such engagement is not transient. In the end, there is no single or right design for a particular research project, but there is always a need for continuous revision, reflexivity and commitment to integrity (Roof, 2014, Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

3.5. Conclusion:

This research adopts social constructionism as a philosophical approach due to its consideration of social and historical contexts as forces contributing to the knowledge-forming processes without losing sight of the human as a maker of meaning. In addition, its pragmatic viability makes social constructionism useful for a single case study like the one at hand as it offers the needed depth and asks appropriate questions. On a practical level, critical discourse analysis – as a methodology – works with constructionism to bring together a focus on the role of discourse in constituting ideas and an investigation on how ideas are built and relations are reproduced through the mediation of the human. It is this nature and focus of critical discourse analysis that underpins its strong relation with constructionism. Taking this methodology to

practice, the method this research was conducted comprised of three overlapping and interconnected stages; corpus selection and enhancement, systematic coding and analysis and finally an evaluation. While the evaluation considered both the ideas and their creator, it included a process of reflexivity and consideration of biases and positionality to ensure rigour and optimum objectivity.

4. Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr: Life on the Move

4.1. Biography: Relevance and Construction

A biography is always involved with the social and cultural politics of the time and contains the cognitive, historical and linguistic processes that the subject engages with (Lee, 2009, Nadel, 1983). In this way, a biography provides a perfect context for its subject's personality, thought and views with all its attached events and interpretation of those events. To trace views and ideas, to locate thought shifts, to spot the birth and development of intellectual trajectories, the starting point should thus be writing a biography. If a critical discourse analysis neglects the context in which the discourse was constructed, it loses not only its credibility but its purpose as well. Therefore, we need a biography to situate Al-Mashhūr's thought.

Writing a biography is neither easy or free from contention. Part of what makes it difficult is the continuous symptom of ambiguity about the human side of the subjects (Madaule, 1967, Nadel, 1983); nother is the mediatory job of a biographer in telling someone else's version of events rather than dealing with the events directly. In their version of events, people tend to perform actions with language using the agency of tropes reducing, representing, integrating, distancing, augmenting or trivialising and a biographer needs to be conscious of these intricate operations (Nadel, 1983). We cannot forget though, that it is this 'someone else's version of events' that impacts their views and thought and this is exactly why we need a biography; to know how they make sense of their events and turn them into thought. A process of writing a biography necessarily involves subordination and suppression of selected events and highlighting others (Nadel, 1983). How selection and highlighting shape the narrative is what makes biography writing unfree from contention; but that point can be a guideline rather than

a trap, an incentive to remain ‘dispassionate’ and focussed on tracing all known facts and received opinions back to their sources; to maintain epistemological security for the reader (Lee, 2009, Hamilton, 2007). Similarly, both biographer and reader should remain aware that a biography’s success lies in its acknowledgement that it cannot be a comprehensive or an absolute record of its subject (Nadel, 1983, Hamilton, 2007).

Al-Mashhūr’s autobiography is comprised of four volumes, each covering a different stage of his life. The first is called *Al-Hafr `ala Jidār al-Dhākirah: Rīḥlat al-Hayāh Bayn al-Wāqi` wa al-Qawāqi`* (Engraving on the Wall of Memory: A Life Journey between Reality & Shells) in which he relates and reflects on the years from his birth until the death of his first wife (1947 – 1977). The second is a detailed account of his encounter with Marxism in Yemen and his escape journey to KSA to join his father, brothers and his own children who had left before him to Jeddah (1977 – 1981). The title of this sequel is *Al-Khuriūj min al-Dā'irah al-Hamrā'* (Leaving the Red Circle); the red here symbolising Marxism and circle symbolising the difficulty of leaving Yemen. (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a) The remaining two are memoirs that cover his daily activities in KSA and his later return to Yemen; one is entitled *Halāwat al-Tajribah al-Murrah* (The Sweetness of a Bitter Experience) covering 1981-1991 and the other is entitled *Sanawāt al-Istithmār al-Mufid* (Years of Beneficial Investment) covering 1992-1993. My focus, for this biography, will be on the first two works for five reasons; 1) they chronicle the formulation of his thought through the most challenging periods of his life; many of the books used to investigate his intellectual project were written during or in response to the events of the years covered in those two volumes 2) he gives the first two volumes special attention and collective title as *Fayḍ Al-Dhikrayāt* (Ever-Flowing Memories) which confirms their continuous impact on his thought and personality 3) the latter two works are mainly records of daily activities in a memoir form rather than eventful turns or philosophical insights 4) the

author includes private family matters in the latter two which he has not allowed me to share 5) they are still unpublished manuscripts with missing names and details. I will make use of and reference to the other two volumes to ensure a level of completeness in this biography.

4.2. Ḥadramawt: Essential Historical Background

Due to the essentiality of the southern eastern Yemeni region of Ḥadramawt, where Al-Mashhūr hailed from, its importance in framing the discussion of this chapter and its impact on multiple aspects of Al-Mashhūr’s life and thought, it is vital that a brief history of the region, its social and political loyalties and strata is presented before moving on to discuss Al-Mashhūr’s biography.

The southern Arabian region of Ḥadramawt, covers a large area of land in the east of modern day Yemen and has a long coastal line which, throughout history, gave it access to the world of the Indian Ocean and placed its coastal cities like al-Mukalla and al-Shihr on the trade route (Bujra and Brehony, 2017, Serjeant, 1962, Freitag, 1999). Characterised by its rural life and mud-brick architecture, the region’s sparse population were driven at times of drought and frequent political instability to travel to South East Asia, India and East Africa. In a 1930 estimation, 30 per cent of the population lived in diaspora (Bujra and Brehony, 2017). In addition to its economic importance which attracted the British to its vital port of Aden as early as 1839 (Bujra and Brehony, 2017, Smith, 1953), the region was the house of the historical town of Tarīm which since around 950 CE. became the home of the posterity of Ahmad b. Isa al-Muhājir, an 8th generation descendant of the Prophet who migrated to the region from Baṣra; and the family took the name Bā‘Alawi after one of al-Muhājir’s grandsons (Serjeant, 1957,

Bang, 2003, Buxton, 2013). The honorific title *sayyid* (female; *sayyidah* pl. *sādah*) has historically been used to refer to those of Prophetic descent. Over the time, the Bā'Alawi *sādah* formed an influential and tightly-knit stratum with multiple sub-branches of the family; and in a society where genealogical consciousness ran high and was coupled with a system of stratification, they were placed on top of the social pyramid, subordinated by non-*sādah* religious scholars (*mashāyikh*) and tribesmen (*qabā'il*) (Bujra and Brehony, 2017, Bang, 2003, Serjeant, 1957, Edaibat, 2022).

In a society divided by tribal loyalties, the Bā'Alawi *sādah* held considerable power and influence as religious scholarly elite, providers of religious and spiritual learning, social and political mediation. They became the scholars, the propagators, the Sufis, the saints, and the ascetics and were depicted as paragons of righteousness, generous benefactors, indispensable mediators and intercessors on behalf of the downtrodden acting as a check on the arbitrary power of oppressive temporal rulers (Knysh, 1999, Serjeant, 1957, Bang, 2003). Functioning from sacred spaces they have created called *hawṭahs* (sing. *hawṭah*), an enclave dedicated and believed to be protected by the aura of spiritual power of a founding saint who is later buried in the sanctuary, *sādah* practiced some sort of sovereignty; a parallel authority next to the temporal one by the sultan (Edaibat, 2022, Serjeant, 1957). The *hawṭah* was administered by a *mansab*, a capable *sayyid* from the progeny of the founding saint, who is elected by local tribal elders, and as a guardian of the *hawṭah*, is expected to serve as a peacemaker, spiritual leader and neutral arbitrator in return of privileges like freedom from customs and taxation, votive offerings and bequeathed tithes on land (Edaibat, 2022, Serjeant, 1957, Knysh, 1993). It is not the purpose of this brief historical background to delve into the academic debate over the original theological background of al-Muhājir himself, as it aims to highlight the well-established scholarly and spiritual role of the *sādah* within the Hadrami society. Transcending

the debate over whether they were the first bearers of the Shāfi‘ī *madhab* and Sufism to the region or it was already existent prior to their arrival, the Bā‘Alawi *sādah* have established a tradition of Shāfi‘ī scholarship and a Ṣufī Tarīqah named after them, turning their city of Tarīm into a centre of learning in Hadramawt, Yemen and beyond, for centuries to this day (Knysh, 1999, Serjeant, 1957, Serjeant, 1962, Bang, 2003, Freitag, 1999).

The region of Hadramawt was a scene for political instability and tribal tension and, since their arrival in 1839, the British had decided to focus on the strategic port of Aden and not to extend their protectorate to the hinterland Hadramawt, but they were initially drawn to get involved in the disputes between the local Kathīrī and Qu‘ayṭī sultanates in 1888, leading to direct intervention and the arrival of Harold Ingrams the first British political officer in Hadramawt who played a big role at different levels in the years to come (Bujra and Brehony, 2017, Maknūn, 2018, Smith, 2002, Boxberger, 1997). Ingrams, a young colonial official who previously worked in Zanzibar arrived in Aden in 1934 and was dispatched by his seniors to Hadramawt to investigate the situation in the *sādah* controlled city of Tarim, the Kathīrī’s Say’ūn and the Qu‘ayṭī’s Shibām and Al-Mukalla and an unprecedented peace truce between the two sultans was signed on 12th of February 1937 (Smith, 2002, Petouris, 2017). Post 1937, the region witnessed more British intervention to reform education, develop modern state structure and centralise political power unwittingly creating a field for anti-colonial nationalist ideas to grow, but as the short-lived British led Federation of South Arabia was discontinued by the British retreat from ungovernable Aden in 1967, the whole region fell to Marxist nationalist revolutionaries tied with the Soviet who took it in a different direction (Smith, 2002, Harrington, 2014, Maknūn, 2018, Petouris, 2017, Carapico, 1998).

4.3. Al-Mashhūr's Life: Preliminary Remarks

Al-Mashhūr was born on the 26th of May 1947 while Yemen was still a British colony (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). British colonial proposals of modernity touched everything from education and social life to politics and the economy (Hinchcliffe et al., 2013, Dresch, 2002, Maknūn, 2018, Cigar, 1990) challenging the centuries-old role of the *Sādah* and, thus of Al-Mashhūr, in the local society. At the age of twenty, he witnessed the British retreat and the advance of another modernising regime; the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY). The Republic's approach was more radically secular than that of colonial Britain and, running a one-party Marxist state, the new rulers embraced the use of violence against traditional scholars (Harrington, 2014, Cigar, 1990, Brehony, 2017, Carapico, 1998). Al-Mashhūr found himself facing a Marxist regime which openly saw religious scholars as something belonging to the past, marginalised them, forced them into exile, and, embracing modern theories of progress, liberation theology, and proximity to the Soviets, was deeply hostile to traditional Islam (Naumkin, 2004, Asad, 2003, Cox, 1984, Cigar, 1990, Al-Mashhūr, 2001a, Al-Mashhūr, 1986). It was in this milieu that he witnessed the dissolution of traditional kinship and religious ties and their replacement with an order rooted in the individuals' economic function, forcing fractions of society either to comply or flee (Stookey, 1982). This form of what Shepard (1987) calls "radical secularism" has impacted his views of secularism and its attachments in general.

As he found out that under the new regime, his traditional education credentials did not qualify him to continue his role as a teacher, Al-Mashhūr had to go back to study for preparatory education in 1969 at the age of 22, for secondary certificate in 1973 at the age of 26 and then in Aden's College of Education (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). His encounters with education and other government officials, generally characterised as he described by their hostility, impacted his

views on ‘modern education’ as part of modernity’s project and, as the new regime made life difficult for him, he had to escape to KSA in 1980 to face new challenges (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a, Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Al-Mashhūr lived in colonial and post-colonial Yemen, for 33 years amounting to almost half of his life. During this time, he accrued -often at great personal risk- first-hand experience of key themes of modernity; a violent rupture from the past, abandonment of its symbols and values, and a rejection of traditional authority. These gave way to a secular, progressive society in which religion was viewed – at best – unfavourably. The migration to KSA placed him in the epicentre of Wahhabism, a literalist movement at the heart of whose doctrines is disrupting and unsettling the established order of things and, as such, a variant manifestation of Western modernity (Bunzel, 2023, Bauer, 2021). His time in exile continued to inform and shape his views on modernity in a new guise; it was in KSA that Al-Mashhūr’s focus encompassed the dangers of extremism, divisive dangers of *takfir*, fragmentation and he began to highlight the importance of looking for common grounds for work (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c).

Whether in Yemen or KSA, components of modernity- many of which were identified in the introductory chapter of this thesis- were present throughout the various stages of Al-Mashhūr’s life and he was always in conversation with them. Equality, European superiority, colonialism, orientalism, secularism, fragmentation, nation-state, modern education, democracy (Asad, 2003, Loomba, 2015, Giddens, 2005, Pippin, 1999, Cox, 1984) and others are the essential subjects of his intellectual works. It was within this environment that Al-Mashhūr’s identity was formed, and as the self is “formed by accidents, contingencies, education and environment” (Lee, 2009 p.16), biographical study allows us launch an investigation of the identity as a first step before exploring his discourse. This identity manifests in, “anecdotes,

revelatory incidents, description, conversation, encounters with others, moments of decision-making, single acts, preferences, particularities and repeated habits” (Lee, 2009 p.15)

4.4. Al-Mashhūr’s Life: Between Three Cities

Al-Mashhūr starts the first volume of his memoirs by describing how he preferred, as an incentive for memorising the Qur'an, a bicycle over a steel chair, “I chose movement in its stimulating format” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.6). This simple statement sums up a governing theme of his life; movement. Due to this theme and their centrality and prominence in Al-Mashhūr’s life and works, I have made the three cities Al-Mashhūr lived in (Ahwar, Aden and Jeddah) the main themes of this biography underneath which I critically discuss features of his life, its impact on his ideas and link to his books. At the end of this chapter, a timeline with dates will be included for ease of reference.

4.4.1. Ahwar: Where Formation Started

Ahwar, a small rural city of a sparse population on the coastal road that links Aden and Al-Mukalla, served as the capital of the Lower Awlaqi Sultanate itself part of the Aden Protectorate since 1888 and later a member of the British-led Federation of South Arabia since 1960 i.e. one year after its formation (Hardy-Guilbert and Rougeulle, 1997, Smith, 1953, Al-Salimi, 2010). In 1942, the local Sultan ‘Aydarūs b. ‘Ali b. ‘Abdullah b. Mahdi requested ‘Ali b. Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr Bā ‘Alawi, a religious scholar and a *sayyid* who was visiting from Tarīm, to settle down to provide religious and spiritual education including establishing a primary school for the locals (Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Upon settling, ‘Ali Al-Mashhūr married a local *sayyidah*; Shaykhā bint Abu Bakr b. ‘Umar Al-Hāmid, the *mansab* of the Sultanate and established a school, which after completing its new building in 1945, became

his base for education and other communal activities (Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Al-Mashhūr, 2007). In its inaugural year, the school, named *al-Madrasah al-Maymūnah*, had a cohort of 80 students, hosted -for the first time in the sultanate - a girls' department and hired a group of local teachers to assist the founder (Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Al-Mashhūr, 2007). The marriage of 'Ali Al-Mashhūr and Shaykhā Al-Hāmid produced 12 children, the second of whom was Abu Bakr Al-Mashhūr, the subject of this biography, born on the 26th of May 1947 (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Al-Mashhūr, 2017b). This initial scene in the life of Al-Mashhūr is important in understanding his relationship with education from the beginning and why it features prominently in his writings about modernity later in his life. It is of equal importance to note that 'Ali Al-Mashhūr's background as the provider of education in the sultanate and Shaykhā Al-Hāmid's being the daughter of the *mansab* places Al-Mashhūr in the centre of scholarly and spiritual authority, let alone the family's proximity to the Sultan. Being the religious and spiritual aristocracy in Yemen for centuries, in addition to a monopoly of educational and other institutions until the late years of the British rule maintained the social stratification of the Yemeni society and made the *sādah* a key player in any conversations with the British (Stookey, 1982, Dresch, 2002, Serjeant, 1957, Petouris, 2017). The British proposals to reform education and open modern schools meant removing from the *sādah* one of their most important resources; education; and by supporting modernist Irshadis¹ opening schools in Yemen, the British were siding with *Sādah*'s long term opponents (Petouris, 2017, Bujra and Brehony, 2017).

¹ Irshadis are members of Jam'iyyatul Irshad al-Islāmiyyah established in 1914 in Indonesia in defiance to the *Sādah* monopoly of religious institutions. Further details on the 'Alawi-Irshadi clash will be discussed in later chapters.

In Ahwar, a simple rural environment, Al-Mashhūr spent the first 26 years of his life, where earlier in his life he was one of the most privileged children; he was one of three people who owned a bicycle, the other two being the sultan and a son of a big businessman (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Growing up in rural environment will impact his views of city life, his ideas about progress and technology as we shall see later on in this biography. As a child and adult, Al-Mashhūr's life in Ahwar revolved around three elements that shaped his worldview, ideas and were his source of knowledge about the external world. Al-Mashhūr acknowledge that his childhood was a "carefully guided one, a stage of guided discipline" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.3); conservative and protected, or one may say, restricted and un-nuanced.

4.4.1.1.The Father:

Al-Mashhūr mentions his father in almost every page of his biography; for Al-Mashhūr the son, his father was not just a father; rather, a mentor, a spiritual guide, a source of knowledge and an inspiration. Of this eminent impact on Al-Mashhūr's life, Al-Mashhūr wrote that his father's teaching was "perfectly engraved on his memory that it shielded him at challenging times" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.1) and, of his father's company he wrote, that it was "the longest phase that filled my mind with knowledge" (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.8). Cherishing the young Al-Mashhūr's spirit of competitiveness and willingness to excel, the father was keen to grow him into a responsible individual and prepare him as a scholar for the future; he insisted that Al-Mashhūr memorised the Qur'an at an early age, encouraged him to open religious ceremonies and gatherings with Qur'anic recitation, deputised him to deliver the Friday sermons and lead *tarawīh* when he was fourteen, trained him to deliver poetry and devotional *nashīds* and kept a corrective close eye on him at all times (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Rather than seeing this as a form of restrictive supervision, Al-Mashhūr appreciates this care as he says, "my father was preparing my soul and my mind for special tasks and missions that would not

have been fit for anyone else" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.16). Once distracted from some duties of memorisation by reading *Samīr* children's magazine, the father punished his son by tearing the magazine apart (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Even in choosing which games to join, the father's opinion was prominent; so much so, that Al-Mashhūr was a make of his father. This proximity to his father enabled Al-Mashhūr to read closely the father's qualities and understand what he wanted for him. In Al-Mashhūr's view, his father was a unique leader who carried concern for everyone, a sincere community worker that dedicated all his effort to helping people, a principled teacher who did not allow any violation of truth and propriety, a disciplining guide who corrected mistakes and instilled lessons and, at the same time, he is the protective father who foresaw dangers afar and prevented them from hitting his son (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Al-Mashhūr fondly mentions two incidents that are of importance to our discussion here; when an educational committee arrived from Abyan and Aden to test students in *al-Madrasah al-Maymūnah* and suggested a list of successful students to continue their education in Abyan and Aden modern schools, the father intentionally removed Al-Mashhūr's name from the list insisting that he stays under his supervision, depriving him the chance to go to public school and, consoling him, "if you persist and show patience, you will be better than them" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.10). The second incident, related Al-Mashhūr, "(the father) would model my interests to an aim that he had in his mind; whenever he noticed that I was keen on linguistic, Qur'anic and juristic knowledge, he would encourage me and give a lot of gifts but whenever he saw me growing interest in modern science or foreign languages like English, or any subject that did not serve his ambitious plan, he would express his dislike and dissatisfaction" (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.8). These two incidents reveal, not only the threat modern education had presented to the father's traditional education, but also, how such situation have formulated Al-Mashhūr's views on modern education as an antithesis to traditional education which he calls *al-Talīm al-Abawī* (fatherly education). To him, the mistake of *al-Madrasah al-Hadīthah* (the

modern school) was that it presented itself as a substitute to the long established *al-Madrasah al-Abawiyyah* (the fatherly school); it did not complement it, but abrogated it. We shall see later how such views on modern education were intensified by colonial and post-colonial intervention in the affairs of *al-Madrasah al-Maymūnah*. Not only did Al-Mashhūr write a complete book on urgent procedures to protect the *arbiṭah* (traditional religious colleges and schools) from the modern school under the title *al-Istidādāt al-Hathīthah*, but also used the terms ‘fatherly school’ and ‘modern school’ in every book that I have selected for analysis in my investigation of his response to modernity.

It is important to mention here that his father’s proximity to the Sultān, within a context of advice and correction, was in harmony with; or rather, informed Al-Mashhūr’s idea of the role of scholars as checks on rulers and refuge for the weak laity; and their need to remain neutral mediators and apolitical peace-makers. In light of this, we understand his criticism on how nation-state regimes, including PDRY, used some scholars to support their political agendas and how revolutionaries used some scholars and religious historical figures to advance their political ambitions (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). One other aspect of how Al-Mashhūr saw his father relates to how, upon arriving in Ahwar, the latter criticised and reformed the multiple superstitious and un-Islamic practices that dominated people’s daily life, like bewailing the dead, demon exorcising rituals known as *zār*, pre-contractual consummation of marriage and vendetta (Al-Mashhūr, 1998b). This refashioning of local cultural norms not in line with religion, manifested in Al-Mashhūr’s outright criticism of the practices of the Sufī school, to which he belongs, whenever he found that such practices mix culture with religion resulting in contravening, what he perceives as the teachings of Islam (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a).

The impactful role of Al-Mashhūr's father did not cancel women's impact on his life. Al-Mashhūr, who wrote multiple works for women including a few biographies of famous Muslim women figures and addressed the role of women in modern society in his books (Al-Mashhūr, no date-b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002d, Al-Mashhūr, 2014), spoke about three women who impacted his life; his mother Shaykhā, his sister Qamar and his first wife Khadījah Al-‘Aṭṭās. Stressing the importance of a woman's presence in a man's life he wrote, “behind every man, there is a woman and forget about [the man] being great or not, for greatness does not change the situation. Truthfully, women are behind many decisions taken by men even if they are not married. Whenever a man acts, there is a woman's wish behind it whether positive or negative” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.31). Al-Mashhūr commends his mother's trust of his father's way of educating and upbringing the children seeing such a subordinate role as *fitri* (natural); an uneducated wife trusting her qualified husband's method of educating and leading the whole family (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). The mother's non-interfering policy is a valued method of adhering to the traditional family roles, believes Al-Mashhūr, something which will have its impact on how he views, not only the role of men and women in a traditional family, but women's role in the society at large. The second woman in Al-Mashhūr's life is his sister Qamar who was born two years after him and died when he was eleven. Despite seeing his male siblings as rivals who share, not just the toys but mother's and father's love, Al-Mashhūr saw Qamar differently (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Her presence was a cool breeze that created a desired balance between her brothers and her death left a vacuum behind and taught him sadness for the first time (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Here again, the word ‘balance’ reveals how he sees women in the society; an essential component that balances men and teaches them but, according to Al-Mashhūr, when their *fitrah* remains untainted by foreign ideas. The third woman in Al-Mashhūr's biography is his first wife Khadījah Al-‘Aṭṭās whom he married at the age of twenty on his father's advice and blessings (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). To Al-Mashhūr,

marriage is an experience of emotional completeness and maturity; the wedding night conversation is “a mature traditional experience” where his “heart and entity traversed to the world of completeness” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.85). After Yemen’s independence, the new Marxist regime required Al-Mashhūr, amongst other teachers, to enrol in formal education and all schools, regardless of their origin, were nationalised and given a national curriculum (Carapico, 1998, Al-Mashhūr, 1986). At the age of 22, and only a graduate of grade four in a primary community school, Al-Mashhūr had to go back to education and continue from the point his father had stopped him; a journey that, despite its positive outcomes, further impacted his views on modern education. Unlike his father, his wife who initially offered her certificates if that could help, encouraged Al-Mashhūr to study for the preparatory certificate which he completed in 1969, then the secondary certificate in 1973 (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Al-Mashhūr describes his wife in this situation as “the one who shares joys and sorrows” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.95), another affirmation of how he sees woman’s essential role in a family. When he had to move to Aden to join university, Al-Mashhūr’s wife followed him with their children; there she persevered through three difficult years, hosted by her family while he was looking for a house through the Marxist government housing system and when a house became available and preparations for moving started, she died in labour after ten years of marriage. Remembering those ten years Al-Mashhūr wrote that his wife was, “a mother, a teacher, a planner, a friend and a serious voice. She was a woman who feared darkness, mice and night bird sounds. She was a wise mind that appreciated marital life with its bitterness and sweetness; patient when patience was required, merciful when compassion was needed and amicable when amicability was prime; a helping hand, a loving heart and a caring soul, a beacon that lit my professional and intellectual life. Like the Sun, she shone over my whole being, a fertile soil the brought forth fruits and vegetation” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 pp.119-120).

Al-Mashhūr's understanding of women's role in the society was formed through these three figures; his mother, sister and wife. When Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah opened its doors for girls' to learn reading and writing, Qur'an and some religious studies, it was a leap in a society where women were deprived the right of inheritance let alone the right of education (Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Al-Salimi, 2010, Ingrams, 2013). This limited leap carried out within the inherited boundaries of a conservative society that sees woman's role mainly at home, was soon to be challenged by modernisation changes introduced by the British who gave space to women in the open society; adopting liberal modes of living and education and turning the nearby city of Aden into a cosmopolitan liberal city (Hinchcliffe et al., 2013, Dresch, 2002). After the departure of the British, the Marxist regime— in breaking with the past and connecting with the modern- overturned the whole social order, adopting more radical measures to liberate women, including compelling women from Sayyid and religious personage families to work in factories and manual labour and give up their veil, and allowing nakedness and free mixing in what was perceived as a conservative society (Naumkin, 2004, Mermier and Goffey, 2010, Hourani, 1991, Bidwell, 1983).

Bearing the tradition that he inherited from his father, Al-Mashhūr saw the changes that happened to women's role in the society as 'suppression of the *fitrah*' and a damage to a calm society that caused confusion of natural roles (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). This understanding features prominently in three of his books and is present in the remainder of his works; all analysed in this thesis. For example, he speaks of how modern changes, facilitated by state apparatus and modern education, have encompassed woman's role in the society and pushed her from managing her home to compete with men at work, in the office, in politics and state jobs abandoning her traditional role (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). Of women under Marxism, he wrote that women were forced to participate in protests to support the revolution for bringing what

revolutionaries thought of as achievements and gains for women and they were only shame upon shame (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b). Although he published these views in 2001 and 2002, he stated that he wrote the manuscript of these books between 1978 and 1985 (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a) and we only know this through his autobiography that carries a record of his views, the shapers of his views and the books where he deposited his views.

4.4.1.2.The Mosque:

The Ahwār society during Al-Mashhūr's childhood, teen years and beyond was a simple rural one that he describes as "a big family, connected by love and faithfulness that stem from truthfulness, simplicity and love of Allah and the Messenger" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.41). I argue that his views on modern fragmented societies are informed by his growth in this interconnected society as we shall see later in this biography. With no electricity, the only proper lantern in the city was used to guide people to evening and dawn prayers in the mosque. After a day of classes in the new school building, the mosque was the hub for the students of Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah; it is in the mosque where the school itself started. In the mosques of the city, "many spiritual relationships grew" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.47) and in the mosque, Al-Mashhūr was trained under the supervision of his father. After the word "father", he mentioned the word "mosque" in the first volume of his biography more than any other word; almost in every page. He relates how "Jamal Al-Dīn mosque was a spiritual beacon that kindled his faith during his formative years" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.55) and continues to list the subjects he studied with his father in that mosque including *tafsīr*, *jurisprudence* and *taṣawwuf* and the famous panegyric poem of *al-Burdah*. The mosque was and continued to be central in Al-Mashhūr's life, he grew up in one, played around one and later in his life when he moved to KSA, worked in one. Since a young age, his daily activities were scheduled around prayer

times and that taught him to be disciplined about his time, something which he notes, “was almost mechanical from as early as the age of seven” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.42).

However, something significant happened and changed people’s relation to the mosque; the arrival of electricity. Al-Mashhūr remembers how, when the government decided to connect the city to electricity, it was a cultural shock to the locals who were not ready for it (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). While acknowledging its importance and praising the local government for the step, Al-Mashhūr sees this ‘modernisation’ creeping into his simple city as a dangerous toy in immature hands and minds. Using a *hadīth* that speaks of insects lured by the glow of fire to throw themselves in, he strikes a similarity between fire and Marxism, and between those insects (also gathered around city lights) and ignorant people rushing to new ideas and technologies without proper thinking and reflection (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). A revealing text here where Al-Mashhūr says, “progress, as I understand it, is not electricity, water or material civilisation; it is rather man’s understanding of his time, using its means while remaining intellectually independent” (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.64). This theme of opposing imported ideas, intellectual colonisation and subordination is how Al-Mashhūr saw the idea of progress, a modernisation on Western terms and such a theme is present throughout his books where he spoke of orientalism, anthropology, secularisation, nation-state, democracy, capitalism and other attached components of modernity. Al-Mashhūr blames this imported modernisation for inciting simple-minded people to despise their tradition with its manners, religious directives and beliefs; it sold them the idea of progress on terms that are not theirs and without warning them of its outcomes. He concludes that when the booming of music and world news deafened their ears and filled their time, what would be expected from a Bedouin, a peasant, a student and their likes other than neglecting their religious duties, emptying their mosques and turning their backs on their customs, guides and intellectual symbols (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Similar to Al-Mashhūr, Yusuf (2017) concludes his treatise on defending the traditional method of

physical moon sighting against modern attempts of calculation, by highlighting the negative role of electric lights played in changing people's thinking about their purpose on earth and its contribution to disconnecting them from the cosmos (Yusuf, 2017). Like Hamza Yusuf and other traditional Muslim scholars, Al-Mashhur struggles between the positive side of modern civilisation and its negative impact on feeding people's desires and emptying their souls. He bitterly laments how the numbers of mosque attendees dwindled and the voice of the *adhān* was subdued by the "drums of the new reality and the power of the shells" (Al-Mashhūr, 1986 p.65). His symbolic reference to the arriving civilisation as 'drums' and 'shells' reflects his view of the modern; loud and hollow as drums, empty, fragile and fragmented like shells. These references are crucial in understanding his engagement with modernity and its proposals of progress and fragmented society, secularisation and subordination of religion, subjectivity and identity. The tone of that engagement was shaped, I argue, by those early experiences and influences. In the arrival of modernity to his small city, Al-Mashhūr saw a decline of religiosity, a change in traditional social relationships and a downplay of the centrality of the mosque and its rituals.

4.4.1.3.The School:

The Sādah's virtual monopoly of religious and educational institutions in Ḥaḍramawt put them in direct contact with colonial rulers and made them later a target of the Marxist regime's nationalisation policies (Freitag, 1999, Petouris, 2017, Carapico, 1998). In Aḥwar, Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah was not just a base for Al-Mashhūr and his father to provide education; it was the hub for other community initiatives and projects. Almost a reformed school with a distinguished building and a hybrid curriculum that combined traditional subjects taught in Ḥaḍramawt *ribāts* and modern subjects taught in Aden schools, Al-Mashhūr describes his father's school as, one that provided a comprehensive education that included acting and

drama activities, excursions, literary competitions and handcrafts and catered for moral, intellectual and practical growth of its students (Al-Mashhūr, 2007, Al-Mashhūr, 1998b). Despite providing an account of the assessment process followed by the school, lists of dramas played by its students, rules and regulations employed by the school's headmaster 'Ali Al-Mashhūr, we do not know what modern subjects were taught in the school apart from geography and maths (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Al-Mashhūr, 2007).

On the 9th of April 1955, a letter from the deputy British Agent to Aden Sir Kennedy Trevaskis addressed to the regent of the Lower 'Awlaqi sultanate Sheikh b. 'Ali spoke of a recent visit paid to Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah by the Education Officer of the Protectorate Mr. Gordon who submitted a report to his seniors of his surprise at the clean, well-behaved students and serious educational methods followed by the school which, Mr. Gordon believes, were excellently efficient (Al-Mashhūr, 2007). At the end of the letter, Gordon is quoted to have suggested though, that when places are available for Al-Maymūnah students to continue their education in intermediate and higher government schools in Zinjibar and Aden, the current curriculum would have to change to ensure students were qualified for the new phase (Al-Mashhūr, 2007).² Al-Mashhūr saw this suggestion as, "the first instance of official attention to the already rising education and an attempt to demolish the religious foundations on which the school curriculum was built" (Al-Mashhūr, 2007 p.546). The issue of colonialism and education is central to Al-Mashhūr's engagement with modernity; he witnessed colonial intervention in traditional education and shifting its purpose towards what Stookey (1982) calls producing trained individuals for the lower levels of bureaucracy (Stookey, 1982). The colonial

² See a photo of the letter at the end of this chapter

intervention in education included as Petouris (2017) notes encouraging the modernist Irshadi movement to open schools in the Hadramawt homeland; the Irshadi schools were geared towards modern curriculum to equip the Hadramis beyond the limited roles they had in the stratified society (Petouris, 2017). Similarly, Stookey (1982) observes that when the British and later the Marxists shifted the function of teaching from “the hands of Islamic scholars to the hands of their protégés, they were committing another breach in the traditional social structure” (Stookey, 1982 p.43). Petouris (2017) correctly concludes that such a step in particular, and development in general, will be interpreted as stemming from the perennial struggle between tradition and reform (Petouris, 2017). In the case of Al-Mashhūr, it was seen as an attack on traditional education which he believed was already being reformed, from within, by his father. Freitag (1999) notes a bias in authors focussing on Hadrami traditional education in favour of modernist salafi tendencies against *sayyid*-led religious education; and neglecting serious reforms of the education system, style of teaching and curriculum as early as the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century in which Al-Mashhūr’s great grandfather, ‘Alawi b. Abd al-Rahman b. Abī Bakr Al-Mashhūr (1846-1922) was instrumental (Freitag, 1999). The new shift was multi-layered; it reshaped the student-teacher relationship, the process, the curriculum, the ethos and the whole purpose of education.

In line with their modernisation process and the restructuring of the old sheikhdoms into modern states, the British intervention in education, aimed at training the locals, both at home and overseas, to fill in the jobs needed for the modern state apparatus including clerks, nurses, men and women teachers and police (Little, 1968, Stookey, 1982, Bruck, 2005). These new purposes turned education into what Yusuf (2019) and Ogunnaike (2018) call a servile system that teaches utilitarian skills required for offering the services the society needs but deprives the students from understanding or even questioning why they do the things they do (Yusuf, 2019, Ogunnaike, 2018). At the same time, modern schools’ students became open, during

their training courses home and abroad, to ideals of modernity including like autonomy, liberty, secularism, equality and nationalism; these were main triggers for resisting colonial rule (Stookey, 1982, Naumkin, 2004, Dresch, 2002, Bruck, 2005).

Awakened by the new education, the old Tribal Levies tribesmen now turned into uniformed officers for the Federal Army, drew unfavourable comparisons between modern colonial systems and the poor situation in tribal areas; and, feeling the need for a change while witnessing the new standards of living, they embraced the Nasserite nationalist propaganda coming from northern Yemen and Egypt (Little, 1968, Carapico, 1998). With an ideological genealogy to the egalitarian message of the Irshadis and now Marxists, these tribesmen, now officers, became the vanguard of the National Liberation Front (NLF), a nationalist guerrilla organisation with a wide youth following, which led the revolution that gave birth to the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY), later changed into the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) with the NLF itself metamorphosing into the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) that ruled a one party country (Carapico, 1998, Bidwell, 1983, Lackner, 1985). The revolution, which Ingrams (1963) calls, "modernism of the Nasserite variety", brought a regime which, despite formal recognition of Islam as the state religion, was among the most secular in the Arab world (Ingrams, 1963, Gause, 1988). Within the state's nationalisation campaign (Carapico, 1998, Gause, 1988), Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah, amongst others, was nationalised, Al-Mashhūr's father was forced to resign and leave the country to Jeddah, and Al-Mashhūr was forced to either earn a recognised degree or lose his job; a step that made him leave Ahwār and move to the cosmopolitan city of Aden where he experienced other manifestations of modernity and a more intense relation with Marxism. In his engagement with modernity, Al-Mashhūr focuses on the colonial use of education to change religious identities and create a generation of graduates Western in taste and thought but local in features; a predicament that the Muslim world has been suffering from ever since (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b,

Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). Placing these discussions in the context of the story of Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah enables us to link his discourse with its context, understand why he views modern education in this manner and the background to his criticism.

4.4.2. Aden: Shaping Challenges

4.4.2.1.Collapsed Past: No Place in the New Yemen:

If Al-Mashhur's views on modernity were initially formulated by his experiences of the modern in Aḥwar, they were intensified by his encounters with it in Aden. Al-Mashhūr's need to have a degree necessitated him to move to Aden with his family in 1974 where he divided his time between a teaching job and his studies in the University of Aden's College of Education (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). Al-Mashhūr describes this period as a phase of intense transitions which, not only declared his traditional studies redundant, but forced his father out of Yemen to save his life from, what he describes as, the terror of atheist guerrillas (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). Life in the buzzing capital, he notes, widened his perspective and enriched his life experience; yet, his father's teachings shielded him from the psychological and intellectual changes that occupied the noisy city (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). In Aden, encounters with modernity intensified as he witnessed how, prior to their departure, the British administration had changed the face of the city that became more European; at all levels, than anything (Hinchcliffe et al., 2013, Little, 1968, Bidwell, 1983). After his arrival to Aden, Al-Mashhūr found himself facing the secular Marxist regime which dealt with the like of Al-Mashhūr with suspicion, marginalisation, public humiliation, torture and, in multiple instances, killing (Cigar, 1990, Bidwell, 1983, Gause, 1988). With massive nationalisation, the government ran housing on a priority process (Stookey, 1982) and Al-Mashhūr described how difficult it was for him to get a house due to his religious background (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Promises of equality, proclaimed by the regime, were broken and a sense of nostalgia and

distrust in its underlying ideals was triggered (Ferguson, 2006). To government officials, Al-Mashhūr was a reminder of the past, an enemy of “Marxism that, consecrated by the State, set itself up as a counter-model in face of the social and religious conservatism of the previous generation” (Mermier and Goffey, 2010). Al-Mashhūr came to counter more themes of modernity; nation-state as a new political unit, radical secularism that persecutes religion and a failed promise of equality. Setting itself as a grid for treating social inequalities, the modernity project clashed with the social organisation already in place (Ferguson, 2006) and generated sentiments of inequality; an antithesis of its original proposals. The seeds of this project were inherited from the colonial West which transformed racial differences into real inequalities, not just against a race but against castes and fractions of the society (Loomba, 1998, Naumkin, 2004).

Penning many poems during his time in Aden and beyond about his experiences, Al-Mashhūr spoke of the pain – and the trauma- it had caused him (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). In his anthology *Bukā Al-Qalam* (The Crying of the Pen), Al-Mashhūr voiced those feelings of pain and trauma that were still impacting him as late as 1986 (six years after leaving Yemen) when he wrote, “Give me my pen,
my pain is deep; it is unforgotten
Allow me a while,
to hide my trouble,
my chest is tight,
and thoughts are boiling, within my blood
my temper is disturbed
my boredom has spread, all over me” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005a).

The anthology contains poems that extend to as late as 1996 and Al-Mashhūr wrote an introduction for it in 2005 but, at the time of writing this thesis, it was not yet published. Al-Mashhūr's time in Aden informed his perception of modernity in a disturbing way, his view of Marxism is shaped by his trauma and clashes with the Yemeni regime and this tone is evident in his works where he discusses Marxism and equality, liberation and nation-state (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005c).

4.4.2.2. Leaving the Red Circle: Identity and Religious Exile

Cigar (1990) discusses the scarcity of studies in Western languages about the state of Islamic scholars in the PDRY as the country “remains by and large closed to Western scholars” and that most of what is known about “non-regime actors as religious activists, comes from government sources” (Cigar, 1990 p.185). This gives the current study more significance as it provides, through access to works and studies in Arabic, a wider range of accounts of what happened on the ground to religious scholars and activists who did not join the Marxist camp. As mentioned earlier, the Marxist regime was violent towards traditional Muslim scholars. Al-Áydarūs (no date), Stookey (1982), Carapico (1998) and others recount how religious scholars were seen as vestiges of underdevelopment and part of the constellation of superstitions, some kidnapped and killed, private libraries and endowments nationalised, rare religious manuscripts burnt, and the authority of the older generation of leaders undermined as necessary measures for moving towards progress and democracy brought by the revolution (Al-Áydarūs, no date, Gause, 1988, Stookey, 1982, Carapico, 1998, Cigar, 1990). Meanwhile, young men and women lay together on the beaches of Aden with beer bottles, Soviet songs played in the background and educational curricula underwent a re-tailoring and history books were rewritten to prepare the next generations to carry on the revolutionary liberation (Mermier and Goffey, 2010, Bidwell, 1983, Little, 1968). Bidwell (1983) depicts the intensity of the situation saying, “The

whole of the old social order had been overturned. The tribal chiefs were either in jail or in exile or otherwise deprived of power which was exercised by officials whose standing depended upon position in the party rather than birth. There had been deliberate attempt to humiliate to humiliate the Sayyids and other religious personages by forcing them to do manual labour and by compelling their ladies to give up their veils. The regime denigrated Islam whatever it felt safe to do so and party leaders no longer made even a token appearance in religious ceremonies. In 1971 a statute gave formal equality to women; they worked in factories and the veil practically disappeared" (Bidwell, 1983 p.253). This situation of losing all social certainties (Veen, 2014), destruction of the religious and spiritual authority of people like Al-Mashhūr, giving rise to extreme subjectivity and denying religion access to public life left its impact on Al-Mashhūr and contributed to how he viewed modernity, since these themes of authority, subjectivity and the role of religion in public life are central to the discourse of modernity.

Unable to cope with the new Yemen and suffocated after the death of his wife Khadījah, Al-Mashhūr sent his children to join his father in Jeddah and prepared to leave the country; the red circle of Marxism as he describes it. Leading a secret escape and having to be smuggled out of the country to KSA via North Yemen; Al-Mashhūr recorded the details of this dangerous journey in a book of 159 pages which he calls, 'Leaving the Red Circle" (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). The years leading to the escape were the lowest in Al-Mashhūr's life (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a); a widowed man without his children or larger family who had gradually left to KSA, unsettled and challenged by everything around him. He calls that stage a nightmare where all the pillars of the faith were dust binned and a war on Islam was launched (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005a). However, he acknowledges the limitedness of his experience in that phase (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a) and that his passionate responses were the fruit of the intellectual school

he grew up in. I argue that being forced to religious exile, Al-Mashhūr's sense of authenticity was strengthened and, traumatised by the experience of having to leave his homeland, his clinging to tradition increased. Religious exiles activate "the role of religion as a source of cognitive and emotional support" (Goździak and Shandy, 2002 p.129). In addition, religious émigrés tend to see their tradition as part of their core being and identity imagination (Montenegro, 2018). Life in diaspora intensifies the need to preserve and the feeling of being secure in nostalgia; tradition turns into an assertive identity that gives the person security and meaning. This will impact Al-Mashhūr's engagement with modernity; being seen as a power that forces religion and its proponents into exile. Contrasting tradition with modernity shows a rise of the number of uprooted people; a feature of the modern world where people are largely on the move without a permanent abode (Bauman, 2019, Eaton, 2007). Al-Mashhūr's exile was a by-product of modernity.

In August 1980, Al-Mashhūr started his escape which he describes as "a journey to save life" (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.17) but a decision not easy to take. The dangers of the illegal journey started from the first moment; he left his watch behind because in such a journey, there is no need to keep the time, he relates. Neither the smell of the smoking driver nor of the piles of dried fish he was asked to sit on was a pleasant start; but both forced him to keep quiet. Coupled with cautiousness that was commanded by the driver, silence was essential for the success of the mission. This journey unfolds not only aspects of Al-Mashhūr's personality but also strategies of coping with exile and the challenges of facing a new reality far from home and these are essential to understanding his approach to modernity as a new reality and his strategies of engaging with it. A man known for being expressive, Al-Mashhūr, silent outwardly, was internally engaged in a conversation with himself; a conversation that is relevant to some themes of modernity. He asked himself, "what if I die in this adventure?" and replied that death

is the destiny of all people; it is where his wife travelled in the end (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). Then he posed a plethora of questions that relate to belief in destiny and his answers were archetypal of a conservative Muslim. The doctrine of predestination provided comfort to individuals who were exiled as it gave them a sense of belonging to a special group (Veen, 2014). Does this reliance on belief and mysticism in dealing with the loss of his homeland permeate his response to modernity which led to the loss of a long-established tradition? Muting one's will and immersing in religious meaning is a strategy to disallow a sense of suffering and it is possible to see the same tactic adopted in dealing with the bigger challenge of modernity. Even his view of a narrow road as a reminder of *Al-sirāt*, the path that will be stretched over Hell for people to pass on to Heaven, shows how recourse to religion has become his tool to interact with and view any new experience. Through the lens of religion and its revelation he will be reading the proposals of modernity later.

The society he was leaving continued to engage his mind; he complained that the new laws introduced in the society would be of no benefit unless linked to religion which he sees as the *sine qua non* of any modernisation effort. He justified to himself that the Marxists left him with no options but to escape and while in the car, he noticed how people, vary in their destinations yet take the same vehicle (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p43). This idea will shape his suggestions to Muslims dealing with modernity in pluralistic societies and working out differences for the sake of a larger good. Al-Mashhūr was evidently a reflective and philosophical personality; with every encounter in this journey he had a deep insight and always linked them to the Qur'an or other religious texts; the only texts he was most familiar with through his upbringing. In his exile journey, he immensely questions human will; the will of those who chose to push Yemen down the route of Marxism as well as his own will in projection to Divine will. His thoughts on human will, I argue, will shape his take on human autonomy and reason in particular and

attached issues within modernity. Rationalisation and autonomy are defining themes of modernity (Cox, 1984). Had he not been forced to leave his homeland; these questions would not have emerged and this can be seen as the bright side of challenges; they force the person to investigate their certainties and that will evidently be more prominent when he engages with the intellectual challenge of modernity. In a moment of fear, Al-Mashhūr wishes to have possessed some super powers to see what is hidden in a forest he comes across and even in this moment he quotes from tradition the tale of the pre-Islamic Zarqā Al-Yamamah – a woman with keen sight- who detected enemy soldiers from the distance of one week even when they hid behind trees and alerted her people (Khoury, 2008). This may symbolise, in our discussion, a level of engaging with modernity and an attitude of dealing with challenges based on conjecture at times. It is evident that Al-Mashhūr loves nature and prefers villages and a life of simplicity over city life with its hustle and bustle; as he grew up in the rural Aḥwār. This gives us an insight on how he will view complex lifestyles which are sold as part of modernity's integrated package (Ferguson, 2006). He describes how he became captivated by some picturesque and scenic remote villages he saw during his journey and, while criticising a house he saw built close to a cliff, he acknowledges that people have different perspectives (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). Philosophically, Al-Mashhūr may be referring to the unsettled rock of modernity and finds justification for people who prefer “change as the only permanence and uncertainty the only certainty” (Bauman, 2019 p.viii). The underlying notion of this situation and similar ones scattered throughout this journey is Al-Mashhūr's acceptance of multiplicity of perspectives. Even though they will not escape his comments, different views and choices are still respected for what they are. This is clear in his books *Al-Utrūḥah* (The Thesis), *Al-Muwājahah* (The Confrontation) and *Iḥyā’ Lughat al-Islām al-Ālamiyyah* (Reviving the Universal Language of Islam) in which, while critically engaging with the proposals of different Islamic intellectual currents, he offers what he calls, *mabda’ al-qawāsim al-*

mushtarakah (the principle of common grounds), *mahwa al-ummiyyah al-dīniyyah* (erasing religious illiteracy) and *nabdh al-tahrīsh wal fi’awiyyah* (shunning animosities and sectarianism) (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2011). Veen (2014) rightfully mentions that “the experience of exile could induce a believer to put theological difference into perspective” (Veen, 2014 p.79) and as fragmentation is part of the themes of modernity, Al-Mashhūr offers his strategy to deal with it.

Al-Mashhūr does not tell us exactly how long his journey took, but he mentions that the first phase of the journey from Aden in to Al-Hudaydah in the north took six weeks (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a). While liking Al-Hudaydah’s spaciousness and planning, he criticised the chaos and violation of law that he witnessed there something which he attributes to people’s disrespect of the government; a point that can be related to his views on authority and supremacy of law; but which law? When he criticised local Yemenis keenness on their traditional costume characterised by a curved dagger in a belt tied around the waist known as *jambiyah* (Mackintosh-Smith and Yeoman, 2007), he brought his religious perspective of what is tradition: “tradition, in my opinion is a Yemeni’s fierce defence of the correct Islamic thinking which was supported and spread by his forefathers in the corners of the globe. He should use all modern tools to continue their noble preservation. A modern day Yemeni is being swallowed by modernism that destroys their intellectual tradition while still defending the necessity of wearing a skirt and a dagger” (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.72). Paradoxically, the keenness on the local guise was a response to the colonial guise of crisp white shirts worn by modernists i.e. it was launched from the premise of tradition (Dresch, 2002) but Al-Mashhūr’s corrective introduces tradition as a meaning not a costume. This critical look at what constitutes tradition helps us identify how he perceives adoption of technology and modern inventions while maintaining the core of a tradition; his concept of discursive tradition as expressed in his

works. Al-Mashhūr ardently criticises external social change that is not associated with moral discipline and system, he believes that “order is one of the forms of civility; it stems from the tradition while security, economics, planning, services, traffic regulation, electricity and others are all aspects of modern civilisation” (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.74) and a combination of both is what is needed in a society whose members do not acknowledge central authority or respect peaceful coexistence.

In his journey from Al-Hudaydah to Jeddah, Al-Mashhūr passed through Táiz, Ṣanáa, Ṣádah, Al-Khaḍrā, Najarān, Al-Tā’if and Makkah. In regular fashion, in each of these cities, he gave his thoughts on his encounters, especially in the first three. In his view, it is difficult for a person to get rid of life styles one had adopted for a big part of one’s life and embrace life styles of a new society; thus, those who uncritically swallow the new reality with its problems, are uprooted; they see their life merely as a chance for earning a living. Integration, Al-Mashhūr believes, should be the outcome of an evaluative process in which a person uses all their abilities to read and analyse new societies, their ideas, habits and implications (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). These thoughts inform us that conversation rather than subordination and dictation is what Al-Mashhūr suggests as a way of dealing with ‘the new’ including the modern. Having been given the chance to settle in Yemen from 1991, Al-Mashhūr preferred to divide his time between Yemen and Jeddah and only returned in the last two years of his life when he could not do that anymore. Whether for his family in Jeddah or other reasons, making home of the exile is, I argue, a form of integration and acceptance (Haar, 1998). Another interesting observation of Al-Mashhūr is of a Jewish community in an old Yemeni village en route to the north; he notes, “they could only be distinguished by their side locks; they spoke the Yemeni accent and wore traditional costume. Beyond that, a spectator cannot distinguish them from any average Yemeni Muslim” (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.100). Al-Mashhūr’s underlining

observation is that people can live in diverse social context without triggering unrest or unease; besides this hairstyle which has moral significance in Judaism (Jacobs, 2009) these Jewish Yemenis were not different from their Muslim co-citizens. If modernity, through its tool of globalisation, proposes the modelling of the human after the telling principles of ‘change’ and ‘progress’, then modernity’s claim of diversity is revoked by its own commitments; something which Marxism has already taught him. Since the experience of exile strengthens a “distaste for religious radicalism” (Veen, 2014 p.69), I argue, radicalism itself becomes the cause of ‘distaste’ regardless of its colour; religious or irreligious. It is important to see how this is projected in Al-Mashhūr’s reception of modernist ideas, whether secular or literalist in later years. Al-Mashhūr’s work *Iḥyā’ Manhajiyat Al-Namāṭ al-Awsāṭ* (Reviving the Methodology of Middle Path) and his continual refusal of *tarafay al-ifrāṭ wa al-tafrīṭ* or the two extremes of rigidness or looseness are directly linked to our discussion here.

One significant observation Al-Mashhūr makes which links his exit from Aden to his entry into the Saudi borders is of the smell; he left Aden in a mini truck laden with dried fish and he entered the Saudi borders in a mini truck laden with sheep compost (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). This is a very interesting observation that I could not properly analyse; yet, possibly in the smell he sees the traces of the worst things in both societies or that while he only remembers the rottenness of the air that he left, he is not received by a great welcome here either. However, these remain speculations. Crossing the Yemeni/Saudi borders, Al-Mashhūr’s saw that he was not just crossing barriers between two countries, but between two regimes, two causes and two experiences (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a). Typically of a religious exile, crossing the boundaries is moving from one theological sphere to another, one social and cultural reality to another and such crossings are influential in shaping lives and perspectives (Mantecón, 2014). Al-Khadrā, the border point he passed, which means ‘green’ made him observe another contrast with the

red circle he left behind. He complements this contrast by noting, “we realise the value of cheerfulness and ease when it is preceded by pain and difficulty” (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.136). Finally, Al-Mashhūr enters Jeddah and the first person that receives him is his father and as he notes, “I buried my worry, my pain, my difficulty in the chest of my father” (Al-Mashhūr, 2001a p.154). Just as he was there at the beginning of his life, Al-Mashhūr’s father returns to the scene to guide him, in his mid-thirties, and lead him to another ‘spiritual’ father who will continue the journey with him; a journey he described as, “moving from the world of captivity to the captivity of the world, and from the chains of adversity to the adversity of chains” (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a p.6). This “captivity of the world” reminds us of the previous discussion on how he viewed the arrival of electricity in Ahwar as an introduction to the modern world that captivated people and changed their religious and social life. The KSA, a big oil producing country at the time, was an ardent critic of the regime in Aden and there Al-Mashhūr’s nostalgia was possibly fulfilled.

4.4.3. Jeddah: New Challenges to a Matured Self

The new life in Jeddah was calmer than Yemen; Al-Mashhūr was teaching and assisting his father in leading Masjid Al-‘Isā’ī (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a, Al-Mashhūr, 1998b). In this phase, I argue, meeting his spiritual guide ‘Abd al-Qādir b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Rahmān Al-Saqqāf (1913-2010) and interacting with Wahhabism were of prime impact on his views.

4.4.3.1.The Shaykh: Closing the Fatherly Circle

Like Al-Mashhūr’s father, Abd al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf, another Ba ‘Alawi *sayyid*, had to leave Yemen in 1973. Al-Saqqāf’s house in Jeddah buzzed with visitors, seekers and students who attended his gatherings, asked for blessings and studied under his tutelage and to whom he was

the *qutb al-ghawth* (the Supreme saint) of his time (Sugich, 2013, Al-Mashhūr, 2017a, Buxton, 2013, Al-Badawi, 2022). Al-Mashhūr's father, who frequented Al-Saqqāf's house, requested Al-Saqqāf in 1981 to give Abu Bakr a space in his gatherings and Al-Mashhūr started a journey under Al-Saqqāf's guidance and would write poetry and chant it at the end of the gatherings (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a, Al-Mashhūr, 1998a). His life was divided between his Imam job at Masjid Al-‘Īsa’ī where his father previously preached, and Al-Saqqāf's gatherings. To him, these gatherings were fountains of knowledge and practice that quenched his thirst and granted him assurance (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a, Al-Mashhūr, 1998a). After the death of Al-Mashhūr's father, Al-Saqqāf took his father's place as a guide and teacher. The patriarchal guidance continued throughout the rest of Al-Mashhūr's life and the connection with his teacher is evident in his poetry as well as the 600 pages biography Al-Mashhūr wrote of Al-Saqqāf paralleled only by another about his own father. Urbánek (2014) notes that finding support and patronage—here spiritual—is a strategy of coping which religious intellectuals adopt (Urbánek, 2014). This point is crucial to the methods Al-Mashhūr suggests to reduce the impact of modernity on Muslim communities; to remain connected to spiritual guides or *al-madrasah al-abawiyah* and restore the role of authority (Al-Mashhūr, 2009).

4.4.3.2. Literalism, Ostracising and Religious Sectarianism

Reminded of the Marxists that opposed the authority of the sādah and called them superstitious, Al-Mashhūr's ḥanف and Yemeni background subjected him to suspicion at times, especially from Wahhabism; a school which adopts a literalist reading of Islam and shuns ḥanف practices like invoking saints as heretical (Hogarth, 1925, Bunzel, 2023). He was frequently asked by random congregants about his beliefs and challenged at times that the *hadiths* that he quoted were unsound or that he hides his ‘deviant’ Sufi identity (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a). As he came from a country which opposed Islam, as Saudi regime called PDRY (Bidwell, 1983, Little,

1968) Al-Mashhūr was, at times, accused being a hidden Marxist (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a).

Resorting to poetry again, Al-Mashhūr wrote in 1990,

“They attribute me, callously,

to strange associations;

they asked, ‘Marxist! Are you? An Ideologue?

As you came from the land of songs, prostitutes, and *haram*

where no *ṣalāh* or *ṣiyām*

and now you are an Imam, what a ploy!

To them I said, o people of peace,

Guardians of truth and God’s House

Upright folk!

In both lands, I am being wronged

So, hear me once.

But as I spoke,

they shouted back

You’re innovator. A crazy sufi

[you] worship the dead,

attend the *mawlid*,

[you] sing in mosques and visit the shrine

They reminded me of the armies back in Hudaydah

where claims are cooked

Accusations ready, and judgment passed

for those who do not

join their ranks” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005a p.27).

Besides reminding Al-Mashhūr of his trauma in Yemen, these encounters strengthened in him his opposition to sectarianism and division. Insisting that what unites Muslims is far greater than what divides them, and that discord is a tool of the devil who has unending ploys to split human society and instil enmity amongst the members of the human family, Al-Mashhūr wrote extensively in his books about respecting differences and working on a common ground (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a, Al-Mashhūr, 2013a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). Veen (2014) notes that the experience of exile strengthens the sense of distancing oneself from radicalised forms of faith and bolsters one's moderation (Veen, 2014). I argue that this was also due to Al-Mashhūr's rootedness in tradition. In 2016, a controversial conference to identify what trends represent Sunni Islam today was organised Grozny by 'Ali Al-Jifrī, a neo-traditionalist Bā'Alawi scholar accused of aligning with political regimes. The conference, which was attended by 200 global Islamic scholars including Sheikh of Al-Azhar, gave rise to heated debate and accusations all over the internet and most notably amongst the Wahhabi Saudi scholars, who had claimed exclusive representation of the Sunni Islam for decades, and found themselves not only excluded from the conference but dethroned from the seat of representing Sunnism (Team, 2016, Sinani, 2019). In an open criticism to the conference and its political alignments, Al-Mashhūr issued a statement on his Telegram channel refusing any conference that ostracises any Muslim group, calling for unity during challenging times and arguing that staying away from the halls of politics is what he understands to be in line with the tradition (Sinani, 2019). If an introduction can be a conclusion, I would conclude this biography by quoting Al-Mashhūr's introduction to his memoirs of his years in Jeddah; an introduction he wrote at the age of 63 where he confirms that a life-long experience has added to his trust of his school of thought. Yet, he notes, "I do not hate anyone's way of thinking, school of thought or views. What I deeply dislike is using Islam and religion to serve certain purposes, make certain gains or cover ill-intended attacks. Religion should never be used to justify hatred towards those who

do not deserve to be hated" (Al-Mashhūr, 2017a). This strategy of inclusion and accommodation continued to feature in Al-Mashhūr's writing. I argue that we should expect to see more of this strategy in dealing with modernity.

4.5. Conclusion: Modernity in Every Corner:

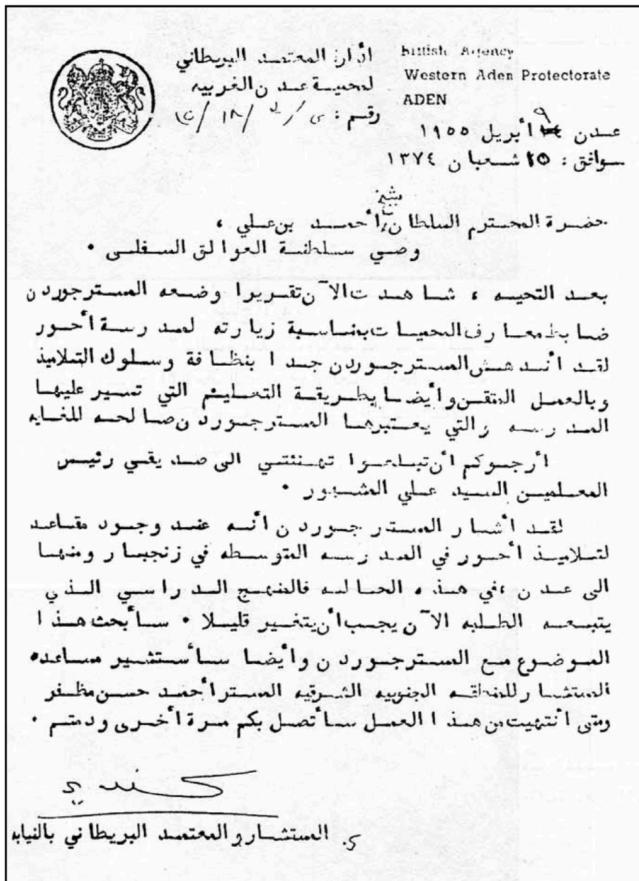
At the time of writing this thesis, Al-Mashhūr passed away in Ammān on 27th of July 2022 and was buried in his ancestors' city of Tarīm as he wished. Throughout his 75 years life, Al-Mashhūr encountered themes modernity in every corner; colonialism, modern-education, challenges to authority and traditional institutions, nation-state, Marxism, secularism, atheism, fragmentation, democracy, communism and capitalism, modernist interpretations of Islam, human autonomy and disenchantment. These themes constituted his intellectual project and his experience shaped his understanding and response to them. With an inherited tradition, but from within modernity, Al-Mashhūr reworked his engagement with the modern. Not only does this biographical account signpost the themes that we will see him engaging with in his deconstructive project but, guided by the tradition that he has inherited, it justifies how he builds the constructive side of his project. Of equal importance, this biography alerts us to how he sets his priorities, the tone and the focus of his project and how he builds his mega narrative. Having understood their context and background, the following chapters will turn to exploring the content and substance of this engagement and the tone of his response.

Timeline of Al-Mashhūr's Life

Date	Event
1942	Ali Al-Mashhūr's father arrives in Aḥwār and settles there on the request of the Sultan
1942	The establishment of Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah and its girls' department
1945	Completing the new building for Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah
1947	Al-Mashhūr's birth on 24 th of May 1947
1949	Al-Mashhūr's sister, Qamar is born in the new house (she passed away at the age of 9)
1955	A visit from Mr. Gordon, the education officer, to Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah
1958	Al-Mashhūr's sister, Qamar passes away at the age of 9
1959	The establishment of the Federation of South Arabia (FSA)
1960	Lower 'Aulaqi Sultanate joins the Federation of South Arabia
1961	Al-Mashhūr delivers his first Friday sermon and starts teaching girls at Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah
1962	Al-Mashhūr deputises a female graduate of the school to replace him in teaching girls
1967	The Federation of South Arabia collapses
	Britain retreats from Aden after 126 years
	South Yemen declares independence as People's Republic of South Yemen on 30 th Nov
1969	People's Republic of South Yemen becomes a radical marxist state (name changed in 1970 to People's Democratic Republic of Yemen)
1969	Al-Mashhūr passes Preparatory Examination after being required to have formal qualification
1972	Al-Mashhūr's father leaves Yemen to Jeddah after being targeted by the Marxist security regime and forced to leave his position [he was helped by a former student of the school now a president]
1973	Al-Mashhūr completes his Secondary education

1974	Al-Mashhūr moves to Aden with his family
1977	Al-Mashhūr's wife Khadījah passes away and his children leave to Jeddah
1978 -1985	Book: Al-Rumūz wa al-Asābi (Symbols and Fingers)
1980	Al-Mashhūr starts his escape to Jeddah in August (from Aden, via Táiz and Sañaa)
1980	Al-Mashhūr arrives in Jeddah where he settles till 1991 (Third Volume of Autobiography covers these years)
1986	Al-Mashhūr completes the writing of the first volume of his autobiography
1991	Al-Mashhūr returns to Yemen after the unity and starts his activities and work
1991 - 2020	Al-Mashhūr lives between Jeddah and Yemen and travels internationally (mainly to East Asia)
2001	Al-Mashhūr publishes the second volume of his biography
2002	Books: Al-Utrūḥah (Thesis) – Al-Mustashriqūn wa Al-Tanwīriyyūn (The Orientalists & The Enlightened) – Al-Īdāh wa al-Ishārah (Clarification & Indication)
2004	Book: Al-Muslimūn fī Mujtamaāt al-Dhillah (Muslims in Societies of Humiliation)
2005	Book: Iḥyā' Lughat Al-Islam (Reviving the Universal Language of Islam)
2009	Book: Iḥyā Manhajiyat al-Namaṭ al-Awsaṭ (Reviving the Methodology of the Middle Path)
2010	Book: Al-Dalā'il al-Nabawiyyah (Prophetic Indication to the Honour of the Fatherly School)
2014	Book: Maqālāt Parīs (Paris Essays)
2021	Al-Mashhūr returns to Yemen permanently
27 th July 2022	Al-Mashhūr dies of health complications in Amman and is buried in Yemen

Source: (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 2001a, Al-Salimi, 2010, Al-Mashhūr, 2007, Al-Mashhūr, 1998b, Dresch, 2002, Ovendale, 1998)



خطاب إدارة المعتمد البريطاني

The letter from the British Agent to Aden regarding Al-Madrasah Al-Maymūnah and Gordon's report. Source: Al-Mashhūr (2007)

5. Al-Mashhūr on The Political Face of Modernity

The purpose of this chapter is to lay out the first part of Al-Mashhūr's deconstructive project i.e. his engagement with political modernity. In its three main sections and sub-sections, the chapter discusses how Al-Mashhūr sees colonialism as a central theme of political modernity responsible for the loss of authority; caliphal and scholarly. This is followed by a discussion of his views on the consequences of colonial political modernity and its themes of disunity, nationalism, nation-state and democracy. The chapter ends with a focus on Al-Mashhūr's pragmatist tone in differentiating what he calls bad and good colonialism.

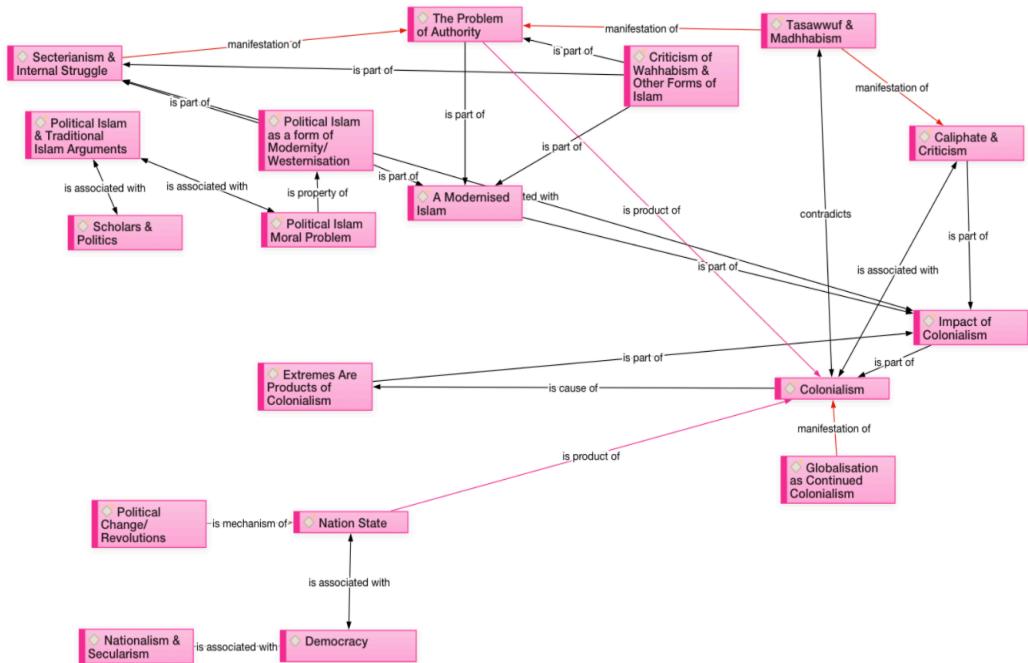
5.1. Colonialism as a Vehicle of Modernity:

Beyond the debate on the definition of colonialism - ostensibly a stand-alone process that occupied human activity - discussions on modernity cannot neglect its role as a vehicle through which the modern ideas of the colonisers were forced on the colonised (Horvath, 1972, Mahadevan, 2002, Bhambra, 2007, Loomba, 2015, Táíwò, 2010). Though the 18th and the 19th centuries liberal thinkers justified colonialism in terms of instituting a cultural renaissance hastening development and introducing progress; its era was one during which 'The West' became an abstraction larger than its geographically bounded origin, including psychological, epistemic and political categories alongside territorial ones (Bhambra, 2007, Mignolo, 1995, Said, 1993). The universalist tone of modernity was much evident in the words of the colonial Sir Mark Sykes as he addressed the Conservative and Unionist 1900 Club in August 1916, saying that the Allies were fighting for "the true democracy which came from the French Revolution. If we fail, humanity would fail" (Berdine, 2018 p.95). Similarly, the colonial officer Ingrams (1963) reveals that the seeds of nationalism were transported to the Middle East with the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 (Ingrams, 1963). Chakrabarty (2007) notes that

one cannot think of ‘political modernity’ without concepts like citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before law, democracy, the idea of the subject, sovereignty all of which bear the burden of European Enlightenment and were preached by the European coloniser at the colonised (Chakrabarty, 2007). Diffusion of civilisation on European Enlightenment terms was thus central to the colonial project from its early days that it encompassed laws and institutions, manners and principles, morals and thinking and in this sense European colonialism stands apart from all historical episodes of colonialism (Porter, 1996, Loomba, 2015, Said, 1993). In the coming discussions, I follow Horvath (1972) and use the words ‘colonialism’ and ‘imperialism’ with the essential notion of domination (this includes economic variables and culture-change process) but with one difference; the presence or absence of a significant number of settlers in the colony from the colonising power (Horvath, 1972). This notion of ‘absence’ and ‘presence’ is similar to how Said (1993) uses the two terms; ‘imperialism’ as domination from a distance and colonialism as the actual implanting of settlements in distant territory and how Doyle (1986) views imperialism as formal or informal domination of another political society from a distance that continues even after/when colonialism has ended (Said, 1993, Doyle, 1986).

In Al-Mashhūr’s engagement with modernity, colonialism serves as the most essential point. It is a lens through which he sees the modern, its impact and ways of conducting itself and hence, I begin the discussion by examining his views on colonialism and its impact on Muslims. In my coding process, ‘impact of colonialism’ as a code yields the highest number of quotations (133) and alongside two other directly connected codes, the number of quotations increases to 184 which shows the centrality of colonialism to Al-Mashhūr’s project. This number increases if I include indirectly associated codes like extremism as a product of colonialism, sectarianism and struggle. Political modernity is covered under 18 codes

spreading across 9 core works yielding the highest number of quotations in the whole project (699 quotations) which reveals Al-Mashhūr's heavy focus on the political side of modernity and confirms that his project is primarily a decolonising one. The codes covered under political modernity include; colonialism, impact of colonialism, caliphate, the problem of authority, political Islam, *Wahhabism*, sectarianism and internal struggle, extremism, *taṣawwuf* and *madhhabism*, nation-state, nationalism, revolution, scholars and politics, and democracy. In structuring this chapter, I have categorised the codes into four groups; colonialism and attachments (3 codes – 184 quotations), caliphate and loss of authority (2 codes – 81 quotations), Islamisms and corollaries (9 codes – 308 quotations) and nation-state and its attachments (4 codes – 128 quotations). It is in the order of these groups that this chapter will be structured. A network showing the codes of political modernity for ease of reference appears below:



Al-Mashhūr's engagement with colonialism is so central that he starts many discussions with colonialism and frequently refers back to it, linking the majority of modern failures in the Muslim world to it. Part of that focus on colonialism appears in the variety of names Al-Mashhūr uses to describe the era of colonialism in Muslim lands; these names are all borrowed from Prophetic *ahadīth*. Most notably he calls it '*al-marhalah al-ghuthā'iyyah*' or 'the stage of worthlessness' in which Muslims were controlled and their resources were plundered and shared by '*akalat al-qasāh*' (sharers of the dish) in reference to colonisers (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). This continuous reference to tradition in naming a historical stage like colonialism not only implies how he sees its impact on Muslims and his use of tradition to address modernity as a 'test' or a 'tribulation' but also reveals how he reads history through the lens of tradition and how he converses with the present by quoting the past; he sees the present as a continuation of the past rather than just 'here and now'. This is confirmed by his view of colonialism as "a renewal of the historical Crusade and a reaction within the second millennium which witnessed the industrial supremacy of the West to the prior Muslim expansion into European kingdoms in the previous millennium" (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c p.19). While still captured in medieval confrontations between Europe and the Islamicate, Al-Mashhūr's views reflect his traditional belief in the continuity of history; a theme that we will witness throughout his discussions and as a component of his own intellectual project. This belief in the continuity of history, I argue, is his refusal strategy in the face of the rupture that is offered by modernity. Similar to Al-Mashhūr, Loomba (2015) argues that "modern European colonialism cannot be sealed off from earlier histories of contact- the Crusades, or the Moorish invasion of Spain" (Loomba, 2015 p.21).

Whilst the historical Crusades comprised military domination for economic gain, modern colonialism is multi-layered. It is, Al-Mashhūr argues, a stage of intellectual domination where

Western political, economic and social ways of life and modes of thinking were brought to Muslim lands and a wholesale of ideas – which will feature in the next chapter on philosophical and intellectual modernity – declared the colonial mind victorious and the Muslim mind tamed and conditioned (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). This wholesale adoption started following the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate; an event which Al-Mashhūr frequently laments as the beginning of a stage in which the concept of a unified symbolic government was separated from the concept of a unified faith and Muslims became prone to factions and sectarianism at all levels, losing their identity to programmed ‘worthlessness’ and ‘subordination’ (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). While agreeing that Islam has never been monolithic, Humphreys (1979) rightly notes that in pre-modern times all Muslims at least shared a specifically religious interpretation of life but since the European domination of Muslim lands, European secularist modes of thought were spread and adopted as more adequate instruments of dealing with the reality by the intellectual *avant garde* who, despite variant backgrounds, were more interested in these ‘this-worldly’ answers than in the modes of the past (Humphreys, 1979). Through igniting the fires of local ethnicities – including Arab nationalism – European colonialism, in combination with a host of other internal crises in the Ottoman domains, facilitated the demise of the empire (Stephanov, 2016, Abou El Fadl, 2007). Besides exploitation, suppression and control, Al-Mashhūr blames colonialism for offering Muslims failing alternatives which he calls *al-suqūf al-munhārah* (collapsing ceilings) where Muslims lost their will and independence in return for material services or mundane reforms in the guise of civility (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Again, Al-Mashhūr uses Qur’anic terms to name a modern phenomenon; the word *munhārah* from the verb *inhāra* (to collapse) is used in the Qur’an (9:109) in reference to a false mosque built by the hypocrites as a parallel institution intended to secretly subvert that of the Prophet mosque in Medina. Alongside its function as a place of worship, the Mosque was the centre of political and religious authority at the time, and the attempt to construct

another aimed to spread division in the community of believers (Al-Rāzī, 2005). This implied comparison asserts the interconnectedness of history in his mind and explains his view on the political proposals of modernity; collapsing ceilings.

Despite acknowledging that their ability to dominate Muslim countries came from deep reading and studying of Muslim societies, Al-Mashhūr equally attributes the success of the colonisers to the cooperation of local leaders who, driven by short-lived plans and promises were lured to cooperate with their enemies against the Ottoman caliphate (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Through stages of transformation, deception and direct encounter, different colonial powers dominated the colonised, created an atmosphere of animosity to secure their own continuity and produced generations of hybrid Muslims who think and live within modern frameworks; whether from the Eastern or the Western blocs (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Again, Al-Mashhūr blames the continuation of ‘the stage of worthlessness’ on those generations who, upon taking leading positions in postcolonial nation-states, turned their backs on religion and continued administrative, intellectual and socio-economic inconsistencies in the divided homelands (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). While Loomba (2015) speaks of the ‘un-forming’ and ‘re-forming’ nature of colonialism, which will guide our next discussion on the impact of colonialism, they note a phenomenon of hybridity where colonialism creates Europeanised natives; European in taste, opinion, morals and intellect while still local in blood and colour (Loomba, 2015). While the remainder of this chapter will focus on the political impact of colonialism which represents the political face of modernity, the following chapter will discuss the philosophical face of modernity, both equally carried on the vehicle of colonialism. These two chapters present the deconstructive project of Al-Mashhūr before discussing the shape of his modernity in a separate chapter.

5.2. Political Impact of Colonialism:

This section introduces Al-Mashhūr's theory of authority, the colonial role in destroying both caliphal and scholarly authority and the shape of post-caliphal modern Muslim world where multiple Islams as well as multiple nation-states replaced the unified political and scholarly authority.

5.2.1. The Caliphate & the Loss of Authority:

While colonialism touched many areas, Al-Mashhūr considers its most devastating impact to be on the area of authority. This is clear in the number of quotations that come directly under the codes ‘the caliphate’ and ‘loss of authority’; there are 81 quotations which confirm a significant attention given to this topic. If we consider that the codes about different forms of Islam (an outcome of the loss of scholarly authority) and the codes about nation-state and its attachments (an outcome of the loss of caliphal authority), the total number of quotation will significantly increase to 517. This justifies the structuring of this chapter as well as the centrality of the discussion on the caliphate and the loss of authority to any following discussion on the impact of colonialism; they function as an isthmus between colonialism and its massive impact. Additionally, the loss of authority will emerge later in Al-Mashhūr constructive project as he offers alternative authority in absence of the historical authority that was demolished by colonialism. It is important to begin this discussion by noting that Al-Mashhūr does not see religious and political authority in the dichotomy of sacred and secular, which he and others associate with modernity (Bauer, 2021). Seeing the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘temporal’ as one, Al-Mashhūr gives his account of the historical decline that happened to the concept of caliphate; an account which he directly deduced from his own reading and interpretation of the *ahādīth* and other historical events and argues that its nuances correct wrong understandings that divided Muslim on the issue of the caliphate (Al-Mashhūr, 2015c). He contends that following

the Prophet's demise, the position of the caliph combined the two aspects of authority; the temporal political (*al-hukm*) and the scholarly and spiritual (*al-'ilm*) and this union continued until the ceding of the Prophet's grandson al-Hasan who, being the last of those who did not covet the position, ended the era of the rightly-guided caliphs (Al-Mashhūr, 2016, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c). Under the new ruler; Mu'awiyah, the caliphate was turned into a dynasty and hereditary despotism (*wirāthah wa mulk 'adīd*), despite the nominal caliphal title that continued to be conferred upon the dynastic ruler (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c, Al-Mashhūr, 2016). Al-Mashhūr further suggests that even though the temporal side of the caliphate ceased to exist, a religious scholarly caliphate (*khilāfat al-'ilm*) continued in the successive lines of upright Muslim scholars who guided the Muslim *ummah* in both spiritual and mundane matters (Al-Mashhūr, 2016, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c). Al-Mashhūr supports his claim with a list of *aḥādīth* intimating that the first thirty years following the Prophet's demise, that ended with al-Hasan's ceding power, constitute the era of the caliphate and what follows is a dynasty, a hereditary despotism and tyranny (Al-Mashhūr, 2015c). Despite the decline in the form of temporal caliphate, now turned into dynasty, the unified authority of the *'ulamā'* enjoyed independence and played their expected role in the community thanks to the unified political authority (quasi-caliphate), but the abolition of the already weakened and increasingly symbolic caliphate sent the scholarly authority (*khilāfat al-'ilm*) into disarray, turning scholars into employees and executors of colonisers' programs (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b).

Studies researching the relation between caliphs as temporal rulers and scholars as religious authority link the emergence of the *'ulamā'* as visible and increasingly influential and independent religious elite to the formalisation of the concept of Prophet's Sunnah and the beginnings of the schools of law during the early 'Abbasīd period. Bringing a host of opinions

to this effect, Zaman (1997) attests that the authority of scholars as interpreters of Sharī‘ah independent of the temporal role of the caliph was a matter of agreement, not competition, between the two sides from the close of the second Hijri century; despite Lapidus (1975) insistence that such a regulation was a confirmation of a separation between religion and state (Zaman, 1997, Lapidus, 1975). Similarly, Crone and Hinds (2003) argue that the Umayyad and the early Abbasid caliphs combined religious authority with the temporal one and that continued to be the case until the claim to religious authority landed with the *ulamā'*, depicting the event as a power struggle between the two (Crone and Hinds, 2003). The link between the '*ulamā*' (religious leaders) and the *umarā* (temporal leaders) continued to inform Muslim discourse in as much as blaming Muslims' sorry state in later centuries on both, confirming this association (Haddad, 1997). However, Al-Mashhūr's thesis of perceiving the *ulamā* as *khulafā'* from as early as the beginning of the Umayyad period, when the deviation in the concept of the caliphate from election to bloodline appointment occurred, and his further elaboration of the thesis are unique. Their uniqueness lies in their being a premise on which he will suggest later on to recast the concept of *ulamā* as *khulafā'* (a form of authority that he has already introduced) into an alternative authority of 'unity on shared principles' (*al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah*) that can replace the traditional authority of the scholars in a post-caliphal Muslim world where the previous unified scholarly authority is no longer tenable. Additionally, while discussions on the relation between scholars and caliphs remain concerned with delineating the caliphs' authority on religious matters rather than the decline in the concept of the caliphate that warranted a discontinuation of the political and a migration of the religious to living lines of scholars, Al-Mashhūr's assignment of 'spiritual' caliphate to scholars indicates his tendency to reconnect the present with the past and see history as continuous. This proposal serves at multiple layers to confirm Al-Mashhūr's interest in preservation, offering pragmatic alternatives that stem from the tradition. He affirms this attitude as he says, "one of

the most important tasks of Muslim in this age is to go back to the foundations; these are, renewing their reading of the Book of Allah, re-studying the sound Prophetic *Sunnah* and revisiting the Prophet's stances and ways of handling different situations. In this, they can get out of the impasse they are currently suffering from" (Al-Mashhūr, 2015c p.28).

Al-Mashhūr's highlighting of the loss of caliphal authority as a landmark for the loss of scholarly authority is linked back to the role of colonialism and political modernity. Studies show that despite earlier suggestions to subject scholars to a level of state supervision and turn them into functionaries, scholars' independence from rulers was their empowering feature throughout history in the pre-colonial Muslim world; but with the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate and the arrival of the modern nation-state, scholars were turned into employees and part of the state apparatus and lost their independence and authority (Hallaq, 2014, Walbridge, 2011, Zaman, 1997, Lawrence, 1990). Similarly, a strategy of replacing traditional independent *qadis* with employed court officials - a fashion of British colonialism in Yemen and Egypt and elsewhere- contributed to eroding the traditional role of scholars as authority in the wake of the 20th century (Adams, 2010, Maknūn, 2018). Unlike the post-colonial Muslim world, the graduates of the traditional religious institutions during the time of the caliphate benefitted from its autonomy playing an intermediary role between the ruler and the subjects gaining the trust of the diverse masses and remaining the definers of the socio-legal implications of Islam for most people; hence shaping the society (Voll, 1994, Osman, 2017). However, the disempowerment of the '*ulamā*' and traditional elites started inside the Ottoman caliphate at the hands of the intellectual nationalist vanguard who, by introducing political changes including undermining the status of scholarly elite, were implementing a vision of Europeanised modernity (Hassan, 2016).

The loss of authority, Al-Mashhur laments, left a vacuum in the lives of Muslims who were in need of a genuine religious explanation of the events that surrounded them and they turned to multiple ideologies that lead them to the Eastern or the Western blocs in search for legal, political and educational systems (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b); a manifestation of what Berger (2011) calls ‘a homeless mind’ (Berger, 2011). Their connection with their faith was so much distorted that a Muslim would pray five times a day, yet serve in a usurious bank and a trader would use usurious money to print Qur'an copies for free distribution (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Under colonial control, he continues, discord and distrust were installed between Muslims and their traditional scholars who were depicted, by emerging ideologies and new forms of Islam, as backward and manipulative and traditional respect for scholars was replaced by loyalty to political parties, the state or ideological movements (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). The loss of authority, notes Al-Mashhūr, has impacted economy, education, history and politics in such a way that new generations were completely unaware that it was the root of all problems (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). This loss of authority, despite manifesting in the discontinuation of scholarly authority, is inseparable from the abolition of the political authority of the Ottoman caliphate. Observing the interconnectedness between tradition, religion and authority, Arendt (1961) argues that authority has proved to be the most stable framework and with its loss, the general doubt of the modern age has invaded the political realm where things are more radically expressed (Arendt, 1961).

Al-Mashhūr marks Sultan Abdül-Hamid's deposition and the declaration of the secular state as alarmingly remarkable events that effectively ended the caliphate and started a new dangerous historical stage which, he argues, deserves an in-depth and independent study (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Not far from Al-Mashhūr's statement, although on the other side of the narrative, the colonialist Sir Mark Sykes is quoted to have marked this event in his memoirs

“the fall of Abdul Hamid has been the fall, not of a despot or tyrant, but of a people and an idea. The Sultan meant something to his subjects, his people something to him. Good or ill, he represented not only a system but life, a scheme of things, an idea, a tradition, a faith, a species of continuity” (Berdine, 2018 p.6). Guida (2008) equally marks the deposition of Abdül-Hamid II as the point after which the principles justifying the claims to the Great Caliphate (divine will, inheritance, actual power and allegiance) gradually lost recognition and were eventually disputed as the Western idea of national sovereignty was assimilated into Islamic political thought (Guida, 2008). With this deposition, the long tradition associated with the caliphate and the caliphal seat was practically ready for an abolition which was no less momentous than its arrival for the world of Islam, for even symbolically, a caliph still represented to a Muslim the figure of a shepherd, the temporal and the spiritual interests of the community and as an institution, the caliphate symbolised unity and a way of thinking (Sadiq, 1991, Hassan, 2016). But to the West, a unified leadership for Muslims (caliphate) represented something from the past; a Muslim papacy (Mishra, 2012) and that was the antithesis of modernity. Thus, the caliphate needed to be archived into the shelves of history and nationalism was a perfect tool for the job being a component of modernity itself. It is important to note that nationalism, amongst other European ideals, were introduced first in a bundle of reforms known as *Tanzimat* in the late Ottoman empire to help the weak empire thrive in the emerging modern world system of economics and nation-states (Stephanov, 2016, Hassan, 2016). It seems however, that the empire could not survive by borrowing reforms from nation-states without turning into a nation-state itself. Without a caliphate, Al-Mashhūr laments, Muslims were left to colonial powers and their installed regimes to manipulate their minds and exploit both their resources and their divisions (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a).

While shyly criticising the Ottoman caliphate as neither an ideal Muslim government nor strong enough to stop waves of modernity, Al-Mashhūr blames local leaders' political immaturity and conspiring colonial powers for pushing Muslims into "*juhr al-dabb*" or the mastigure's hole; another name for the colonial period where, by losing authority, Muslims started imitating Western ways of life and thinking (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c). In his regular fashion, Al-Mashhūr takes the name from a *hadīth* in which the Prophet predicts that Muslims will follow previous nations even if they were to enter a tight mastigure's hole, they would follow suit. Al-Mashhūr considers it a duty on the *ummah* to look into the issue of authority and think seriously about Muslims' position in the world to counter continued imperial projects (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). The loss of authority produced a landscape in which both scholarly and political authority were replaced with new arrangements; ideologies each offering their interpretation of Islam. Divided by approach but united by predicament, these ideologies appealed to Islamic tradition to claim authenticity and justify their new ideas (Findley, 1982b). A new hermeneutics and meaning creation was employed; but the new body of ideas was not a theology; rather an ideology; an action-orientated vision that portrays a highly charged form of reality to inspire commitment and seek legitimisation by focusing on the social and political dimensions (Findley, 1982a, Lawrence, 1990). In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss Al-Mashhūr's engagement with these new manifestations.

5.2.2. From A Unified Islam to Islamisms: Sectarianism Revisited

The political ceilings that followed the caliphate, Al-Mashhūr insists, were responsible for installing and sponsoring the spirit of sectarianism and discord at all levels; such sectarianism

continues to consume the *ummah* and tie it, despite its economic and spiritual uniqueness, to the exploitative cycle of global politics (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Giving examples of this role played by post-caliphal political ceilings, Al-Mashhūr refers to the creation of political parties which, “is a modern framework that appeared in the post-caliphal Muslim world and was modelled after Western politics. It serves as a wide door for the execution of Western policies in Muslim societies especially in spreading partisanship and rivalry and exploiting it in favour of the continued colonial project” (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a p.19). Al-Mashhūr expresses his dismay at the double-standard programs launched by Western powers and the UN promoting proximity and understanding between religions (specifically Judaism and Christianity) when those same powers herd Muslims through rancour and discord and normalise this state of affairs renewing the colonial strategy of ‘divide and conquer’ (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). The victims of this sectarianism include thinkers and scholars who, despite their intellectual prowess, fail to understand that they are serving the colonial project through their narrow understanding and fossilised interpretations (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). After offering multiple possibilities for why those intellectuals fall victim to sectarianism, Al-Mashhūr concludes that it is a combination of misunderstanding, ill-thinking, distrust and following the ploys of external powers with the last one being the most dangerous and most effective (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). In an atmosphere dominated by narrowness and distrust, each group claims ownership of the faith and anathematises their co-religionists; turning the Qur'an and the Sunnah, in the absence of scholarly authority, into weapons against each other and risking the universal message of Islam and stripping its *ummah* of the quality of being ‘best to serve mankind’ (Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Loss of scholarly authority creates a flat ground where matters that were of significance to a few whose say is prominent, become a concern and a contention for one and all (Arendt, 1961). While acknowledging that sectarianism has existed in history, Al-Mashhūr notes that at *al-marhalah al-ghuthā'iyyah*, it has covered

unprecedented spectrums and overtaken the *ummah* from top to bottom; such that it is a symptom of *ummah*'s overall *wahan* (weakness) (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b).

In his multiple works, Al-Mashhūr engages with the manifestations of what he calls '*Islam al-marāhil al-ghuthāiyah*' (The Islam of the stages of worthlessness) referring to the new Islamisms whose apparent diversity does not cancel their intellectual affinity, their departure from the tradition and their being products of modernity; they either submissively secularise, apologetically modernise, or reactively politicise Islam at different degrees from literalism to terrorism (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2009, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). Al-Mashhūr's observation about these Islamisms as 'authentically modern' despite their apparent diversity and – attack on modernity – is not far from Roy (1994) and Vidino (2020) who assert that such Islamisms are equally products of modernity and that their members, who never belonged to the ranks of classical scholar; but were graduates of the modern educational system, viewed religion as an ideology; a neologism that remains an anathema to how Islam was traditionally viewed (Roy, 1994, Vidino, 2020). Despite the emblematic rejection of the West, Islamists "borrow from modernity the refusal to return to the real tradition in the name of an imaginary tradition: they reject popular religious practice, the village, Sufism and philosophy and undermine what is and was Muslim civilisation and ensure the triumph of fast food, of jeans, Coke and English" (Roy, 1994 p.22, Lawrence, 1990). At the opposite ends of the spectrum, radical Islamists and modernists share the propensity to live as if the future were already stripped of any meaning other than that which they singularly ascribe to it (Lawrence, 1990); thus creating their own versions of reality that are ruptured from the past or its meanings. To Al-Mashhūr, what unites these Islamisms is being products of modernity, they are manufactured versions of Islam that appeared when a vacuum was created following the loss of scholarly and caliphal authority

(Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). However, while bitterly critiquing their manufactured versions of Islam, Al-Mashhūr calls them to stand on a common ground with other Muslims and work together to defuse the situations their colonisers have put them in (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2009, Al-Mashhūr, 2011). This suggestion of ‘common ground’ or ‘common principles’ is what will appear later in Al-Mashhūr’s constructive project as an alternative authority, a concept which, I have contended elsewhere, displays pragmatism, decolonisation and tendency towards preservation.

5.2.2.1.Modernist Islam

The first Islamism that Al-Mashhūr engages with is ‘modernist Islam’ and while he acknowledges the centrality of *tahdīth* and *tajdīd* (advancement and renewal) to the faith, he argues that the idea itself has been used to fool scholars and researchers into justifying a divorce from tradition and a subjugation of Muslim history to modernist ideologies through borrowed interpretations (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). These borrowed interpretations Al-Mashhūr refers to took multiple shapes depending on the model modernists wanted to fit Islam in. In Yemen, where Marxism became a model, modernist re-interpretations of Islam included calling traditional scholarly authority ‘idols of the past’ that need to be destroyed, calling Abu Bakr and ‘Umar ‘repugnant aristocracy’ and Ali and Abu Dharr ‘harbingers of Islamic socialism’ all to create a modernist Islam that fits within alien worldviews; a project that achieved nothing at both levels; neither making Islam palatable nor keeping it undistorted (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Roy, 1994). In his fervent endeavour to reform religious institutions, the leading modernist Muhammad ‘Abduh suggested that the nuanced deliberations of the *madhhabs* be replaced with a return to a flat “original” understanding of Islam that is accessible

to the laity; but this move not only transformed the very meaning of Islam but also the status of those formerly charged with its communal roles namely the ‘*ulama* (Elshakry, 2016 p.198). Not far from ‘Abduh, the Indian modernist Sir Ahmad Khan’s re-interpretation of medieval Islamic history to fit within the parameters of Western scholarship, led to losing objectivity and turned into imaginative apologetics which was equally unacceptable to orientalists abroad and traditionalists at home (Ahmad, 1967).

In this sense, Al-Mashhūr does not oppose modernising *per se* but rejects a modernisation that is carried out wholesale, on Western modernity’s terms. His proposal can be considered to have an intellectual affinity with ‘Abd al-Rahman Taha’s critique of Western modernity and call for creating an Islamic modernity; or a manifestation of Asad’s discursive tradition; yet, its unique features will be elaborated in a later chapter. Al-Mashhūr further blames modernist Islam for promoting Westernisation while consuming colonial policies and imports, in what he calls, a project of programmed uprooting of Muslim identity (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Al-Mashhūr’s criticism of modernist Islam stems from what he considers a disregard of Muslim identity, its lack of priorities, its uncritical consumption of Western ideas and ways of life, its inability to build independent successful Muslim countries, its submissiveness and programmed taming of the Muslim masses to foreign ideas and its haphazard and alien policies (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). To Al-Mashhūr, modernists want “to write a death certificate for the legacy inherited from the forefather but Muslims do not need a thinker who uses colonial methods to destroy the intellectual, political and social heritage of the *ummah* under the guise of reform” (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c p.106). This criticism does not prevent Al-Mashhūr calling upon modernists to raise their awareness and shift their paradigms to understand that what they propose is not *tajdīd*; rather, writing a death certificate for a living tradition and inviting them to work with other Muslims on shared principles to deal with the

situation from within Islam; rather than resorting to imported models (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2004). The death certificate to which Al-Mashhūr refers was driven by a fascination with European civilisation; a characteristic of Islamic modernists starting with 'Abduh who weighed the thought of Islam's past centuries in the scales of Western modernity to create a reformed faith and so did 'Ali 'Abd al-Rāziq, Muṣṭafa 'Abd al-Rāziq, Tāha Ḥusayn, Tawfiq Șidqī, Sayyid Aḥmad Khan, Ziya Gökalp to name but a few (Adams, 2010, Kurzman, 2002, Hammond, 2022b, Yusuf, 2012, Sedgwick, 2010). It is against this deformed/reformed faith, that is modelled after modernist historicised and power struggle frameworks, that Al-Mashhūr argues in favour of a holistic faith that has its unique worldview (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b).

5.2.2.2.Political Islam

While political and modernist Islams seem to have differing agendas, they share the same genealogical roots; both stem essentially from a notion of comparativism; a tendency to take one of the elements of the comparison as the norm for the other neglecting individual dynamics and uniqueness; from there, they work their ways towards their versions of Islam through slightly variant routes. Capturing this intellectual affinity, Roy (1994) and Humphreys (1979) identify that both modernists and Islamists presume a problem that needs a solution; both propose a the same solution; raising the same slogan with a little modification; 'Islam is the solution' becomes, 'modernity is the solution' (Roy, 1994, Humphreys, 1979). Under the title 'the *Nahda*' (Awakening) Hallaq (2019) stresses the uniform nature of the apparently different modes of thought that were dominated by nationalism, Marxism, secularism, political Islamism and liberalism (Hallaq, 2019).

Al-Mashhūr starts his engagement with political Islam by responding to the latter's criticism of traditional Islam's apolitical position justifying that such a position is necessary for the soundness of faith and safety of the society; keeping a distance from tyrants is safer than revolting against them (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). One may contend that while being pragmatic, this position can be seen as an empowerment of tyranny. Al-Mashhūr further highlights that while it is important to have strong leaders, the focus of traditional Islam is building morality, spirituality and good initiatives since partaking in modern politics comes at the expense of moral integrity (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Arguing from another faith in line with this thinking, Sacks (2005) notes that religious traditions cannot be reduced to political programmes, conservative or revolutionary and the task of religious institutions is less to influence governments than to create communities of faith (Sacks, 2005). While avoiding direct involvement in politics, some scholars within the traditional school to which Al-Mashhūr subscribes, were criticised for involvement in politics via supporting post-Arab Spring autocratic regimes, something which those traditionalist scholars justify as part of traditional Islam's commitment to opposing political mobilisation [protests-revolutions] as a means of change since they lead to violence and disorder (Sinani, 2019). Joining neither political Islamists nor pro-regime scholars, Al-Mashhūr remains committed to opposing the modern political process and mobilisation; yet, criticises those scholars who take sides and insists on remaining faithful to his 'apolitical position' (Sinani, 2019, Al-Mashhūr, 2015a).

Elaborating on the question of morality, Al-Mashhūr accuses political Islamists for coveting power and leadership, an antithesis of Islamic teachings that discourage Muslims from running after leadership (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). In their race for leadership, political Islamists promote partisanship and, using Western political tools, lure the emotional masses through rhetorical

epizeuxis to make unqualified decisions which lead to more frustration especially when Islamists' political programmes fail (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Another point Al-Mashhūr decries is political Islamists' alliances that are motivated by political interests and their continued compromise of Islamic moral principles that make them no different to any other mainstream political party (Al-Mashhūr, 2009, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Al-Mashhūr gives examples of use of revolution as means of change, encouraging women to participate in protests, embracing the Western nation-state political model as examples of the degree of the Westernisation of political Islam; such Westernisation has secured for them the support of the UN and its associated organisations (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). For Al-Mashhūr, the end does not justify the means; thus, he sees political Islam as one of many opportunistic movements using religion for political gains and besides that allows itself the use of tools that run counter to the slogan they raise (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Frampton (2018) notes the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood Hasan al-Banna was in favour of emulating and adopting certain Western systems despite declared aversion to Westernism (Frampton, 2018).

While seeing it infiltrated from all sides, Al-Mashhūr calls into question political Islamism's commitment to diversity. He recounts an incident of a young Islamist who publicly scolded a female for showing up to university in what he counted as indecent attire while, in a later protest, asking people to vote for an Islam that will accommodate everyone; to Al-Mashhūr this dichotomy in discourse underlies hypocrisy and opportunism (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Speaking of the moral predicament of politics, Hallaq (2019) highlights that politics by definition requires deception, hypocrisy and double standards which are manifest in the contradictions of the political actor for whom public service becomes the veneer that masks self-promotion, self-interest, love of the self, fame, will to power and much else of the same and who publicly endorses something while discreetly militates against it (Hallaq, 2019).

Despite his apolitical position, Al-Mashhūr sees political Islam's mishandling as something that warrants a reply but he doubts if Islamists will heed it as the reply comes from outside their circles and they have no regard for scholarly authority (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a).

5.2.2.3.Wahhabism & Extremism:

Despite its claim to tradition, Al-Mashhūr sees Wahhabism as a product of modernity, a member of the larger family of Islamisms whose aberrant readings of Islam only complete the colonial project (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). While emerging as a movement in the 18th century, some scholars trace the intellectual roots of Wahhabism to the 13th century scholar Ibn Taymiyyah; yet count the movement – with its literalist reading of Islam- as a modern one with claims to historical rootedness to justify authenticity (Hamid, 2016, Lauzière, 2016, Wagemakers, 2016, Armstrong, 2004). Al-Mashhūr likens Wahhabis to secularists who reject matters of the unseen as irrational; Wahhabis emerge from a specifically sceptical rationalism - as opposed to general commitment to rational principles that is part of the Islamic tradition -to refuse traditional narrations and conclusions as apocryphal and superstitious (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Lauzière, 2016). The apparent contrast between them is a product of tension between a dogmatic fundamental dimension and a pragmatic operative one; tension that happens when ideology seeks to mobilise and organise itself, at a practical level, into an action-orientated body (Findley, 1982a). Despite their divergent trends, followers of Islamisms, Wahhabis included, are similar to secularists in insisting on “the rationality of religious prescriptions; this militant rationalism is a sign that modernity has worked its way into the very heart of their discourse, which is so rationalist that it ends up denying its own religion” (Roy, 1994 p.21). This “enlarged role of practical reason” is steeped in Enlightenment thinking which made it almost equal to

God and its impact on leading modernists and Islamists alike is evident (Lawrence, 1990, Armstrong, 2004).

To Al-Mashhūr, Wahhabism is a literalist movement that owns a flat understanding of Islam into which it attempts to fit a diverse and nuanced tradition; it is an anomaly that emerges from ill-thinking about other Muslims or misinterpretation of texts and lack of proper knowledge (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Through their attack on *madhhabs*, Al-Mashhūr argues, Wahhabis have “developed their new *madhab*; one that cuts the *ummah* from its tradition by allowing attacks on erudite scholars like al-Nawawi, Ibn Hajar, al-Suyūti and Al-Ghazāli – upon whose scholarship generations of later scholars have agreed – while claiming to revive the way of the predecessors” (Al-Mashhūr, 2010 p.30, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). In addition, their harsh approach and non-accommodative literalism, Al-Mashhūr argues, made Wahhabis an isthmus and a gateway to extremism and easy excommunication of other Muslims (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). While claiming to save the Muslim community from the traps of *shirk* (polytheism) and *bid'ah* (heresy), they intensified the division by widening the use of the accusation of *shirk* as an anathema against those who disagree with their literalist understanding of Islam (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Lawrence (2010) elaborates that, by insisting that true believers not only dissociate themselves from all those who do not self-identify with Wahhabi teachings but also expose their erroneous words and deeds, Wahhabism included in its attack not just Sufis but all devout ‘*ulamā*’ and *fuqahā*’ who derived their authority and projected its value within the traditional *madhhabs* (Lawrence, 2010). This unqualified and unwarranted use of the word *shirk* is what Al-Mashhūr calls, *al-shirk al-siyāsi* (politically motivated accusation of polytheism) a neologism that differs antithetically from the qualified scholarly judgment of *shirk* which he calls *al-shirk al-asāsi* (foundational polytheism) that is economically applied in limited situations by qualified scholars (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a,

Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). The nature and structure of traditional theology – to which Al-Mashhūr and his ranks subscribe- is rooted in a resistance to questioning the faith of the believing masses and limiting the use of *takfīr*; which sets it apart from modern day Wahhabism (Hammond, 2022b, Wagemakers, 2016, Wiktorowicz, 2011). By highlighting the difference between the two concepts, Al-Mashhūr implies how the role of scholarly authority who work on the unity of the community and accommodating Muslims under the large umbrella of Islam is now misused by unqualified groups. In sharp contrast to their self-ascribed status of protectors of *tawḥīd* (monotheism) Al-Mashhūr contends, Wahhabis cooperated with Yemeni Marxists in their anti-shrine and anti-saints campaign, thus aligning themselves with a movement vehemently opposed to all religion; this cooperation has been confirmed in modern scholarship (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Knysh, 1997a).

This wide use of *takfīr* (charging of disbelief), *tabdī* ‘(accusation of heresy) has made Wahhabism just a stepping stone to extremism which turned these verbal accusation into violence (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). With *bughd* (hatred), *adāwa* (animosity), *barā’* (dissociation) and *takfīr*, launching warfare – in the literal sense of the word - against their fellow believers was present in Wahhabism discourse from the time of its founder. Bunzel (2023) affirms this, quoting an epistle of Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, “If a person wishes to be a follower of the Messenger [i.e. Muhammad], then it is incumbent on him to dissociate from this [i.e. *shirk*], to direct worship exclusively to God, to reject it and those who commit it, to condemn those who practice it, to show them hatred and enmity, and to wage *jihad* against them until the religion becomes God’s entirely” (Bunzel, 2023 p.3). Al-Mashhūr’s refusal of extremism as an ideology founded on un-Islamic and un-ethical underpinnings does not stop him from attributing it to engineered global programs that promote clashes and violence as the new norm and invest in ignorant unqualified Muslims who share a

resentment of traditional scholarly authority accusing scholars of ‘political quietism’ and ‘corrupt elitism’ (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Rightly noted, mass killing with the aim of perfecting humanity which is rooted in the predominance of the theology of power is far from being a natural outgrowth of the classical tradition, it is rather a by-product of colonialism and modernity (Gray, 2003, Abou El Fadl, 2017, Masud, 2009).

5.2.2.4. Weakened *Taṣawwuf* and *Madhhabism*

Al-Mashhūr affirms that he belongs to traditional Sunnism or what Brown (2013) calls the ‘late Sunni traditionalism’ that has historically constituted of theological *asharism* or *maturidism*, juristic *madhhabism* and subscribing to Sufism (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Azami, 2019, Brown, 2013). “Sunni Islam was traditionally considered to consist of three main elements: *islām*, *imān* and *ihsān* – that is, law, belief, and mysticism. This tripartite division of Islam’s key constituents can be found in the *ḥadīth* literature, as well as in the chapter headings of a good number of pre-modern works that were intended to be comprehensive treatments of Islam, either in the form of basic manuals for the average person, or the more specialised texts on topics such as comparative jurisprudence” (Spevack, 2014 p.38). Since Al-Mashhūr refers to this school interchangeably using the titles ‘the school of *taṣawwuf*’ and ‘the school of *madhhabism*’ and sometimes combining both, I will use these terms to refer to the same thing i.e. traditional Sunnism.

Despite belonging to the school of *taṣawwuf* and *madhhabism*, Al-Mashhūr does not spare its members his criticism. He blames *Sufis* and *madhab* followers for falling into unnecessary

debates with other schools; defending the legitimacy of certain practices that originated within social contexts and were falsely added to *taṣawwuf* (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). In his criticism of the heterodox practices amongst Sufis at his time, Al-Mashhūr treads a well-worn path within traditional scholarship; al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Bannā’, Zarrūq and Ibn ‘Ajībah are amongst the scholars of the discipline to engage in the same practice centuries earlier (Al-Fāsi Zarrūq, 2007, Al-Fāsi Zarrūq, 2015, Al-Ghazāli, 1989, Ibn ‘Ajībah, 2004, Khushaim, 1971). Additionally, bias amongst followers of *madhāhib* (juristic schools) left them to controversy and, their keenness to defend their stance at any cost, deprived them of realising that the purpose of *madhāhib* is to display the diversity of the tradition (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). These internal factors in addition to the colonial targeting of *taṣawwuf* and *madhabism*, following the abolition of the caliphate, led both to a state of weakness in the age of worthlessness (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). Speaking of the colonial role in rivalries and competition between sufi *tariqas* in fear of pan-Islamic ideas, Lawrence (2010) mentions how the French watched the *zāwiyas* closely and exploited differences between the *Qādiriyya* and the *Tijāniyya* brotherhoods co-opting the *Tijāniyya* as long as they served and fulfilled certain purposes for the colonial administration (Lawrence, 2010). In a similar fashion, the *Mirghaniyah* were co-opted by the British in Sudan in the latter’s battles against the upstart and rebellious al-Mahdi; previously a fellow Sufi who embraced thoughts of *Ibn ‘Arabi* and *Idrisi tariqah* (Lawrence, 2010, O’Fahey, 1999). Repeatedly, Al-Mashhūr insists that *taṣawwuf* and *madhabism* were prime targets of colonial powers because they constituted the school adopted by the Ottoman caliphate but the followers of the school contributed to its deterioration when they allowed stagnation and exaggeration to creep into their circles (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b).

Encouraging the followers of the school to return to their historical role as social mediators, good models, bearers of *dawah* and peace-keepers in the world, Al-Mashhūr argues that moderation and awareness are much needed amongst modern Sufis to dispel the continuous accusation hailed by other schools that they are the cause of backwardness and to protect the bright history of *taṣawwuf* from the unintended distortion caused by some, not all, members of the school (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). Speaking of the role of traditional scholarly authority in stabilising the pre-colonial society, Voll (1994) wrote that “teachers in Al-Azhar tended to draw back from activist fundamentalism or social radicalisation and during the upheavals of the 18th century, the university stood for stability rather than for revolution” (Voll, 1994). However, with the arrangement of the modern nation-state, the success of even those social mediation roles, the conservative project of serving a traditional form of piety, promoting public virtue and engaging in *dawah* activities will inevitably engage the political domain of the state which imposes restrictions on these activities in addition to the possibility of being seen as competitive to state-supported institutions as Hirschkind (2011) rightly notes, which poses questions on the viability of restoring that traditional role (Hirschkind, 2011).

5.2.3. The Collapsing Political Ceilings: Nationalism, Democracy and the Nation-State

Given Al-Mashhūr’s continuous use of the word ‘ceilings’ (*suqūf*) in reference to the shapes of political arrangements adopted by Muslims in emulation of the West during the stage of worthlessness, I have chosen the same wording ‘collapsing ceilings’ to name nationalism,

democracy and nation-state; the three political alternatives that dominated the Muslim *ummah* in the post caliphal stage, the stage of loss of authority. In his discussions of the impact of the loss of authority (scholarly and caliphal), Al-Mashhūr engages with the idea of nationalism and its associated themes of nation-state and democracy and stresses, again, how he sees the role of scholars in the post-caliphal Muslim world. Nationalism, Al-Mashhūr starts his discussion, is a European idea born in a context of sectarian tension where the church lost the battle leaving the European nations, now lacking a unifying faith, to choose other shapes of identity; language and race were the foundations of the new identity of nationalism and its political arrangement; the nation-state (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). In contrast, Al-Mashhūr further argues, Muslims had no church to start with; the European problem was irrelevant to them since their faith continued to bond them together; yet, Christian Arabs like Buṭrus al-Bustāni and Naṣīf al-Yaziji, who were fascinated with anything European embraced nationalism; without noting the difference in context; rather, as part of submitting to European colonialism (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Stressing the same difference between European and Muslim contexts, Hallaq (2014) wrote, “the political absolutism that Europe experienced, the merciless serfdom of feudalism, the abuses of the church, the inhumane realities of the Industrial Revolution, and all that which made revolutions necessary in Europe were not the lot of Muslims” (Hallaq, 2014 p.110).

Al-Mashhūr’s attribution of early nationalist thought inspired by the French Revolution secularism to Buṭrus al-Bustāni is well-established by other researchers (Raffoul, 2001, Abu-Manneh, 1980); yet, against Al-Mashhūr’s conclusion, it was arguably a reaction to European colonialism rather than encouraged by it. Al-Bustāni’s nationalist concern with ‘the future of his country’, which is continuously marked by biographers and critics (Raffoul, 2001, Abu-Manneh, 1980), triggers a reflection on ‘nationalism’ being informed by a ‘question of

becoming’ one that is located in the ‘future’. With its insistence on transforming human identity from a ‘given’ into a ‘task’, modernity promotes in the modern being a need to ‘becoming’ and imbues them with compulsive obsession with the future (Bauman, 2019). That leads me to conclude that despite apparent opposition to European colonialism, al-Bustāni’s version of nationalism proves his intellectual embracing of modernity’s frame of thought. Additionally, Al-Bustāni’s conversion from the Catholicism to Protestantism proves an embedded disposition of modernist separation between the ‘public’ and the ‘private’. Quoting Ernest Simon, Sacks (2005) points out a difference between catholic and protestant conceptions of religion; while catholic religions seek to sanctify all aspects of the life of the individual and the community, protestant religions focus on the individual, their direct relation to God and their personal faith and salvation; a characteristic that makes protestantisation of religion part of modernity to say the least (Sacks, 2005). This seemingly diverted discussion of Al-Bustāni is to show, as highlighted elsewhere, Al-Mushhūr’s lack of nuance in areas that are necessary for an in-depth critique of modernity. His focus on decolonisation leads him, at times, to overlook other agents behind a historical situation and renders his argument emotional.

Intertwined with secularism, Al-Mashhūr refuses nationalism as it came to replace the caliphate; the symbol of Islamic unity, identity and authority; he insists the role Turkish nationalists like the key figure of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) Ahmet Rıza (1858-1930) played in secularisation was inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution which the latter embraced and promoted during his stay in Paris and beyond (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Despite acknowledging that some traditional *‘ulamā* joined the CUP in its early days, Al-Mashhūr sees that those scholars left as soon as they realised the secular direction and agenda of the CUP (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Hammond, 2022b, Quadri, 2021). Nationalism in Al-Mashhūr’s view, not only contributed to the abolition of the caliphate but, as a secular idea,

distorted the minds of naïve hybrid Muslims, Arabs and others, who thought it was the best way forward but, having turned their backs on their religion, ended with more division and subjugation to colonial powers (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Berdine (2018) and Shakir (2017) expose that the real support for nationalism in the Muslim world was wide within the circles of Western educated elites who were in constant contact with colonial officials to discuss how to take this project further (Berdine, 2018, Shakir, 2017). Similarly, Mishra (2012) and Ahmad (1967) note the Indian modernist Sir Ahmed Khan's refusal of caliphal authority, declaring himself and his people as nationals of India and subjects of the British government; an attachment to the West and a detachment from pan-Islamic universalism and potentially aggressive Indian nationalism (Mishra, 2012, Ahmad, 1967). Al-Mashhūr's argument that nationalism became a substitute to religion and its caliphal symbol is mirrored by the theory that nationalism is modernity's substitute for religion which is the currency in social sciences; a theory which is often applied when considering the relationship between secularisation and nationalism (Liobera, 1994, Gellner, 2005, Santiago, 2012). The language adopted by nationalism is one that replaces loyalties and allegiances to anything other than the nation; an idolatrous deification of the 'Nation' as Scruton (2019) contends differentiating nationalism as an ideology from the natural love of one's land (Scruton, 2019). Building on the classical definition of the Islamic *ummah* as a theologically defined space enabling Muslims to practice the disciplines of *dīn* in the world, Asad (1999) concludes that "using the term *al-ummah al-'arabiyyah* to denote Arab nation represents a major conceptual transformation by which *ummah* is cut off from the theological predicates that gave it its universalising power and made to stand for an imagined community that is equivalent to a total society, limited like other limited and sovereign nations in a secular (social) world" (Asad, 1999 pp.189-190).

As it replaced the Muslim identity symbolised by the caliphate, Al-Mashhūr argues, nationalism rearranged Muslim societies into multiple entities called nation-states; yet, one powerful feature of these entities was that they refashioned the human awareness creating ‘the subject’ whose focus is on limited material services and unrestrained freedoms (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). The secular laws and institutions of the nation-state installed fear of the state and losing the services it provides more than fear of God in the mind of the new ‘subject’; creating what Al-Mashhūr calls *al-muslim al-khidmāti* (services-focused Muslim) (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). The nation-state’s production of ‘the subject’ through its powerful institutions and orders is an idea discussed by Hallaq (2014) who contends that modern nation-state systems of order and discipline produce individuals whose subjectivities are unprecedented in the sense that they are trained to submit to a regularity technique that engenders docility and utility in completely material sense (Hallaq, 2014). Through the nation-state’s reengineering of the social order a unique *homo modernus* for whom maintaining and affirming ordinary life with work and family being the main locus of a good life have been identified as the main focus and concern (Hallaq, 2014, Giddens, 2005, Cole and Kandiyoti, 2002, Jung, 2016, Taylor, 2006). This shift of focus from ‘other-worldly’ to ‘this-worldly’ affairs intensifies the process of domination and secularisation simultaneously. With the state, as an ultimate reference, now replacing the *Shari‘ah* which previously informed both government and the masses, democracy was affirmed as a political mechanism for governance (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b).

At a global level, Al-Mashhūr sees democracy as the button Western powers press every time they decide to replace the already weak regimes they have previously installed; a trigger for revolutions and protests which have both become modernity’s violent options to execute an intended quasi-change (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-

Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Democracy, to Al-Mashhūr, replaces defined political authority and hierarchical societies with chaotic and competitive masses all coveting power and resorting to revolution should they be unable to achieve it (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Noting a difference between modern nation-states and pre-modern societies, Taylor (1998) points out a shift from hierarchical, mediated-access societies to horizontal, direct-access societies; in the horizontal societies, the modern notion of citizenship replaced pre-modern shapes of belonging and made the state the object of common allegiance of all citizens (Taylor, 1998). On this premise, I argue that since authority is built on hierarchy as Arendt (1961) rightly notes, the nation-state's espoused mechanism of democracy, with its equal-access power given to everyone, contributed to undermining authority as Al-Mashhūr rightly contends.

Al-Mashhūr pays special attention to revolution and coup d'état as political change mechanisms. He sees them as modern means of deepening injustice, furthering violence and bringing about chaos and bloodshed to otherwise stable societies and thus they cannot be justified as Islamic since Islam calls for conciliation, gentleness, peace, social solidarity and fairness (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Though cases of rebellion existed in the Islamic history, van Ess (2001) notes that in the formative period of Islam, rebellion became an irregularity, a kind of misconduct for the suppression of which the entire community bore responsibility; it was weakened by multiple references to Qur'anic verses that encourage conciliation between Muslims (van Ess, 2001). Responding to revolutionary voices that may justify themselves by quoting the *hadīth* that the best *jihād* is a word of truth spoken to an oppressive *sultān*, Al-Mashhūr resorts to language to interpret the word *sultān* as a stage of political and moral decline (*marhalat al-sultān al-jā'ir*) where 'the word of truth' will be to advise both masses and leaders in a wise manner that brings

unity and is free from co-opting any side (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). To Al-Mashhūr, to be ‘the best *jihād*’, a word of truth has to be free from ‘political’ motives, distant from power struggles and in line with the moral principles of Islam; and revolution does not qualify as such. Al-Mashhūr’s opposition to revolution reflects a conservative ethical stance that resonates with the likes of Edmund Burke and Scruton for whom “the wise policy is to accept the arrangements, however imperfect, that have evolved through custom and inheritance, to improve them by small adjustments, but not to jeopardise them by large-scale alterations the consequences of which nobody can really envisage” (Scruton, 2019 p.2). Additionally, Arendt (1988) rightly argues that revolution is inconceivable outside the domain of violence and Del Noce (2014) stresses that, “the ennoblement of violence is tied to the philosophical idea of revolution; which means that revolution cannot take place in the name of traditional ethical principles because they are either empty words (justice, freedom), or legitimisations-mystifications of the existing order. The idea of revolution implies the elimination of ethics” (Del Noce, 2014 p.20, Arendt, 1988). I conclude that Al-Mashhūr will be betraying his ethical traditional positions if he were to embrace or encourage the idea of revolution.

5.3. Ending on a Positive Note: Pragmatism & Bad Colonialism

Despite his ardent criticism of the colonialist political project as the face of political modernity, Al-Mashhūr negotiates with the colonial heritage. In his own words, “We cannot brand all colonial heritage as negative or useless; negativity lies in using that heritage against Islam. When we separate science and civilisation from the policies of colonisers and their agents, we can find ourselves standing on non-politicised common ground; such is the space for all people who look for peace and stability” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b p.34). In another place, he insists that

bundling together usurious economies and destructive political models with modern scientific discoveries that can help all humans and refusing all because they come from the West is an extreme reactionary response which, he believes, is divorced from fairness and justice both injunctions of Islam (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). While this negotiating tone may sound pragmatist, it can validly be placed within Asad's view of 'a discursive tradition'; in a sense where a concept of tradition is used as an analytical tool for analysing competing discourses in the Muslim public sphere and dealing with the Islamic past and future, with a particular Islamic practice in the present (Sinani, 2019, Asad, 1993, Asad, 2009).

5.4. Conclusion:

In Al-Mashhūr's engagement with political modernity the role of colonialism is always present; which, I argue, stems from his own experience with colonial authorities in Yemen as discussed in the previous chapter, thus, he sees the modern through the eye of one colonised. In this regard, he holds colonialism responsible for the loss of authority in Muslims lands, a crisis which occurred with the abolition of the caliphate, which he acknowledges was imperfect, leading to complications at the political and the scholarly levels. Loss of scholarly authority gave way to emergent ideologies claiming equal ownership of the authentic interpretation of Islam and simultaneously excommunicating their co-religionists, while at the level of politics, the Western ideology of nationalism and its associated nation-state supplanted the unified political authority of the caliphate. In her distinction between the concept of 'power' and the concept of 'authority', Arendt (1961) rightly shows that since authority requires obedience, it is commonly mistaken for some form of power; yet, authority precludes the use of external means of coercion (Arendt, 1961). At the same time, authority is incompatible with the egalitarian order of persuasion because authority is hierarchical; the relation in an authoritarian

order rests neither on common reason nor the power of the one who commands; rather, on the hierarchy whose rightness and legitimacy both parties recognise and where both have their predetermined stable place (Arendt, 1961). Following Ardent thinking, I argue that ‘political modernity’ with its manifestations of nation-state (coercive power), democracy, equality and similar themes engenders power and undermines authority which is why ‘loss of authority’ features as a central theme to Al-Mashhūr’s discussion of political modernity. Through the coercive power of the nation-state, political modernity replaces the hierarchy of traditional authority – recognised by both parties – with the power of command and ability to coerce which neglects any legitimacy or otherwise of the nature of the command and whom it is coming from. It also dismisses the assigned role of the state by augmenting its spheres of functionality and control, empowering its intrusiveness and making it the ultimate reference in the political realm rather than any transcendent framework to which both the state and its subjects can recourse for “within the nation’s borders there is no order higher than that of the state” (Hallaq, 2014 p.26). Equally, attached notions of democracy dismisses any external authority since humans are masters of themselves and can chose the roles they want to play (Trueman, 2022).

While arguing against the unsuitability of those modes of thought for Muslims and striving to highlight their deficiencies – an argument that reveals his decolonial tone – Al-Mashhūr ends his engagement with a negotiation, proposing an adoption of some positive elements of the colonial heritage that are distant from the politicisation project and can be of service for all humans regardless of any agendas. While this last proposal neglects the intellectual underpinnings of scientific discoveries and theories that come from Europe, it displays an instance where the ‘tradition’ informs modernity; rather than the other way around. While being pragmatic, one can argue that it is driven by ‘a discourse’ where the ‘tradition’ proves

itself relevant by critiquing the modern rather than neglecting it or disengaging from it, as erroneously displayed in the current academic narrative.

6. The Philosophical Face of Modernity

This chapter discusses the second part of Al-Mashhūr's deconstructive project where he deals with the philosophical side of modernity. This is covered over four major sections. Firstly, the chapter introduces Al-Mashhūr's views on the production of knowledge in modernity and its characteristics. This is followed by a section on Al-Mashhūr's engagement with two mechanisms of producing and disseminating modern knowledge i.e. orientalist anthropology and the modern education system. The chapter concludes with Al-Mashhūr's negotiation to prove relevance of the tradition by offering an alternative Muslim anthropology and a hybrid system of traditional-modern education.

6.1. Modernity & the Production of Knowledge:

In modernity, the sureties of tradition have been replaced with epistemic frameworks and processes that redefined knowledge and reduced its scope under what was called demythologisation, supremacy of man and the scientific method (Giddens, 2005, Del Noce, 2014). To be modern, humans needed to embrace principles and modes of thought that make them, alone, the source of what they know rather than it being imposed upon them from an authority, be it transcendental or traditional; and as such knowledge was produced through a set of epistemic frameworks embedded in humanism, scientism, materialism and disenchantment all blended with the primacy and supremacy of man (Larmore, 2008, Kanu, 2015). This is what I mean by the modern production of knowledge. In this process, humans divorce inherited modes of knowledge production as irrelevant or archaic. Like political modernity, this cannot be separated from the colonial project which introduced, disseminated and empowered these new modes. Being a rupture from the past, modernity proposes methods of structuring and acquiring knowledge that define such an enterprise as one rooted in doubt, as Giddens (2005) and Hopwood (1998) state, "modernity institutionalises the principle of

radical doubt and insists that all knowledge takes the form of hypotheses: claims which may very well be true, but which are in principle always open to revision and may at some point be abandoned” (Giddens, 2005 p.3, Hopwood, 1998). Despite outward similarity to what certain religions endorse as the religious enquiry for truth, a deeper investigation of a principle like ‘the institutionalisation of radical doubt’ shows that it means giving credence to questions and hypotheses over answers and conclusions and leads to the abandonment of certain areas of knowledge as secondary or completely unnecessary. This re-classification and redefinition of knowledge is traced back to the intellectual fathers of modernity who believed that it is precisely our being human that rules out the possibility of achieving truth or being able to come to face with things as they really are (Spiker, 2021). As an essential ideal of modernity, the emancipation of the human subject from the shackles of ‘superstition’ is founded upon a scientific and rational understanding of the world that shuns the existence of other worlds and asserts that our world is not *a* world but *the* world (Duara, 1991). Keeler (2019) asserts that “Comte taught that the scientific method was the only guarantor of knowledge and had replaced metaphysics in man’s social evolution. In his law of human progress, Comte taught that human societies must pass through three stages: the theological, the metaphysical and the positive or scientific” (Keeler, 2019 p.15). Through revelation, Abrahamic religions, Islam specifically, assert the existence of other worlds beyond the full intellectual capacity of man’s grasp; something which puts it in direct contradiction with the exclusivist tone of modern science (Al-Attas, 2001, Bakar, 1998). At another level, the purposes of knowledge enterprise for modernity’s philosophers like Bacon and Descartes are ones governed by a materialistic view of nature, rejecting final causes in explanation, shunning ‘wisdom’ in favour of pleasure, health and freedom from pain as the new ends achieved by knowledge, such that “the invitation to be modern is simply an invitation to blind oneself to human concerns, as they are experienced by humans; instead, to impose wilfully, a mathematical order on everything, resulting in a floating,

sterile world, whose inhabitants are incapable of understanding such things as the ignobility of adultery, and whose political and social authority stems exclusively from their power to produce the best weapons" (Pippin, 1999 p.21).

Below I will discuss how Al-Mashhūr understands knowledge production and its mechanisms within modernity; how he engages with the ‘institutionalisation of doubt’, the re-classification of knowledge’ and re-definition of its purposes in light of the shift to materialism, the scientific method and the centrality of the human and their empowerment in the knowledge enterprise.

6.1.1. Al-Mashhūr’s Views on Modern Knowledge:

Al-Mashhūr discusses modernity’s production of knowledge in four works written over 11 years; he reiterated these views in later works such that I conclude he did not change them. His views on the production of knowledge and its corollaries which is the centre of his engagement with philosophical modernity fall under 23 codes that yield a total of 565 quotations. The codes include, production of knowledge, religion and science, scientisation, status of reason, autonomous reason, materialism and spirituality, religion and secularity, secularisation, Marxism and its impact, disenchantment, orientalism, responding to orientalism, twisted anthropology, new modes of education, colonialism and traditional education, modern and traditional education, fatherly and ego-centric schools. To build the structure of this chapter, the 23 codes were classified into three groups; production of knowledge and its attachments (16 codes- 250 quotations), orientalism and anthropology (3 codes – 189 quotations) and education and attachments (4 codes – 126 quotations). At the end of this thesis, I will include the code networks based on which this chapter, the previous and the following ones were designed. I will also include a table that shows the coding groups within each network and the number of quotations attached to them. This exercise will not only help in understanding the

flow of the chapters and their overall argument but will prove beneficial in tracing the tone of Al-Mashhūr's project and its overarching focus. I will explain this further in the concluding chapter. Starting with tracing the emergence of modernity to pre-Enlightenment, Al-Mashhūr describes it as a period dominated by "material and spiritual darkness for European individuals and societies" (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b p.17) and characterised by a struggle between "the proponents of secularism and the church" (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b p.18). This struggle, Al-Mashhūr comments, gave birth to what the Qur'an calls a phase of *istikbār* (material supremacy and arrogance); in reference to anthropocentrism and material power (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). While refusing a comparison between the pre-modern Europe and the Muslim world, Al-Mashhūr's emphasis on the materialistic nature of modernity sets the tone for his discussion of the knowledge that it has produced. Without displaying sympathy with the reasons that led to its emergence, he emphasizes that a difference in context merits a different approach in dealing with the problems that faced Muslim societies.

Al-Mashhūr's first observation on modern knowledge is that it does not read the universe in the name of God. Instead, it emulates some ancient civilisations that chose to see the universe solely through the lens of materialism, a perspective that displays man's ingratitude and rejection of God (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). This materialist reading disconnects ethics from knowledge, deprives man of his position as a viceroy of God, and leaves him limited, severed from God's aid and cast adrift on his temporary earthly abode (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). This conviction in the ability to subject everything to man's autonomous reason, place all reality within the natural order and deem it knowable by the methods of science, blinds itself to its inconsistencies (Duara, 1991) and disenchants the world from any higher meaning; such conviction formed the basis of knowledge in modernity's setting and set its compass. While criticising modern autonomous reason, Al-Mashhūr praises man's ability to travel into space

and achieve unfathomable discoveries calling this, ‘the peak of material progress’, but laments its spreading of scepticism, radical subjectivity and emptying the souls of human beings of any religious meaning. In line with traditional Islam that sees man as a holistic being; body, mind and soul, Al-Mashhūr observes that “spirituality does not have an impactful place in the hearts of many modern generations” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c p.127).

This materialist knowledge, Al-Mashhūr argues, led to ‘disenchantment’ i.e. the emptying of human enquiry of any metaphysical purpose, reducing humans to brute desires, passions or utilitarian ends in their search for truth (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). He calls such ‘disenchantment’, a revival of ‘ego-centrism’ and ‘arrogance’; two qualities of the devil who refused to prostrate to Adam claiming to be of ‘better substance’; hence, challenging God’s authority and refusing His command (i.e. revelation) (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). This separation of ‘metaphysical meanings’ from human enquiry manifested later in materialist civilisations that glorified human intellect over revelation, placing religious knowledge in a lower position or branding it superstitious and despite their material success, they failed morally and spiritually (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b).

Regarding the binary re-classification of knowledge into secular and sacred, Al-Mashhūr notes that knowledge should not be divided along such lines; divine revelation should oversee all human enquiry and guide it (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). While using observation, investigation, and experimentation as tools, scientific research should not be separated from revelation and metaphysical meanings; otherwise, it risks being ‘ego-centric’ (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). Dispelling what his readers may assume, Al-Mashhūr states that “Islam acknowledges human reason’s interpretation of natural phenomena and material world considering such an enquiry part of the larger body of religious knowledge and a support to the faith itself, not a substitute

to it” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c p.177). Again, Al-Mashhūr reiterates that science without metaphysics, an anomaly to human history, engenders atheism, anthropocentrism and a human defiance to God’s orders (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c).

Turning again to the Industrial Revolution, Al-Mashhūr links this event with the appearance of secularism, itself one of the hallmarks of modernity (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c, Duara, 1991). More emphatically, Giddens (2005) understands modernity to be the equivalent of industrialism (Giddens, 2005). Empowering man to invade the universe, the Industrial Revolution changed the shape of pre-modern societies’ relationship with the cosmos; thus, shifted man’s knowledge of his own capacities and objectives; augmenting his focus on his senses and reason more than revelation (Mumford, 1940, Pippin, 1999, Smart, 1990, Steiner, 1997). Brute desires started to take priority in deciding ultimate goals as man shifted the focus away from the power of religion; in other words, passion was placed higher than reason which was no more guided by revelation (George, 2017). Al-Mashhūr notes that modern knowledge turns man -at individual and societal levels- into a consumer, a machine and an object for scientific experiments; a change in the purpose of knowledge (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). This last observation will manifest in Al-Mashhūr’s response to anthropological studies conducted in Yemen which I will discuss later in this chapter as an area of modern production of knowledge. Al-Mashhūr blames modern knowledge for antagonistic and deeply sceptical attitudes towards religious matters of the unseen, like miracles and the hereafter, attributing that to the excessive pursuit of material proofs which, adversely, damages its conclusion (Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c).

Al-Mashhūr frequently characterises modern knowledge as ‘exclusivist’; it claims that only the scientific method, empiricism and the material world are true; thus, excludes other types and

methods of knowledge as superstitious and belonging to the dungeons of history (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). This offers material science narratives as the replacement of ‘revealed knowledge’ and ‘scriptural narrative’ on matters like the origin of the universe, the purpose of man’s life and the measure of human success (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). Dumont (1986) puts this exclusivist nature of modern science which tends to flatten out differences and sees them incompatible in contrast to traditional knowledge’s ability to accommodate differences through the notion of hierarchy (Dumont, 1986, Duara, 1991). Al-Mashhūr reaffirms, that by giving privilege to no one single faculty of a human-being and encouraging humans to acknowledge their limitations and believe in matters like the unseen, afterlife, angels and creation, revealed knowledge is more accommodating and honours variegated interpretations including the scientific one (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b).

6.1.2. A Summary of Al-Mashhūr’s Views on Modern Knowledge:

Al-Mashhūr’s critique of modern knowledge falls under four points that sometimes overlap; being:

6.1.2.1. It is materialistic in focus; and thus, limited in its scope to the physical and material phenomena of this world. Confirming this Islamic worldview, Bakar (1998) argues that there are levels of reality beyond the one level spatio-temporal world available to the senses (Bakar, 1998). Al-Mashhūr does not tell us the specifics of the limitations of science, however, Smith (2003) expands them as he sums up four things science cannot delve into the depths of; it cannot deal with intrinsic values, it cannot provide teleological explanations, it fails in the face of ontological truths and it cannot measure quality itself (Smith, 2003). Put

differently, while science claims all-round knowledge, the presuppositions and assumptions of science cannot be subjected to scientific explanations; the questions of how is science possible, is science universally competent, can science yield accurate pictures of hidden objects, mechanisms and processes, can science discover all truth and if not, why should we trust it as impeccable (Kanu, 2015).

6.1.2.2. It is exclusivist in discourse: Being ego-centric, Al-Mashhūr contends, the new modes of knowledge empower humans to discredit other discourses claiming that they impede progress and obstruct the march of civilisation (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). As Keeler (2019) notes, “for the modern mind-set that traces its origins to the revolutions of the 16th and 17th centuries, verifiable knowledge has been reduced to what can be discovered through the scientific method and is limited to the material realm. Everything else belongs to the imagination and is entirely subjective” (Keeler, 2019 p.76). Not far from this, Duara (1991) affirms that in modernist discourse, positivist science and its corollaries, secularism and progress are held unquestionably superior to any other alternatives and seen beyond inconsistencies or contradictions (Duara, 1991).

6.1.2.3. It augments human reason: While Islamic tradition counts human reason amongst other sources of knowing i.e. revelation (*naql*), mystical cognition (*dhawq*), reason (*aql*) and sensation (*ihsās*) (Keeler, 2019, Al-Attas, 2001, Bakar, 1998), modernist discourse augments the last two and shifts the order placing things superior to us; angels, God...etc., under the control of human experiment, thus, the superior comes after

the inferior, and is finally excluded by human naturalism (Smith, 2003, Al-Attas, 2023). Since empiricism and rationalism became the primary sources for the acquisition of knowledge and, in the name of freedom and reason, religion has been portrayed as dogmatic faith, reality started to be interpreted exclusively in terms of human experience making anthropocentrism the dominant paradigm of the modern society (Asvat, 2015).

6.1.2.4. It is chronically sceptic: The modernist mind is unsettled, so says Al-Mashhūr, as it is prone to doubt, having failed to ask the existential questions let alone answer them (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). The rigidity of modern science, its inability to address the questions of intrinsic values, amongst other reasons, allow for a radical subjectivity and self-choice that is not grounded in the larger cosmic scheme (Duara, 1991). The loss of transcendence made a scientific worldview an impossibility; thus, humans move from partial to partial, posing essential questions but finding no answers to them (Giddens, 2005, Hodgson, 1993).

6.1.3. Restoring the Missed Equilibrium:

To address the crisis of modern knowledge, Al-Mashhūr encourages Muslims to master the language and tools of modern science before offering the West their tradition that accommodated science and spirituality without separating them (Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). Unlike modern Western secular thinkers, Muslim thinkers do not see a dichotomy between metaphysical or religious truths and scientific enterprises; revelation has always encompassed

and guided both; it encourages scientific and spiritual development to go hand in hand (Al-Bālisani, 2013, Al-Mashhūr, 2005c). This was the case in world civilisations until the advent of modern civilisation; it made the human being its focus and denied everything beyond, replaced thought with action, revealed knowledge with material and rational science and sold the eternal for the temporal as Guénon (1942) rightly argues (Guénon, 1942). While the partial success of modern knowledge is incontestable, its insufficiency, radical subjectivity, arrogance, exclusivity, inconsistency all of which are evident make it pregnant with distortion, misrepresentation and promoting conflict (Duara, 1991). A ‘repositioning of human reason’ within the framework of revelation and *tarbiyah* (spiritual discipline) is needed and Islam can help modernity achieve that, Al-Mashhūr (2005c) concludes. Further to the above, Al-Mashhūr engages with two mechanisms/modes through which modern knowledge is produced and disseminated; orientalism and education.

6.2. Orientalism as A Mechanism of Modern Knowledge: Inventing the Other

Eaton (2007) once wrote, “when the Westerner is asked in what period of history he would have chosen to be born, had the choice been offered to him, he chooses – if he is sensible- the present day. He is a twentieth-century man with a twentieth-century face and twentieth-century emotions. Transported, just as he is, to some other period of time he would, no doubt, be thoroughly miserable. But when he assumes that the people of other times must have led lives of complete wretchedness because he is, in their place, would be wretched, he is allowing subjectivism to run away with his judgment. He needs all that the modern world can offer in the way of richness and he could do with more of it, but this need is an aspect of his twentieth-

century nature and he has no grounds for supposing that all men in all times have had the same needs” (Eaton, 2007 p.135). These sentences sum up Al-Mashhūr’s approach to orientalism which “places things Oriental in class, court, prison or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline or governing” (Said, 2003 p.41) as Said (2003) defines it. One of Al-Mashhūr’s core works on modernity discussed orientalism with a specific focus under the title: *Al-Mustashriqūn wa al-Tanwīriyyūn: Taḍāfur Mubham fi Marḥalat al-Ghuthā Nahw Hadaf Mushtarak* (Orientalists & Enlighteners: Dubious Collaboration in the Phase of Worthlessness towards a Common Objective). In this work, he engages with orientalism as a mechanism of producing knowledge that is rooted in doubt and scepticism, one that denies spiritual matters, attempts to subject everything to empirical methods and engenders friction and social conflict; it serves specific frameworks rather than humanity itself (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Continuing the orientalist work, graduates from Western universities went on to apply the same deficient methods for producing knowledge to Muslim societies (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Like the rest of his core works, I applied the coding process to this one and identified multiple codes, the most central of which are; orientalism (17 quotations), responding to orientalism (91 quotations) and twisted anthropology (68) quotations. Without neglecting other works, this specific work was my mainstay in deducing his views on these topics. For instance, he mentions orientalism 28 times in his works, 17 of which are in this book. All the 91 quotations under the code ‘responding to orientalism’ are in this book. Similarly, out of 70 quotations under the code ‘twisted anthropology’, 68 quotations are in this book alone. In the coming discussion, I will give a brief summary of what Al-Mashhūr responds to followed by his responses that unveil his views on anthropology and orientalism as an intertwined mechanism of producing modern knowledge.

6.2.1. Background:

The 1997 publication of an anthology of French and English anthropological articles on Yemeni society by the American Institute for Yemeni studies made such studies available in Arabic for the first time. Two articles in this anthology are of particular interest as they critique the role and influence of the Bā‘Alawī *sādah* – of which Al-Mashhūr himself is a constituent – on the maintenance of a social class structure judged by the authors of the articles to be pernicious and harmful to the members of lower classes. The central arguments of the articles, and Al-Mashhūr’s response to them, include his views on, and engagement with, orientalist anthropology as a mechanism of producing modern knowledge. In summarising these articles and presenting his response to them, we unveil his method of addressing modern critiques of traditional authority and societies.

The first article proposes a segregation of the Ḥaḍrami society into five strata being; the *sādah* (descendants of Prophet Muhammad), *mashāyikh* (members of the scholarly class), *qabā'il* (armed tribesmen), *masākin* (the impoverished) and *du‘afā’* (the weak) and frames a conflict originating in a legal dispute on the issue of hypogamous marriage in terms of a conflict between *sādah* and the rest of these factions (Bujra, 1967). A conflict over the validity of a marriage between a woman from the *sādah* to a non-*sayyid* in the colonial Far East led some factions to turn to Rashīd Ridā for a *fatwa* on the matter. The *fatwa*, which recognised the marriage as valid, was seen in contradistinction to the legal principle of equality (*kafā’ah*) enshrined in the Shafi‘ī school long dominant in Yemen. Buried tensions came to the surface, divided the Yemeni community in diaspora and were used to undermine the *sādah* long-held religious authority and open the community to reformist ideas. Reformists – henceforth Irshadis – were able to break away from *sādah* domination of education and religious leadership and establish modern schools and institutions, argues Bujra, thanks to the colonial socio-economic milieu that provided equal opportunities to everyone as opposed to the closed

strata system in the Ḥadrami homeland, thus allowing this power struggle to happen (Bujra, 1967).

The second article criticises the influence of the *ḥawṭah* institutions, an enclave build around a shrine of a pious saint, as centres for promoting not only the cult of saints, but more importantly for perpetuating the incontestable authority of the religious aristocracy (the *sādah* and the *mashāyikh*) which rested on the belief in saints (Knysh, 1993 p.145). In the article Knysh (1993) is highly sceptical about the validity of many lineages, miracles (like making rain at times of drought) and stories that the locals (scholars or laity) attribute to the buried saint (Knysh, 1993). While acknowledging the peace-making role of the caretakers of the *ḥawṭah*, its being a space for some religious education, Knysh (1993) is critical of the caretakers' use of such 'sacred' spaces to establish unchallenged social and economic status in the society. On ethical and moral grounds, he is equally critical of *mawlid* or yearly commemorations during which illicit sexual activities occur between adult male and female visitors who, argues Knysh, justify their actions by reference to the saint's ability to cancel or pardon the sins of his guests, grant blessings to the sick and help barren woman conceive (Knysh, 1993). Like Bujra, Knysh uses sceptical language about the authenticity of the lineages of the *sādah* but further argues that the only way to upwards movement through the strata system for lower echelons is the cultivation of a 'saint' of their own (Knysh, 1993) as though establishing a 'no descent no sainthood' rule. It is to the background of these two articles that I will present and discuss Al-Mahhūr's responses and views on orientalism and its attached anthropology.

6.2.2. Al-Mashhūr's Response to the Articles:

While Al-Mashhūr's responses to the articles stem from his views on orientalism as a mechanism for producing modern knowledge, it cannot be forgotten that Al-Mashhūr is in fact a *sayyid*, and thus belongs to the class the articles present as 'advantaged aristocracy' obstructing modernist ideas and holding onto established power against emerging changes. Al-Mashhūr begins by establishing the ineffectiveness of using modern secular modes of analysis to describe and understand deeply religious Muslim societies arguing that these methods' built-in insistence on casting doubt on the validity of religion as a whole, treating it as a social phenomenon embedded in power and domination framework as well as the methods' refusal to operate alongside or subject to the metaphysics that motivate such societies damage the validity of their claims (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). He buttresses his rebuttal stating that, "should we investigate what anthropologists call 'superstitious' metaphysics, we will realise that metaphysical/spiritual matters existed throughout history in all societies and were never treated 'doubtful' or 'suspicious' until the advent of the scientific method of modern atheistic anthropology; such that their considering spiritual matters superstitious is an anomaly to human history" (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c p.18). In a similar tone, Hallaq (2018) and Tapper (1995) identify this problem with Western anthropology as arid scientific detachment, extreme secular humanism that is unable to appreciate non-secular societies and the role religion plays in them (Tapper, 1995, Hallaq, 2018). Thus, Al-Mashhūr sets the tone by refusing Western anthropology and social sciences as tools of analysing and studying Muslim societies; given its connection with colonialism and negative stance from religion; their research serves specific agendas, misrepresents reality and fails to understand the complexities of Muslim societies (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c).

In his capacity as a scholar of the sacred law, Al-Mashhūr next rejects outright Bujra's representation of the conflict over the hypogamous marriage as rooted in a class warfare or power struggle, and instead characterises the debate as one belonging solely to the realm of law and intellectual disagreement (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Al-Mashhūr further criticises the selectivist approach of orientalist studies that side with one of the contending groups, usually the one with modernist views, who have intellectual affinity with orientalists as well as making issues of valid debate, a candidate to display an imaginary battle between belief and disbelief, progressive and backward, domineering and dominated (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Turning to the issue of *kafā'ah* (marriage suitability), Al-Mashhūr highlights that it was a debated issue between Muslim jurists long before the 'Alawi-Irshādi conflict brought it to the surface arguing that it was rather modernist ideas that was at debate here; yet, those modernist ideas were shared by both *sādah* and non-*sādah* in as much as conservative views had support from both groups (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). I have uncovered other anthropological studies that challenge Bujra's conclusion that the conflict was one of power between *sayyids* and non-*sayyids*. These confirm Al-Mashhūr's argument and recast the conflict as ideological. Three *sādah* from Singapore were amongst the leading figures of the modernist Irshadi movement, who were already in communication with the Egyptian modernist Rashīd Rida, alongside the leading scholar of the Irshadis Shaykh Ahmed Al-Surkitti who embraced the same modernist ideas prior to his arrival (Abushouk, 2011, Mobini-Kesheh, 1997, Petouris, 2017, Noor and Lee, 2013). Other studies even challenge Bujra's widely quoted strata system as inaccurate (Camelin, 1997, Petouris, 2017). My reference to these studies is not intended to prove Al-Mashhūr's critique as right or wrong; rather, to show a limitation of his deconstructive project which I will elaborate later in the next chapter and elsewhere in this chapter. Al-Mashhūr's inability to speak and read a foreign language restricted his sources of knowing about the West such that he cannot grasp

the diversity of the studies and the presence of a multiplicity of opinions and contending views within anthropology.

While blaming anthropological studies' lack of depth for depicting religious disagreements as power struggles, Al-Mashhūr turns his blame to the two contending Muslim sides for ugly fanaticism, lack of balance, manipulation of religious texts to serve conflict and complete neglect of the spirit of unity and Islamic brotherhood (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). On that note, he suggests that, knowing the Muslim context and its dynamics, balanced Muslim scholars are naturally far better equipped than their Western counterparts to research these issues and that even when the latter consider topics such as these, it is incumbent upon them to commit to objectivity and accurate representation rather than siding intellectually with one of the contending groups (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). I argue that, by taking the discussion beyond the intricacies of jurisprudence and adopting the reconciliatory tone that underlie his criticism of both parties' sharp tone, Al-Mashhūr's discourse is pregnant with pragmatism. In his prioritisation of Muslim unity, Al-Mashhūr is in coherence with his earlier ardent criticism of sectarianism and his later suggestion of the priority of working on shared grounds and principles. Likewise, his qualification of Western anthropologists as being unequipped to deal with matters such as these is an example of his decolonial attitude. Al-Mashhūr's insistence on the inherently legal character of the debate again demonstrated his refusal to accept wholesale the conclusion of modern analysis and illustrates his readiness to correct such misreading and re-categorise observations in a manner more conducive to the understanding the object of analysis (being here the Yemeni society); this is another instance of his decolonisation attitude.

In his response to both articles, Al-Mashhūr is busy highlighting how bias, misrepresentation, inaccuracy, forced epistemic frames of reference that characterise Western anthropological

studies engender scepticism and stir conflict. In doing so, he addresses the sceptical tone of the articles regarding the validity of *sayyid* lineages based on theories adopted by earlier orientalists (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Balfaqih, 1977). Referring back to the ‘orality’ of Islamic tradition and the different nature of Muslim societies, he contends that such matters are difficult for orientalists to understand let alone to criticise or evaluate (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Serjeant, 1957). An example of bias that manifested in the articles, argues Al-Mashhūr, is clear in Bujra’s reliance on Al-Bakary (1935) who was an active Irshadi; this undermines Bujra’s reliability (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). The epistemic problem with Bujra’s study lies in his imposing an analytic frame of reference from outside the society; something which leads to interpretation of religious practices and symbols in a different way; thus, producing knowledge on modernity’s terms. El-Zein (1977) affirms this epistemic problem; that Bujra perceives “Islam as a set of ideas created by an elite and accepted by the masses, which enables its producers to enforce and manipulate social, economic, and political hierarchies. Islam is thus reduced to an instrumental ideology” (El-Zein, 1977 p.236). Within this inherently modern analytic frame of reference imposed upon the Ḥadrami cultural systems, the system of meaning and interpretation is closed in favour of the idiom of politics and domination (El-Zein, 1977). The Ḥadrami’s religious practices and symbols are distorted and produced de novo within an alien frame of modern reading of religion and society; this is what Al-Mashhūr essentially critiques.

Following the same logic, Al-Mashhūr criticises Knysh’s selectivist approach of the issue of ‘saint veneration’ from amongst “a wide variety of research subjects, each interesting in itself and deserving a special study” (Knysh, 1993 p.137) as a candidate to display an imaginary battle between belief and disbelief (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). In Al-Mashhūr’s view, this selection reflects a pattern in orientalists’ anthropological studies “that focus on two areas; describing the state of ignorance in the society and intelligently spreading animosity and discord” (Al-

Mashhūr, 2002c p.42). Al-Mashhūr corrects Knysh's attribution of the concept of sacred enclaves to pre-Islamic Arabia and contends that it emerged from "the Islamic injunctions of solidarity and compassion and was informed by religious texts that insist that believers are like one body; they share sentiments and help one another as part of Islamic values of charity and reconciliation" (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c p.47, Knysh, 1993). Al-Mashhūr further complains that the article's neglect of the achievements of those righteous individuals; rather, focused on pragmatic and materialistic interpretations of the *hawtah* and surrounding practices (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Knysh did briefly, yet superficially, hinted at 'how to become a holy man' but declared earlier that his interest was in "the Hadramis preoccupation with the veneration of saints" (Knysh, 1993 p.138) but restricting that to the mundane motives.

At another level, Al-Mashhūr objects to Knysh's doubt-laden sentences, like describing the *hawtah* as "considered to be under '*the protection of God*'" (Knysh, 1993 p.138), as a misrepresentation of "the pious men's admonition for wrongdoers reminding them of the punishment of the hereafter" (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Likewise, Knysh's words "alleged or historical founder" (Knysh, 1993 p.138), are seen as "aspersing the status of Muslim shrines, destabilising their social arrangement and inciting dissident groups or 'enlightened' factions to attack the credibility of this established structure" (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c p.48). Knysh justification of religious leaders' neutrality as compliance to popular expectations (Knysh, 1993 p.138) is refused by Al-Mashhūr who sees as "a moral principle that stems from the teachings of Islam not from popular expectations" (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c p.49). These are examples of the misrepresentations Al-Mashhūr argues against and sees as negative materialist analyses of great initiatives and religious beliefs that led to stability in the Yemeni society instead of helping the society and playing the role expected from objective academic research (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c).

Like his response to Bujra, Al-Mashhūr argues that Knysh is inaccurate about the sexual activities that happen in the yearly visits; he denies them and declares such acts as complete departure from the *Sharī'ah* (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Touching on spirituality, Al-Mashhūr criticises Knysh's understanding and commentary on 'saintly miracles', as stemming from paradigms that alienates spiritual matters. Knysh's lack of "spiritual connection to Islam" makes him "unable to understand the divine wisdom in allowing *i'jāz* (prophetic miracles) and *karāmah* (saintly miracle) and lead him to force rational and materialistic interpretations that deforms and misrepresents their religious narrative and significance (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Equally, Al-Mashhūr justifies 'fear and respect of pledges' understood by Knysh in a material manner, as a feeling stemming from a religious sense of duty towards one's agreements and argues that if faith inspires respect of agreements and reconciliation, it is a blessed inspiration (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). This hint at faith as a driving force for public good is as traditional as the one echoed by Sacks (2005) as he notes that, "religious faith is central to a humane social order. To paraphrase a rabbinic saying: if we have only a secular society, even a secular society we will not have" (Sacks, 2005 p.26). Finally, Al-Mashhūr reiterates that spiritual matters can neither be fathomed by non-believing researchers nor subjected to the empirical rules of science (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Yet, in his usual manner, he blames ignorant masses for their share in the problem and suggests correct religious education as the best way forward, a suggestion that pragmatically reinstates the role of scholarly authority and its traditional knowledge as an alternative to Western modern knowledge (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c).

It is important to note, as I have highlighted earlier that Knysh has published multiple versions and included more details since the original article in 1993 (Knysh, 1997a, Knysh, 1997b) and his tone and views have changed. Had Al-Mashhūr been aware of this, he would likely have

adapted his response and seen Knysh's case differently. However, Al-Mashhūr inability to read English has limited his access and subsequently a change in his views. As it is, he invites traditional scholars to be aware of their reality and be brave enough to take a moderate position that annuls the work of those who want to demolish the balanced Muslim social structure (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). This vague suggestion can be seen as 'introspective traditional reform' or 'pragmatic conservative response' both of which require tangible steps which Al-Mashhūr has not offered.

6.2.3. Al-Mashhūr's Views on Orientalism

Al-Mashhūr can be described, using Clifford (1988), as writing back against imperial discourse from the position of an oriental whose actuality has been distorted and denied (Clifford, 1988, Hallaq, 2018); yet he - unlike Saïd whom Clifford describes - is aware of the alliance between knowledge and power. His rejection of Western anthropology stems from its being a child of colonialism and producer of certain knowledge; "it is ethnocentric and tainted by its imperial history and connections, its subject-matter, assumptions, questions and methods are dictated by imperial interests; and its practitioners come from imperial backgrounds and biases (through structures of funding, jobs, publication, readership) or Third World (Western-orientated/supported elites)" (Tapper, 1995 p.186, Hallaq, 2018, Asad, 1995). What gives Al-Mashhūr's response importance is being the first time a traditional Muslim scholar from this geographical and intellectual context tackles orientalism at this level of engagement. Al-Mashhūr breaks away from the Ḥaḍrami tradition of focussing on jurisprudence and spirituality and critically engages with orientalism as a mechanism of producing modern knowledge. His views on orientalism and associated anthropology can be summarised as follows:

6.2.3.1. Missrepresentative:

As a mode of domination, orientalism spots weaknesses in the society, augments and presents them in an ‘out-of-proportion’ frame to create social rifts and fractions and instil enmity towards the tradition and traditional scholarship (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). In this respect, it produces an imaginary reality that dwells in the minds of its readers and informs their actions and attitudes. Through anthropological discourse, ‘the primitive’, ‘the irrational’, ‘the mythic’ and ‘the traditional’ are created and informed by a modern dealing with non-modern; a fractional approach that creates a reality of tension (Asad, 1993, Morris, 2006). Asad (2009) argues that “it is wrong to represent types of Islam as being correlated with types of social structure, on the implicit analogy with (ideological) superstructure and (social) base” (Asad, 2009 p.10) Similarly, Hallaq (2018) blames orientalist work for not just misrepresenting but for re-creating the other (Hallaq, 2018). To the colonial orientalist, the oriental was stereotypically unhygienic, unhealthy, superstitious, and unscientific (Fahmy, 2018). Unbiased research, Al-Mashhūr argues, should reveal the impact of Islamic life on people’s social reality and acknowledge that problems are part of any human society rather than exploiting and augmenting those problems to breed conflict in the name of research (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). The tone of pervasive doubt that characterises anthropological studies is typical to modernity and institutionalises such doubt (Giddens, 2005) misrepresenting long-established and traditional societies. Left to bitter choices between; “straw men, vague shadows, distorted portraits and potted narrations” (Pippin, 1999 p.xiii), the reader of those anthropological studies builds an image of a society that is a reproduction; rather than an introduction.

6.2.3.2. Divisive:

It sides with one fraction of the society, a fraction that keeps intellectual affinity with and upholds its proposals of undermining traditional authority. This is another reason to doubt the objectivity of anthropological studies (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Lackner looks into the background of this observation noting that laden with the ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment, anthropology re-enforces the inequalities between the Europeanised elite and the traditional masses in the Third World (Lackner, 1995). As highlighted earlier, Bujra's depiction of the conflict as *sayyids* against *non-sayyids* and dependence on Irshadi only as his reference implies an intellectual bias. Objective research in Al-Mashhūr's view should remain at equal distance from every group, go beyond inciting a clash between two views within the Islamic tradition which is itself wide enough to accommodate everyone (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). The modern secular project has been propagated by a generation of anthropologists, and, in taking certain places and their customs as examples of specific issues of the types mentioned, has had a lasting impact in shaping Muslim lives; this flaw raises the alarm about anthropological objectivity (Fahmy, 2018, Asad, 2003, Tapper, 1995, Appadurai, 1986). This exclusiveness of support and openness to certain fractions of the society is not particular to the Yemeni case; it is part of how the colonial modern functions. Fahmy (2018) presents four reasons why Indians rejected colonial medicine of which he highlights the exclusiveness of service and instruction to certain factions and racial groups (Fahmy, 2018). Similarly, Dutch colonial administration and their advisors orientalists Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936) and Godrard Hazeu (1870-1929) – who admired 'Abduh and Rida - gave exclusive support to the Irshadis and were adamant to undermine the *sayyid* traditional nexus (Mobini-Kesheh, 1997, Laffan, 2022).

6.2.3.3. Privatising:

It ‘privatises religion’ and pushes towards ‘secularising society’ through holding traditional scholars responsible for social problems; rather than showing that popular customs play a bigger role in creating the state of ignorance (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Insisting that traditional scholarship provide a haven for wrong popular practices without highlighting their role in criticising those practices empowers secular groups in the society to portray religion as superstitious, backward and entirely unnecessary for a successful society. This is done without any blame directed to the modernist school which works on the depletion of the spiritual life of the community but shows no objection towards manifestations of modern secular life that clashes with Islamic teachings (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). The secular nature of Western anthropological discourse is established since it was born within a modernist context, and thus sees religion as a human creation, a view that makes it unable to understand Muslim civilisation (Tapper, 1995, Marranci, 2008, Duara, 1991). As El-Zein (1977) explains, modern anthropology perceives religion within its own assumptions about the nature of man, God and the World as idle; it does not define true reality but serves certain social orders and thus should be gotten rid of for the society to modernise itself (El-Zein, 1977). Secularism as a doctrine and secularisation as a process are essential components of modernity’s project and orientalism with its anthropological tool ensure their application and promotion (Asad, 2003).

6.2.3.4. Eurocentric:

Orientalist anthropology is a prisoner of its own background; it tackles religious and spiritual matters from a materialist viewpoint that belongs to another epistemic paradigm and measures other societies in comparison to Europe; so it is self-centric (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Daud, 1998). Here, Al-Mashhūr is similar to Said (2003) and Tapper (1995) who – amongst others- highlight the Eurocentric nature of Western anthropology, that remains tainted by its imperial history and connections (Tapper, 1995, Marranci, 2008, Said, 2003). Appadurai

(1986) displays the problem of “going somewhere distant from the theoretical and cultural metropolis of the anthropologist” (Appadurai, 1986 p.356) which has become the foundation of anthropological theory since the latter part of the nineteenth century; and that ‘elsewhere’ has always been “tied in complicated ways to the history of European expansion, the vagaries of colonial and postcolonial pragmatics, the shifting tastes of Western men of letters” (Appadurai, 1986 p.357); all have produced impacting description and analysis (Appadurai, 1986). Abu-Lughod (1991) raises the same criticism of Eurocentric view of the other as ill-conceived and imprisoned within the European expansionist modern (Abu-Lughod, 1991). Al-Mashhūr’s criticism of orientalist anthropology as a continuation of colonialism should not be separated from the direct relation to his own life; his family’s social status came under attack and his long-established modes of education were replaced with ones informed by Western modes of knowledge. In that, his credentials were questioned, doubted and made redundant and he was forced to go through a new system of producing knowledge; modern education which I will discuss shortly.

6.2.4. Negotiating for a Muslim Anthropology

Al-Mashhūr joins other thinkers who propose an alternative Muslim anthropology that correctly depicts the reality of the Muslim community, preserves its Islamic identity and social fabric and applies constructive research methods, in line with Islamic ethos, in spirit of mutual advice and internal reconciliation (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). He calls for anthropology that is free from political agendas and bias that make it untrusted, in similar manner to Foucault who acknowledges that a hindrance to our trust in modern science is, “the political status of science and the ideological functions it could serve” with such complicated knowledge-power relationship obvious in more dubious sciences like anthropology (Foucault, 1980 p.109). The

presence of an ideology behind knowledge can be detrimental to its fairness and accuracy since it creates a severe sense of zeal for a kind of knowledge that is totally free from error and illusion, a claim driven by nostalgia and far from humility. “There is a kind of nostalgia behind the concept of ideology, the nostalgia of a quasi-transparent form of knowledge, free from all error and illusion” (Foucault, 1980 p.117). Secular humanism, an ideology from which orientalism emerges, is not just a name for a particular type of analysing the world, as Hallaq (2018) rightly argues, “it is the psychoepistemic substantiation of a *particular subject* who articulates the world wholly through the disenchanted modern categories that are inherently incapable of appreciating intellectually, and much less sympathising spiritually with non-secular-humanist phenomena” (Hallaq, 2018 p.5)

The shape of the ‘Islamic anthropology’ Al-Mashhūr proposes is unclear but he stresses that it has to be an ethical one in which Muslim researchers benefit from the available methodologies to build their own and propose a solution for treating the intellectual conflict without affecting the social fabric (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Unlike Western anthropology, Al-Mashhūr argues that a valid anthropology will reflect reality and work to reconcile the conflicting parties who share the same faith and homeland in the end (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Putting a final touch on his proposed anthropology, Al-Mashhūr says, “genuine anthropological studies should discuss why secular and communist movements have failed to build a successful society and how modernist movements were unable to offer a better Islamic alternative to the ‘backward’ traditional authority represented in the Sādah at one point” (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c p.27). In addition to the ambiguity and pragmatism of his proposal, Al-Mashhūr, still entrapped in colonialist anthropology, seems to be unaware of the debate on reconsidering how Islam was approached from an anthropological perspective; a reconsideration that goes beyond the colonial stereotyped representation of Islam and the civilising West (Marranci, 2008). Perhaps a proposed dialogue between an Islamic and Western

anthropologists (Khorramdust et al., 2014) can help moving forward beyond the orientalist discourse and bring Al-Mashhūr's proposal into the debate.

6.3. Education as a Mechanism of Modern Knowledge: Refashioning the Other

Being an educationist, Al-Mashhūr's treatment of the shift that occurred to traditional education under colonialism and beyond and the use of new modes of education to promote Western ideas and ways of thinking is part of his engagement with production of knowledge. In pre-colonial Muslim societies, traditional Islamic education enjoyed uncontested status and support (Tan, 2017). Under colonialism, as in the modernisation and secularisation processes, “a clash with and a marginalisation of, the knowledge and belief systems of those who were conquered” (Loomba, 2015 p.80, Ivermee, 2014, Walbridge, 2011) became the new reality. Seen as virtually worthless, absurd, outdated and full of superstitions that delayed progress of truth, traditional education was judged as producing graduates that were unemployable in the colonial economy (Ogunnaike, 2018, Ali, 2016). The new modes of education imposed by colonial powers introduced an alien pedagogy which not only disrupted the continuity of the intellectual tradition but also broke the continuity of the culture and created a new class of natives (Dawson, 1961, Cook, 1999, Tan, 2017). Al-Mashhūr describes modern Western education introduced by colonial authorities as an intended interruption of the religious educational tradition that led to a discontinuation of generations of solid scholars who used to come from the traditional centres of learning (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). The graduates of colonial education – who became leaders in the newly independent states – continued the execution of colonial policies of secularisation and marginalisation of religion from public life that Islamic tradition stopped functioning even within family law (Maknūn,

2018). It can be argued that secular education was equally introduced by the Ottomans who founded such secular schools; yet, it was colonial powers who, since the collapse of the Ottomans, forced traditional education into retreat through intense secularisation (Abbas, 2017, Yasin and Jani, 2013). Education and its corollaries are represented by 4 codes totalling 126 quotations which makes it as important as orientalism and shows its centrality to Al-Mashhūr's deconstructive project. Al-Mashhūr summarises the predicament of modern modes of education which he calls '*al-talīm al-maqbūd*' (contracted, confined, and plummeted education) in the following:

6.3.1. Lacking Completeness:

New modes of education fail to produce a whole and balanced human being who can rebuild civilisation and spearhead development as they separate the process of *talīm* (education) from *tarbiyah* (nurturing) and *dawah* (preaching) (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). This intended separation of the 'secular' from the 'sacred' or the 'mundane' from the 'spiritual' undermines the Muslim identity and perpetuates the Westernisation project from inside the school (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2001b). In a treatise called *al-Istidādāt al-Hathīthah li Himāyat al-Arbīyah min Muzāḥamat al-Madrasah al-Hadīthah* (Urgent Procedures to Protect the *Ribāts* from the Rivalry of Modern School), Al-Mashhūr wrote, "From bottom to top, the modern school plays a very limited role in social life that cannot match the desired expectations of an Islamic education. This limitation comes from its focus on building the mind and theoretically equipping it with mundane and little religious knowledge, which is an essential job in itself. However, from an Islamic perspective, it lacks moral and spiritual components. These agents that balance the educational process are totally non-existent in modern educational systems because they are designed to perform a specific role to produce generations that give their loyalty to certain ideologies and serve certain institutions" (Al-Mashhūr, no date-a p.5). In a

direct criticism of one of those ideas, he blames Yemeni authorities for teaching historical materialism in its national curricula and, at the same time, marginalising Islamic teachings and trivialising the role of religion (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b). This secularisation of education is rooted in the epistemic foundations of Western modernity which informed Western education. Central to these foundations is “secularism with its veneration of human reason over divine revelation and precepts of the separation of mosque and state” (Cook, 1999 p.340). This emphasis on secularism, introduced and promoted by colonial powers, created and deepened the gap between secular and religious modes of educational development and contributed to the absence of this harmonious human whole (Abbas, 2017, Cook, 1999, Ivermee, 2014). Even while putting the word *tarbiyah* (nurturing) next to the word education as the name of modern Arab nation-states’ ministries of education; its concept and definition is far from being integrated into their conventional education curricula (Yasin and Jani, 2013, Sudan, 2017). Seen within an Islamic paradigm, education is a process of producing a “complete person, including the rational, spiritual and social dimensions of the person” (Cook, 1999 p.345, Sudan, 2017). This ‘holistic’ approach thus considers religion an integral part of the educational process necessary for a balanced, well-rounded personality in which rational, spiritual, ethical and social dimensions are woven together in a harmonious union. To achieve this goal, an educational process should include; imparting knowledge (*talīm*), nurturing ethical and spiritual wellbeing (*tarbiyah*) and culturing refined and well-mannered character (*ta’dīb*) (Al-Attas, 1999, Sudan, 2017, Yasin and Jani, 2013). Al-Mashhūr’s conception of Islamic education as composed of *talīm*, *tarbiyah* and *dawah* is not far from other Muslim educationists if we consider *dawah* to be the social field where good character is refined through interaction with society; thus, covering the social dimension. Thus, he decries the separation of the rational from the spiritual arguing, like Syed Ashraf, Al-Attas and other Muslim educationists that it leads to the disintegration of human personality (Cook, 1999, Tamuri and Ismail, 2013, Al-

Attas, 1999, Yasin and Jani, 2013, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). While the *summum bonum* of education in Islam – reflecting Islam’s *weltanschauung*- is the balanced growth of human character seeing knowledge not with a utilitarian lens but as an act of worship and a lifelong process, the primary aim of modern education is to produce employable individuals equipped with usable skills in the work place (Cook, 1999, Ogunnaike, 2018, Tamuri and Ismail, 2013, Al-Attas, 1999, Lindberg, 1992, Zawawi, 2019, Yasin and Jani, 2013, Sudan, 2017, Ali, 2016). Without neglecting the worldly demands, education in Islam is a means to an other-worldly end while in modernity it is a vehicle to material goals here and now. Daud (1998) argues that a side effect of turning education into a utility for personal or social mobility is the psycho-social pathology phenomena known as ‘diploma disease’ in which degrees are not sought for their intrinsic value but for their social and economic value (Daud, 1998). This leaves matters of the spirit out of modern education’s list of priorities, replaced sometimes with counselling programmes or at other times with calls to keep education neutral towards religions following dictates of secularism; a ban that causes a problem in the development of moral character (de Ruyter and Merry, 2009, Hargreaves, 1980). Al-Mashhūr notes that “graduates of modern schools and universities have lost touch with spirituality. Matters of the spirit have no or too little impact and are confined to private life and hollow rituals; sometimes even perceived as a retreat from life” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b p149)

6.3.2. State Dominated:

Modern education, its curricula, research and degrees, are politicised and function within routes drawn by political regimes that dictate the shape of its knowledge and ideologies that dominate it; while education is supposed to be independent (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, no date-a). While highlighting how the nation-state dominates education as part of its creation of the modern subject, a point which I discussed in the previous chapter, Al-Mashhūr joins others in criticising the impact of this domination on the objectivity and the independence of its

knowledge (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, no date-a, Hallaq, 2014, Cole and Kandiyoti, 2002, Tan, 2017). This domination started during the colonial period when the foundations were laid to produce graduates who serve bureaucratic purposes (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). At varying degrees, colonial powers introduced controlled education and national curriculum to the colonies; an education which imposed cultural assimilation as a new identity (Feldmann, 2016, Maknūn, 2018). Graduates of these modern schools spearheaded revolutions and led the post-colonial nation-state as, Meyer and Robinson (1975) displayed that “colonial and mission schools figure prominently in the origins of the revolutionary leaders and state builders in new nations” (Meyer and Robinson, 1975 p.137) and that the political participation of those colonially educated leaders involved turbulence, political instability, and conflict (Meyer and Robinson, 1975). This fosters Al-Mashhur’s argument that the modes of knowledge in traditional education – through independence- insist on the neutral and peace-making role of its recipients, while the state dominated modern education promotes an unquestioning intellectual, political and military loyalty (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Walbridge, 2011, Hallaq, 2014). This fundamental difference of the products of both modes of education can be traced to the embedded vision of each; the traditional being to produce a good and just human (i.e. person-centred) and ensure their felicity in this life and the hereafter, while the modern being the production of a useful and docile subject; docility and utility (i.e. state-centred) (Al-Attas, 2001, Daud, 1998, Hallaq, 2014). The idea of controlled education is intertwined with the nation-state techniques of submission and domination; thus, knowledge becomes a vehicle of subjugation and fashioning rather than liberation and empowering losing any moral telos for state plans and propaganda (Hallaq, 2014, Cole and Kandiyoti, 2002, Meyer and Robinson, 1975, Hobsbawm, 2000). Al-Mashhūr captures this process, “inside the porches of modern educational institutions, a Muslim has metamorphosed into a different human with different reference points; these points can be nationalism, Westernism or anything similar but

not Islamic” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b p.62). This domination is not confined to undergraduate programs but extends to academia and academic research in form of structuring and funding; they serve a problem-solving role in many government policies and projects (Meyer and Robinson, 1975, Hallaq, 2014, Kwiek, 2008). Al-Mashhūr decries this subservient education arguing that, “a form of contracted knowledge defines the route for higher education degrees like B.A., Masters and PhDs that they have to serve the government policies in their respective countries. A researcher has to follow the designated route or lose the chance to get the desired degree” (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b p.139). Consequently, he argues, we face a disruption of “the social reality, ending self-sufficiency and financial independence and replacing them with job-based system which has empty job titles and associated salaries” (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b p.103). In a similar tone, Hallaq notes that in medieval Muslim societies, the independence of the judiciary was secured by the economic arrangement of the society since dismissal from office – i.e. by the executive power or rulers- was not of great consequence as a Muslim judge – who is normally a scholar – had other artisanal professions that made income coming from *qādī*ship non-impactful. The job-based economy of the modern world that threatens independence did not exist before the nineteenth century (Hallaq, 2014). The impact of dominated education and job-based economy is thus not limited to the individual’s livelihood but also their identity, as Hargreaves (1980) rightly concludes that “in modern society man’s identity is closely tied to his occupational specialisation” (Hargreaves, 1980 p.190, Hanson, 2003).

6.3.3. Ego-Centric & Promotes Individualism:

As an enterprise, modern education engenders ego-centrism and individualism. This *anawī* (ego-centric) education breeds disdain of truth, severance of belonging and interruption of tradition. The nature of the relationship between teacher and student in modern education leaves no opportunity for proper mentorship and fatherly connection (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, no date-a). The new relationship is a contractual one where a teacher and educational

institution become service providers and a student becomes a customer whose ego controls and decides what and how to study (Al-Mashhūr, 1986). Alerting us to the impact of this relationship in which a teacher is turned into a service provider rather than an interactive mentor, the American educator E. D. Hirsch Jr. holds it responsible for a decline in academic competence of the students and calls on political liberals to be conservative when it comes to education (Hirsch 1997). At another level, Corcoran (1926) blames modern education theorists specially Jean Jacques Rousseau for emptying the word ‘teacher’ of its historical and vital meaning and turning it to merely mean an ‘observer’ or an ‘advisor’ at best under the guise of saving individual liberty; something which is not just an attack on the historic authority of the teacher but the authority of the parents as well (Corcoran, 1926). Al-Mashhūr continually refers to the traditional school as *al-madrasah al-abawiyyah* (the fatherly school) as opposed to the modern school or *al-madrasah al-anawiyah* (ego-centric school) (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). The fatherly school ensures a continuation of a tradition where students are guided and mentored by spiritual and intellectual teachers, while the ego-centric school rids off tradition in favour of individualistic experimentation and autonomy making the knowledge process informed by the individual not the time-honoured tradition (Al-Mashhūr, 2004). The impact of the ego-centric modern education was also noted by Cook (1999) as it “creates a capital ‘I’ in the psychology of man to the exclusion of the rest of the world. Self before everything is the only truth, disguised as “enlightened self-interest”” (Cook, 1999 p.350). Similarly, Yasin and Jani (2013) highlight Muslim educationists’ critique of the shift from ‘theocentric’ to ‘anthropocentric’ education (Yasin and Jani, 2013); a parallel to Al-Mashhūr’s *abawi* to *anawi* shift. Other educationists have warned that individualism can be oppressive such that it deprives individuals from an identity and an accumulated capital of knowledge resting upon collective agreement and handed down tradition (Hargreaves, 1980, Dawson, 1961). At another level, Corcoran (1926) notes that the promotion of individualism in educational theory and

methods has been instrumental in infusing materialism, evolution, pragmatism of anti-religious and anti-social modern biological science (Corcoran, 1926). This *anawi* nature of modern education produces two narratives - the fatherly tradition and the individual knowledge- whose clash leads to scepticism, intellectual and psychological dislocation of younger Muslim generations (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, no date-a, Ali, 2016). This notion of fatherly school offered by Al-Mashhūr is intellectually rooted in the religious narrative that different heavenly messages, though apparently successive and unconnected, represent a continuous tradition founded upon revelation and offering a transcendental interpretation for the universe and its history; another example of see how he reads history (Al-Attas, 2001, Al-Mashhūr, 2004). Additionally, the ‘individualistic’ education allows “a technician or an engineer to have direct access to the Qur’an and the other foundational texts of Islam” (Walbridge, 2011 p.10) for instance without any reference to the accumulated centuries-expertise of qualified teachers; a break of authority and the outcome is deformed Islam-isms. This excessive spirit of autonomy, central to modernity, manifesting in educational individualism, engenders glorification of the self at the expense of tradition, social solidarity and human cooperation; thus should be replaced by a strong moral education that teaches that an individual dignity grows within a collective experience as Durkheim is quoted to have suggested (Hargreaves, 1980).

6.4. Negotiation for Relevance:

In regular negotiation mode, Al-Mashhūr concludes his criticism of modern education on a positive note. He sees that, with all its limitations, a modern school has a role in qualifying Muslims with service jobs necessary to the modern economy but cannot replace the traditional Islamic education which rearranges the awareness of Muslims connecting them to the

ontological and teleological foundations of knowledge beyond its worldly utility (Al-Mashhūr, 2010). To salvage the modern mind from the imagined divorce between the secular and the sacred and to reconnect the constituents of a complete educational process, Al-Mashhūr suggests restructuring the traditional schools (*ribāts*, *zāwiyahs*, *madrasahs*) first, getting formal accreditation for their degrees and *ijāzahs* then giving them a quasi-club role to provide the students of modern schools with the spiritual and moral elements missing in the current educational arrangement (Al-Mashhūr, no date-a). Al-Mashhūr insists that attaching a traditional institution to every modern education institution will bring the desired balance through a cooperative education system in which students study modern sciences in a school and receive spiritual and moral components from an adjacent institution serving under the same roof; an idea which he successfully executed many Yemeni cities (Al-Mashhūr, no date-a).

It is not clear, however, how an accreditation process avoids state domination if it has to happen within secular government restrictive policies. Equally, it is not entirely clear how this arrangement is not simply another iteration of the dichotomy Al-Mashhūr wishes to avoid in the first instance; students are subjected to ‘secular’ education in the morning and ‘religious’ one in the evening; how will two worldviews work next to each other in absence of a hierarchical order. Al-Attas (1999) rightly highlights that it is not just a challenge of process but of worldviews (Al-Attas, 1999). Another problem would be witnessed in diversity contexts where Muslim and non-Muslim students share school life and classrooms. This last one, i.e. dealing with religious and intellectual diversity in the modern world deserves more focus of Muslims (Walbridge, 2011). Previous experiences of combining religious training with secular one suffered many complexities (Ivermee, 2014). While attempts at compensatory education stem from a belief in an inherent deficiency of modern secular education to provide a

comprehensive tool for development (Hargreaves, 1980), how will they avoid the secular tight grip of public and private?

6.5. Conclusion:

Al-Mashhūr's critique of philosophical modernity focuses on its production of knowledge through modes that recognise the material world as the world and the scientific method as the method reducing man's quest for truth and meaning to a quest for utility and institutionalising radical doubt. In this, he does not depart from the criticism held by traditionalist scholars and other academics against the exclusivist tone of modern science and its denial of spiritual matters and its own inconsistencies. Al-Mashhūr addresses two modern mechanisms of producing knowledge; orientalist anthropology and education. It is clear that his choice of these two stems from the context of accessibility and background. While his engagement with anthropology relies on responding to anthropological research that addresses the status of *sādah* in Ḥadramawt and abroad, his comment on modern education is within his background as an educationist and past experience with colonialism. Al-Mashhūr's refusal of orientalist anthropology focuses on its use of 'power struggle' as an interpretative framework for complex social and spiritual relations. He considers this an intrusion and forcing of alien social frameworks upon his society leading to inadequate conclusions and mistaken interpretations. In the same vein, he considers Western education, with its focus on individualism and material success, unqualified to produce the desired human being who belongs to a society where religion and continuity of tradition are central.

In both areas, however, Al-Mashhūr negotiates a solution in a pragmatic manner that functions on 'techniques of preservation' and empowering the tradition to decolonise the society.

Although non-confrontational, Al-Mashhūr takes his decolonial proposals to practical levels by suggesting complementary institution that can fill the gap in the modern education system and alternative initiatives that can study Muslim societies better. However, his proposals and comments suffer in areas of details, clarity and functionality. What is interesting in them, though, is the change of tone that is not common in the current academic narrative of how traditionalist scholars perceive modernity. Of equal importance is, as highlighted earlier, how his ‘pragmatism’ places modernity in a hierarchy where ‘tradition’ operates on it to produce a more humane version of it; in that he expands the capacities of the tradition rather than juxtaposing it with modernity. At this deconstructive level, his focus on the philosophical and political sides of modernity also show an incomplete – yet nuanced – project as he does not discuss the social or economic implications of modernity with the same regard. However, these areas of engagement fall within the framework of the themes drawn from his earlier biography; thus, they are limited by his experience and sources of knowledge.

7. The Shape of Al-Mashhūr's Project

In this chapter, I lay out Al-Mashhūr's constructive project and what he offers to deal with modernity. In the four sections of this chapter, I start by discussing Al-Mashhūr's conception of modernity and his view of the claimed clash between modernity and tradition. I follow this by introducing the components of his constructive project; the moral and the intellectual components finishing the discussion by affirming limitations and weaknesses of his project.

7.1. Al-Mashhūr's Conception of Modernity: Reality and Direction

Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity engages areas he had a direct experience with, albeit within his limited environment. From coding that I have mentioned in previous chapters, we can identify that he dealt with colonialism, loss of authority, caliphate, sectarianism, the emergence of Islamisms, extremism, nationalism, nation-state, revolution, the production of knowledge, religion and science, status of reason, materialism, modern education, orientalism and its anthropological research manifestation. He also dealt with underlying themes of dislocation and discontinuity; such that we can say that his perception of the modern centres around four themes; obstruction and disconnection, loss of authority, moral decline and domination. In response to these, his constructive project heavily characterised with pragmatism, is structured around; reconnection through preservation, finding alternative frameworks, reinstating morality- all of which are carried out in a pragmatic manner- and decolonisation. As modernity features an obstruction of a tradition he was not only comfortable with but privileged by, he pragmatically understands that change is irreversible but tradition is preservable. He is deeply concerned with human ontology and teleology; and the idea of continuity features central to his project. Al-Mashhūr's constructive project covers 22 codes underneath which quotations overlap with one another and he is repetitive of the same ideas in

many of these codes. In addition to adding a network showing these codes at the end of this chapter, I have counted amongst them; analysing the current state, why adopting European modernity is a mistake, the fight between tradition and modernity, is tradition able to criticise modernity, can Muslims have their own modernity, the scope of taking from European modernity, what is the response, to whom, what does Al-Mashhūr want to achieve, the moral question, moderation, Muslim unity as a solution, reading history through revelation, *Fiqh al-Tahawwulāt* (understanding transition), revival, modernisation, why is the response, view on other responses, why would others refuse Al-Mashhūr's project, and Al-Mashhūr's sources of knowing the West. For a systematic engagement, the following discussion arranges Al-Mashhūr's project in a sequence of five main theme; background, foundations, justification, content and limitations.

Al-Mashhūr starts his constructive project by offering his analysis of the current state; a state dominated by loss of authority and religious ignorance, both being the outcome of a colonial project that subjected Muslims to Western political, economic, cultural and intellectual programs under the spell of which they lost their awareness of the potentials of Islam and its relevance as a better framework for advancement (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). Exploiting Muslims' poverty and luring them with material civilisation, colonial and post-colonial powers stripped them of their identity and refashioned their understanding and relationships so much that they have become connected to each other, not by bonds of religion anymore, but by economic, ideological or material interests and lost their independence (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Al-Mashhur does not deny that Islamic rituals are present in Muslim societies but understands that such a domesticated form of religion that is divorced from informing other aspects of life does not is acceptable to the Westernised mind (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2010, Al-Mashhūr,

2013b). In this sense, Al-Mashhūr's highlights that modernity is left to dictate the public sphere but he does not give equal attention to how it functions in private; which is a limitation to his proposal. Justifying his objection to Muslims' Westernisation, Al-Mashhūr argues that being historically and religious different to the West, makes the copying the European experience as it is to the Muslim homelands unsuitable, a foundation point which is always neglected by the fervent proponents of a wholesale import of European modernity to Muslim lands (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Referring this fervent Westernisation to its historical background, Sayyid (2022) recalls Ibn Khaldun's suggestion that the vanquished always attempts to adopts the victor's way of life, judging the military defeat to be subsequent to cultural and intellectual superiority; thus, turning the military defeat into a cultural and intellectual one (Sayyid, 2022, Khaldūn, 2005). Building on the notion of unsuitability, Hallaq (2014) convincingly argues that post-colonial nationalist elites in the Muslim world maintained European readymade structures of power -like the nation-state- and aggressively pursued the policies they had inherited from colonialism, for which the existing social formations, following the collapse of traditional structures, had not been adequately prepared and leading to these European structures to sit uncomfortably in the Muslim world (Hallaq, 2014). It is in light of arguments like these that I would conclude later that Al-Mashhūr's project is pregnant with a decolonial narrative.

Al-Mashhūr describes the current attitude Muslims show towards European modernity as revolving between 'committed fascination' and 'committed irritation'; by 'irritation' he means the feeling of unease between their religious commitment and their desire to be modern, which, he argues, is caused by their uncritical acceptance of the West and an imaginary conflict between tradition and modernity (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Analysing this struggle between 'fascination' and 'irritation', Hallaq (2014) calls it a "measure of dissonance

between moral and cultural aspirations, on the one hand, and the moral realities of the modern world in which Muslims live but is not of their own making and which does not allow a retrieval of even minor segments of earlier history without making them subservient to the imperatives of the modern historical narrative and to the progress of Western civilisation; thus depriving Muslims from their organic ways of existence” (Hallaq, 2014 pp.3-4). Albeit ambivalent, Al-Mashhūr’s initial categorisation of a harmony between tradition and modernity is similar to contemporary traditional scholars who insist that the ‘*ulamā*’ are the connection between an authentic Muslim past and the contemporary modern context; thus, by returning their role as interpreters and transmitters of the Islamic scholarly tradition, Muslims an appropriate negotiation between the scriptural disciplines and modernity enabling forging an authentic modernity can happen (Elston, 2023, Al-Aktiti and Hellyer, 2010). At another level, it can be perceived as a reconstitution of the role of the ‘*ulamā*’ through highlighting the impact its absence had on Muslim masses who decided to draw their own conclusions from the Qur'an and *hadith* rather than bowing to the scholarly authority; (Gesink, 2010) thus falling into this state of confusion. The rise of modernist movement, which co-opted colonial authorities, marked the beginning of a widespread and systematic undermining of past scholarship and its intellectual and spiritual leadership leaving Muslims to inherit modernist legacy of cultural, intellectual and spiritual confusion, argues Al-Attas (Al-Attas, 1999).

Rushing to ‘fake’ means of civilisation and accepting a subordinate position in leading humanity, post-colonial Muslims turn to the West to escape social pressure, despotic regimes or fulfil an inferiority complex that is caused by a ‘false’ process of comparison (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). In this intellectual and epistemological metamorphosis, Al-Mashhūr adds, Muslims adopt a modernity that empowers their coloniser’s domination project, distances them from their religious worldview, leads to spiritual suicide, moral decline, social fragmentation and a

civilisation of markets and consumerism (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Depicting this uncritical adoption of European modernity, Al-Mashhūr refers to the story of a crow who, impressed by the peacock's strut, decided to walk like a peacock. Having failed to be a peacock, the frustrated crow tried to go back to its own walk only to discover that it has forgotten it. Similarly, by uncritical embracing of European modernity, Muslims entered civilisation from the unsafe/wrong gate such that they neither reaped the fruits of their fascination nor preserved their identity and uniqueness (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b p.20).

Building on this situation, Al-Mashhūr resorts to highlighting the role of Islamic tradition in addressing the current confusion. Muslims feel disconnected from tradition because they understand a modern language that is not spoken by that tradition; this requires a renewal of the language of Islam to prove its relevance, ability to give people hope, fill their spiritual vacuum and cure their moral decline (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). The current alienation of Islamic tradition does not disqualify it from offering its project, Al-Mashhūr argues, because it owns a trans-historical framework and embedded viability from which it can judge challenges and deal with the intellectual outcome of any age; in other words, it is able to criticise modernity (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). In preparation for his proposal, Al-Mashhūr pragmatically dismisses the opposition between 'tradition' and modernity qua modernity, as artificial and wilfully devised, because it stems from an assumption that modernity is set on European terms and that tradition is antithetical to civilisational renewal; a belief in a dialectical movement of history (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2010, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). This initial soft tone towards modernity uses pragmatism; a tool that enables a discourse to settle imaginary oppositions by suggesting a different view of the original postulates that underlie the imagined opposition (Strong, 1908). Arguing from within subaltern studies, even ardent critics of modernity who

see its categories and concepts deeply rooted in the intellectual and theological traditions of Europe, still advocate a renewal of heritage modernity as opposed to complete rejection of modernity itself and insist that what is to be discarded is the assumption that the route to modernity lies via Europe alone (Raman, 2017, Chakrabarty, 2007). Additionally, and at a foundational level, as Queysanne (1989) suggests, a perceived contrast too often drawn between tradition and modernity is invalidated when tradition is conceived as a process of transmitting and preserving which does not preclude the possibility of change; we may think of the two terms, instead of mutually exclusive, as complementary (Queysanne, 1989). Helpful to our discussion, is to bring to attention that some may contend that besides a lacking of an equivalent to the category ‘tradition’ in the Islamic Arabic lexicon, Western canon problematizes the notion of tradition by juxtaposing it with modernity, (Mosaad, 2022). I am aware of the dense discussion around Talal Asad’s concept of ‘discursive tradition’. Asad, starts by defining a tradition as consisting “essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to a *past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a *future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or the long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through a present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions and social conditions). An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present (Asad, 2009). Justified in his discomfort and interrogation of the limits of Asad’s category of tradition, Quadri (2021) suggests that since they are distinct enough, “individual juristic communities’ fundamental prepositions and intellectual starting points merit thinking as the proper unit by which to calibrate the term tradition” (Quadri, 2021 p.15). Despite ingenuity, this suggestion, does not

account for other terrains of the ‘mega’ discursive tradition outside the legal, say the intellectual or the ethical; yet, it shifts our attention to the possibility of sub-traditions within a larger tradition that are distinctive from each other while belonging to a larger body of the tradition whose characteristic is ‘discursiveness’ rather than stagnation or muteness. The difficulty of a settling answer to the question of limits of a tradition, I argue, is caused by the scope we seek to define and the difficulty of an encompassing precise statement, not a foundational one. For the purpose of this study, and as Al-Mashhūr’s project is a reconciliatory one, as we should see, I confine myself to investigating the factors that play a role in shaping the discursive field as Anjum (2007) calls them since Al-Mashhūr’s concept of ‘tradition’ is not the point of contention but his views as a traditional scholar on engaging with the modern at the level of the *ummah* and since his focus is not the legal rather ethical. Emerging from a sense of inferiority, current approaches to ‘modernisation’ dismiss Islamic tradition as irrelevant, focus on the question of what went wrong and read the world in a colonial language which is dominated by terms like ‘nostalgia’, ‘rupture’ and ‘historicity’, Al-Mashhūr argues (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002c). Despite their declared opposition to Western modernity, Islamist thought imitates and reflects the very thing that it opposes such that a fresh thought that emerges from a different matrix is needed (Gray, 2007).

Having criticised Muslims’ uncritical embracing of European modernity which suffers moral and spiritual bankruptcy, Al-Mashhūr develops this premise of a foundational harmony between tradition and modernity by insisting that renewal, modernisation and civilisation are areas open for human contribution and exchange and should not be sites of domination by some or distorting faiths and moral frameworks of others (Al-Mashhūr, 2004). Disagreeing with an unreserved bond with European modernity, he suggests a conscious selective adoption of certain material aspects of modernity like science, industry, agriculture and technology while

recognising the importance of morals and spirituality and tailoring such adoption to the Muslim context (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2010, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). It is well argued that technology raises philosophical problems of all kinds such that morality and technology are inseparable from each other in as much as technological change is tied to social change -without delving into the debate of which determines the other (Bunge, 1998, Poel, 2020). With this background, Al-Mashhūr's suggestion to embrace Western technology and science -albeit consciously- displays problematic unawareness of the ethical and epistemological underpinning of many of these sciences and technologies; it does not offer detailed guidelines for choice in case of a clash between the material gain and the ethical impact. Equally, it does not delineate the scope of taking from modernity in a clearer and more systematic manner. One could argue that, in suggesting even a selective adoption of European science, Al-Mashhūr is, not only confirming his pragmatic attitude, but also displaying an unsophisticated implied acceptance of Western science as “useful knowledge” (Elshakry, 2010 p.102) unaware of the hegemonic and the transformative nature of its narrative and the problematic history behind it (Elshakry, 2010). Of this transformative nature, Elshakry (2010) tells us how the word *ilm*, traditionally encompassing what would count as both knowledge and belief in their terms, experienced a transformation of meaning to ‘science’ while its original meaning was re-edited and relegated to other terms like *ma'rifah* which, being equated with matters of fact, represented a lower order of truth subordinate to and dominated by science itself (Elshakry, 2010 pp.103-104). Despite critiquing modernity’s production of knowledge and the exclusivist nature of modern science, Al-Mashhūr’s laxity and even encouragement of adoption of European technology seems paradoxical on the one hand and contains what Quadri (2021) calls, a broader technological optimism on the other (Quadri, 2021). Technology is an important site of our contemporary religious life (Pattison, 2007); as such cannot be naively

excluded from discussions about religious, spiritual or moral life and seen as a neutral terrain of the modern.

7.2. Justifying the Project's Approach and Setting Its Preliminaries:

Having established the overarching theme of his project (a conservative pragmatic criticism of European modernity), Al-Mashhūr defends it as necessary in the face of the submissive nature of the current proposals which he calls, “reactionary jumps under multiple names” that deepen subordination to the West and are thus part of the colonial project (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). He lists his criticism of the current responses as; leading the *ummah* to confusion, promoting Westernisation and secularisation, feeding conflict and division by claiming exclusive ownership of a solution, compromising clear religious rulings, attempting a top to bottom change through revolution and leadership contests which is itself Western, disregarding the potentials of an Islamic worldview, neglecting morality and spirituality while focussing on material outward change that leads to violence and extremism at both ends (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Al-Mashhūr pragmatically acknowledges that current proposals still include good ideas and limited benefit and that he does not claim to offer a solution but works for one and encourages others to move in the same direction and revisit their programs (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). I call this pragmatic because an acknowledgement of other proposals induces a “justice of the comparison” (Strong, 1908) which soften outright dismissal of his own proposal and exhorts others to look into it.

His proposal, Al-Mashhūr argues, is driven by a sense of religious and moral responsibility to criticise evil and highlight its dangers and to avoid being a tool of promoting the ignoble (Al-

Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). As a scholar, he needs to raise awareness and preserve a tradition that he inherited; this is through readjusting Muslims' relations with the modern rather than rejecting it completely and presenting the nuanced view of the tradition on modernity proving its ability to contribute to the future of humanity (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2004). But, "in order to preserve, it is necessary to pass on, and, in this entrusting movement, it is impossible to ensure absolute preservation, the un-changing of that which is passed on and given in safekeeping to the other generations. Experience shows that the task of guarding does not rule out change as much as tradition remains alive" (Queysanne, 1989). Al-Mashhūr addresses with his project both statesmen and laity, scholars and politicians, young generations as well as the old and anyone who is keen on helping the *ummah* out of the worthlessness and subjugation state it is in but while he is not sure if his discourse will gain popularity and applicability, he is optimistic since he has discharged his responsibility and delivered the trust of giving advice (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). He further identifies four reasons why some factions may refuse his proposal; it will prove the failure of their Westernisation programs, show them they were wrong in underestimating the intellectual ability and relevance of Islam, deprive them the centrism and prominence they claimed to their ideologies and they will accuse him of being motivated by a sense of 'disadvantage', loss of status and trauma (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2004). Al-Mashhūr, however, acknowledges elsewhere that his "internal emotional reaction was intensified by daily confrontations with the icons of materialist Marxism" (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b p.15) which confirms a level of trauma behind his reply to say the least and his awareness of it. Those characterised by the 'insular intellectuality' of embracing Western modernity on one side or rigid rejection of it on the other, Al-Mashhūr states, will not benefit from or be willing to listen to his discourse (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). To Al-Mashhūr, the merits of his project, unlike the current ones, lie in securing independence for the *ummah* through ending the subordination,

producing generations qualified with the holistic knowledge and proving the soundness of the Islamic tradition and its *islāhi* (amending) nature (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). The tone of these merits perfectly manifests the educationist nature of Al-Mashhūr, his continuous concern of preserving the tradition and maintaining its relevance and the centrality of decolonisation in his project. This interest in education, preservation and decoloniality relate directly to his identity which was formed through his upbringing and life experiences which I discussed in the biography chapter. Identities, Wendt (1992) astutely argues, are “the basis of interests and actors do not have a portfolio of interests that they carry around independent of their social context; rather, they define their interests in the process of defining situations” (Wendt, 1992 p.398). Through an engagement with modernity, he wants to achieve an illuminated Muslim mind that is able to make independent decisions, a stable human society that maintains a balance between mundane and sacred matters and a renewal that is loyal to the tradition (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2009, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). This editing of modernity, Al-Mashhūr contends, requires a generation that is free from the educational and intellectual grip of colonial products, a conversation with scientists who appreciate the value of knowledge exchange, not those who interfere in others’ affairs and an intellectual, social and educational organisation before talking about political or economic ones (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Here again, Al-Mashhūr affirms his prioritisation of the intellectual and educational over the political and economic by insisting that political decline should merit intellectual and moral not political correction and the focus should be preserving people’s identity rather than distracting their minds through engaging in competitive politics and vying for leadership; Muslims need to rebuild society not to compete on ruling it (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). In this respect, Al-Mashhūr’s project intersects with the views of Naqib Al-Attas for whom the problem of education is paramount. Earlier than Al-Mashhūr, Al-Attas wrote, “in most Muslim countries today many Muslims think that their problems stem from economic or

scientific and technological inadequacy. Although it seems that at first glance this is true, and yet, however, the real crux of the problem of knowledge and education" (Daud, 1998 p.71).

Al-Mashhūr, it should be understood, does not belittle the role of Islam in guiding government; rather, believes that a correct political decision comes after intellectual independence and the status quo does not provide that, considering the fragmentary nature of modern politics (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2009, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). To strengthen his point, Al-Mashhūr mentions that the Prophet refused leadership when it was offered by Quraysh to him and preferred to focus on building a community, because such leadership would not have been independent, and so did the Prophet's grandson al-Hasan who sacrificed political leadership for social cohesion and communal unity (Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). This prioritisation is not unique to Al-Mashhūr's project but is characteristic of those of scholarly and educationist background. Al-Attas equally stresses to readers of his critique of modernity that the socio-economic and political aspects are by no means insignificant, but they are subservient and instrumental to intellectual and spiritual ones (Daud, 1998).

7.3. The Response: What?

Al-Mashhūr describes his response as a non-apologetic, cautious, non-reactionary and realistic one which understands the current state, gives priority to building Muslim unity and society through freeing them from the intoxication with the Western civilisation (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Part of his realistic approach is re-evaluating the current educational arrangements and convincing other factions to appreciate the seriousness of the situation the *ummah* faces and to work on saving what can be saved (Al-

Mashhūr, 2002b). Through this preservationist, non-confrontational and pragmatic tone, he gives a new definition to the term ‘revival’ shifting it to moral revival through working together in an atmosphere of mutual respect; making this moral component one of its mainstays (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Contrary to radical change projects, Al-Mashhūr reiterates that he is not in a rush to see the outcome of his one nor is he concerned with offering instant solutions; he is ready to cooperate with other Muslim groups, with conditions I will elaborate later, while maintaining his and their independence (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). This patient tone should not be perceived as a reluctance to act but as particularly integral to a conservative constructive project (Iqbal, 2022, Mahmood, 2005) that understands human agency within traditional theological frameworks that differ drastically from those of modernity. To accomplish this, he calls upon all Muslim groups to put aside the spirit of division, narrowmindedness and excommunication and trust their tradition as a first step (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). As a second step, he highlights that Muslims should not focus on the material gains of Western modernity and turn a blind eye to the havoc it has caused in social and human relations, morality and spirituality (Al-Mashhūr, 2004). In post-colonial Muslim world where a single path towards modernity, manifesting in economic growth and social mobilisation, was embraced by governments, socialists or capitalists, liberals or monarchists, material benefits were sometimes achieved but general feeling of dislocation, moral decline and alienation pervaded (Lee, 1997). These experiences, some may argue, should not necessarily mean a single pathway towards development and or necessary contradiction between the two (Ferguson, 2006). While working on material betterment of societies is commendable, Al-Mashhūr argues, it should be based on justice, solidarity and peace not manipulation, cancellation of the other, conflict and moral depletion (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Husayn, 1982). In terms of the content of his response, Al-Mashhūr offers two essential

components to complement modernity and two essential mechanisms to create a desired modernisation or a Muslim modernity.

7.3.1. The Moral Component:

Al-Mashhūr's first essential component is the moral one which emerges from what he calls the Muslim moral responsibility to offer humanity *al-qudwah al-hasannah* (good exemplars) (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). To Al-Mashhūr, while current Islamist responses quote the Qur'an and the Sunnah to substantiate their projects, their priority is politics; for him morality comes first (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Muslim power, lies at the current moment, in their moral tradition and they need to exemplify this tradition for others to believe them and see its value (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b).

With the first component comes the two essential mechanisms; *tahdīth al-wasā'il* (modernising the means) and *ta'sīl al-badā'il* (enrooting/traditionalising the alternatives) which are to be done through a deep understanding of both text and context, the tradition and the reality (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Modelled after Western programs, current educational systems continue to undermine the integrity of traditional religious knowledge (Gesink, 2010). Understanding that modern modes of education is now a reality, Al-Mashhūr, employing his two mechanisms, offers renewing the ways of delivering religious knowledge without losing its core. To cure the secularised incomplete modern education, he offers, as I have mentioned earlier, his idea of after school *ribāt*; a quasi-club to create a holistic education (Al-Mashhūr, 2010, Al-Mashhūr, no date-a); this is an example of renewing the means and reveals a level of pragmatism. Al-Mashhūr's inspiration with this idea comes from his experience at al-Madrasah al-Maymūnah where his father initiated many after school clubs to teach crafts and other extra-curricular activities in an environment of *tarbiyah* and mentoring (Al-Mashhūr, 1986, Al-

Mashhūr, 2007). To enroot this alternative, Al-Mashhūr refers back to a *hadīth* in which the Prophet exhorts Muslims to hold fast to the Book of Allah and his own Sunnah; with Al-Mashhūr building on the dimension of the Sunnah as the stances of the Prophet, here being the provision of an environment for mentorship that did not deprive Muslims from their daily activities and allowed small windows of retreats with the companions known historically as *ahl al-suffah* (people of the shade) (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2010).

Another important example of employing the two mechanisms to serve the moral component is how Al-Mashhūr handles the loss of authority. I have previously discussed his narrative of the declining transmutation of the caliphate at the political and scholarly levels before its loss after the deposition of Abdul-Hamīd. Acknowledging the impossibility of re-inventing the past and opposing the nostalgic approach of Islamist ideologies, Al-Mashhūr offers an alternative; Muslim unity on the premise of *al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah* (shared principles) (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015a). Expounding his theory, Al-Mashhūr first states that intellectual diversity does not exclude the possibility of working together; a banner of shared principles should then serve as the theme of unity among Muslims who are keen on saving what can be saved, preserving the identity of the *ummah* and breaking the current impasse (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2002b). This unity does not mean giving up one's school or intellectual vision; rather, working together to defuse the plans of any external powers that invest in conflict and liberate Muslims' intellect, education, knowledge and culture from the poison of colonial phases (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2004). Al-Mashhūr acknowledges the difficulty of unity, but argues that there are multiple shared principles that the larger body of the *ummah* agree on, including the importance of morality and the acknowledgement of diversity (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015a). These two

common principles mean that Muslims can be unified on avoidance of bloodshed, disparage, excommunication and anathema which will end extreme division that was cherished and intensified under colonialism (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). In this way, *al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah* works as an alternative authority that secures a level unity in the *ummah* in the absence of a caliphate in the sense Al-Mashhūr has previously developed; this is the *jihād* and the revival of the time, a revival of moral transcendence and a change in methods and language (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Necessary to this unity, Al-Mashhūr highlights, is engaging in a process of self-reflexivity to arrive at balance and moderation in judging oneself and others and realising that anathema, excommunication, conflict and division intensify the suffering of the *ummah* and serve the colonial continued project known as globalisation (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). This domestication of antagonism is equally suggested by Sayyid (2022) for whom erasing disagreement is impossible because it arises from identity being relational and contrastive so much so that identity rests on difference; what is needed then is domesticating disagreement and discord to generate a grammar of working together (Sayyid, 2022). For Al-Mashhūr the idea of *al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah* is part of Islam's universal message; it is not a call for homogenising ideas, patching concepts, mixing proposals or hybrid solutions; it is rather a call to accommodate everyone, those driven by faith and those driven by concern, to maintain a level of unity and proximity where the integrity of the *ummah* is saved and none of its factions is excluded (Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2009, Al-Mashhūr, 2010). This proposal does explain, however, how an objective scholarly critique of other opinions/groups can happen without being perceived as undermining the collective work.

Appealing to his two mechanisms of *tahdīth al-wasā'il* and *ta'sīl al-badā'il* to support the moral component Al-Mashhūr insists that this proximity/unity guided the Prophet's initiatives

in both Makkah and Madīnah (Al-Mashhūr, 2004, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Pragmatic conservatism, decolonisation and preservation are much more apparent throughout these discussions as I have highlighted in many places before. As an attitude, it should be noted that I use pragmatic conservatism to refer to the prudence Al-Mashhūr shows in viewing the past “not as trash but a wealth of value worth preserving” while considering the practicalities of ‘the present’ in the way the preserved past is to be presented and expressed; for unlike a mistaken common perception of their contradiction, conservatism and pragmatism, seen in this light, intersect with each other in many ways (Vannatta, 2012).

7.3.2. The Intellectual Component:

Al-Mashhūr proposes a central component of reading the stages of history through the lens of revelation arguing that it contains what Muslims need to understand and respond to decline; in this sense, a tradition functions as a frame of reference to dictate what course of action to take in the present (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Al-Mashhūr distinguishes between two areas of the tradition; the area of *'ulūm al-thawābit* (the disciplines of the firm foundations) and the area of *'ulūm al-mutaghayyirāt* (the disciplines of transitions and changes) or *fīqh al-tahawwulāt* (the discipline of understanding changes and transitions) (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2016, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c, Al-Mashhūr, 2015a). While the former covers the spectrum of legal-theological-spiritual whose foundations are established without much room for interpretation beyond scholarly juristic *ijtihād*, the latter covers the *da'awi-socio-intellectual* that focuses on understanding transitions, shifts and tribulations thus requires creative and deep reading of the revelation to decipher the guidelines for action in light of its foretold account of human history (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Backing this theory, Al-Mashhūr argues that in *hadīth Jibrīl*, the Prophet was asked about four aspects of the religion, not three as commonly understood, answering

which he pointed at *islam*, *imān*, *ihsān* [the first three aspects] as the legal, theological and spiritual and then, asked about [the fourth being] the signs of the end of times, he referred to a decline that will affect, in Al-Mashhūr's interpretation, four areas; governance, knowledge, belief and economy (Al-Mashhūr, 2013b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c, Al-Mashhūr, 2016). Pulling the discussion away from the apocalyptic debates on the end of the world, Al-Mashhūr argues that the last question was about social, political, intellectual and economic decline that will happen and its answer delineate the areas of tribulation and how can Muslims preserve their identity and faith while navigating in the midst of decay (Al-Mashhūr, 2016, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c). *Fiqh al-tahawwulāt*, argues Al-Mashhūr, enables scholars and masses to preserve the modes of knowledge and creatively rework alternative responses to changes and misleading tribulations *al-fitān al-muḍillah* rather than attempting to rebuild the past (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a). A detector of decline and a map for the future, through investigating the already foretold tribulations, this new discipline formulated by Al-Mashhūr is supposed to give Muslims' a sense of continuity and belonging as it challenges the periodisation of Islam and unveils its ability to respond (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b).

In an intriguing discussion, Iqbal (2022) challenges the current historicist paradigm of 'crisis and critique' under which today's Islam is perceived as a reaction to modernity, arguing that, while retaining secularisation, such a narrative, sees Islam as a product of modernity and demonstrates it as separate from its history positing a 'modern Islam' against 'classical Islam' (Iqbal, 2022). As a narrative device, crisis emphasises an event and incites a decision for how to overcome it; in this way it affirms epochal division which makes the continuity of history unviable. Animating another tradition of thinking the difficulty of the present, Iqbal (2022) offers the Qur'anic figure of 'tribulation' as analytic term which, seen within Islamic tradition as essential feature of life and creation, resists secular periodisation of Islam even while

retaining a productive relationship to history (Iqbal, 2022). From the perspective of the figure of tribulation, the current state of Islam has less to do with a new time of crisis than with a distinct modality of the divine trials whose nature is essential to creation; they contain a divine address that requires translation, not a decision, and resist the division of history (Iqbal, 2022). Additionally, Koselleck (2000), speaking further on the nature of the ‘crisis’, highlights that in the nature of crisis, a solution, which the future holds, is not predictable and that there is immense uncertainty with crisis even in the eventual solution such that the question of ‘historical future’ is inherent in the crisis (Koselleck, 2000).

Building on Iqbal’s theory, I argue that Al-Mashhūr’s *fīqh al-tahawwulāt* instantiates an application of the figure of tribulation, which, being guided by the tradition, handles the foretold tribulations of the modern age with confidence and comfort; rather than the panic that informs other responses which see the current state within the crisis narrative. For this reason, and while other responses look for a decision, Al-Mashhūr responds with a translation, guided by the manual of tradition [*fīqh al-tahawwulāt*], through the mechanisms of ‘modernising the means’ and ‘enrooting the alternatives’. Adding Koselleck’s observation to the above, I argue that, by shifting the paradigm to see decline with the lens of revelation as foretold tribulation; rather than a crisis, Al-Mashhūr is restating a sense of certainty and hope and changing the focus from the anticipatory mood, the ‘historical future’ creates to one of trust and confidence which is necessary to reconnect with tradition. Subsequently, this underlies an intellectual decolonisation argument.

Al-Mashhūr argues that reading history through revelation is conditional to being able to understand the shifts and choose the right response to them (Al-Mashhūr, 2002c, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). It is a God-centric not anthropocentric reading such that it has metaphysical reference,

free from conjecture and manipulation of one group and saves Muslims from the disconnected narrative of history offered by European modernity that leaves humans victims of an imaginary rupture which serves only one narrative and cancels all else (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). It is this view of Western colonial modernity as one that cancels all else that situates Al-Mashhūr's response within the decolonialisation narratives. Described as a form of 'abyssal thinking', Western modernity creates a radical distinction between realms of visibility and invisibility and an impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line (Gallien, 2020, Santos, 2007). Al-Mashhūr believes that, contrary to the materialist way of reading history which many Muslims have adopted, reading history through revelation frees Muslims from fascination with the West because it allows a revaluation of civilisations based on their holistic (not just materialist) service to humanity (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). More importantly, it intellectually decolonises the Muslim mind from historical colonial narratives and restores its trust in their own tradition (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2015c, Al-Mashhūr, 2016).

As an alternative, reading history through revelation using the discipline of *fiqh al-tahawwulāt* follows Al-Mashhūr's mechanism of modernising the means and enrooting the alternatives. It is a renewed way of generating responses to the current state, and by validating it through extensive reference to the tradition, Al-Mashhūr is in line with his commitment of enrooting the alternatives. The discipline, argues Al-Mashhūr, enables Muslims to make sense of their faith, adopt the correct stance and sketch a balanced map of navigating the turmoil caused by waves of European modernity (Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). In a bold addition to traditional Sunnism that builds on fiqh, theology and *taṣawwuf* as its core dimensions, Al-Mashhūr calls for adding *fiqh al-tahawwulāt* as a fourth dimension to protect the other three and free Muslim societies from domination and manipulation; contending that the absence of the fourth component will fossilise the *ummah* in its current confusion.

7.4. Acknowledged Limitations:

Besides understanding his biography, it is important for our discussion of Al-Mashhūr's critique and proposal to investigate his sources of knowing the West because such an element enables us to understand other limitations to his analysis. Through the books chosen for analysis here, I have traced Al-Mashhūr's points of access to the West from his own acknowledgement. I was able to count four of these; reading, discussion with learned scholars and students who lived in Western countries, direct experience during his frequent short medical visits to France, encounters with Marxists and colonial officers in Yemen (Al-Mashhūr, 2002b, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). Despite apparent variation, these four sources are characterised by limitation; Al-Mashhūr did not speak a foreign language which meant that his reading was always mediated by translations and bound by works available in Arabic. I have highlighted the impact of this limitation in my discussion of Knysh's article. Al-Mashhūr's inability to speak English deprived him of accessing later versions of the article which were clearly different from the version Al-Mashhūr read the Arabic translation of. Equally, discussion with students and intellectuals who lived in the West (obviously Arabs) gave him access to mediated knowledge that is to say, their own versions of what they perceive to be the West. Short visits, I argue, are limited opportunities to formulate a deep understanding of intellectual discussions. Unprecedented situations sometimes force the individual to construct their meanings either by analogy or invent them *de novo* (Wendt, 1992). I contend that, like mediated experiences of the West, short-lived interactions during these visits, tamper with the process of meaning construction and render the fresh meanings, at best, incomplete. What remains is his encounters with Marxists and colonialists which, I argue, are what inform his project the most. Yet, these encounters are impacted by emotional trauma and coming from

a closed environment, which Al-Mashhūr acknowledges. To him, daily confrontations with the icons of materialism is the main cause of internal intense emotions and the closed environment he grew up in impacted his conservatism (Al-Mashhūr, 2001b, Al-Mashhūr, 2013b). His acknowledgment of these limitations is a credit for him and does not disqualify his engagement with modernity from being studied and evaluated. Conversely, his focus on the idea of the loss of authority and its consequences is vital to a field that is in need of adequate literature, for as Del Noce (2014) notes despite being one of the essential characteristics of today's world, literature on the topic of the loss of authority which involves specific studies as well as reflections about the contemporary world itself are mostly inadequate (Del Noce, 2014). This, however, should happen, following Del Noce (2014) suggestion, with a mind free from presupposition that the present state of affairs is superior or irreversible (Del Noce, 2014) and that requires a serious long process of epistemic decolonisation.

Another limitation to Al-Mashhūr's engagement relates to its focus; it does not place as much weight on the economic face of modernity as it does with the political and the intellectual. While Al-Mashhūr touches briefly on the economic impact of modernity, he discusses that through political economy and ethics rather than how economic institutions or economies work as economies. In his usual manner, he blames 'capitalist West' and 'eastern communist regimes' for its policies to control and break societies through merciless capitalism and chaotic communism and, equally blames Muslims for their greed that made them 'slaves of *dinār* and *dirham*' (Al-Mashhūr, 2002a, Al-Mashhūr, 2005b). Without furnishing us with alternatives here, the picture is left incomplete. Still, Al-Mashhūr's critical tone is short of depth and detailed analysis of even the moral and social implications of such an essential component of modernity as capitalism. Providing what Al-Mashhūr's critique lacks, Weaver (2013) and Berger (1992), on their part, aptly accuse capitalism, being unparalleled engine of wealth and

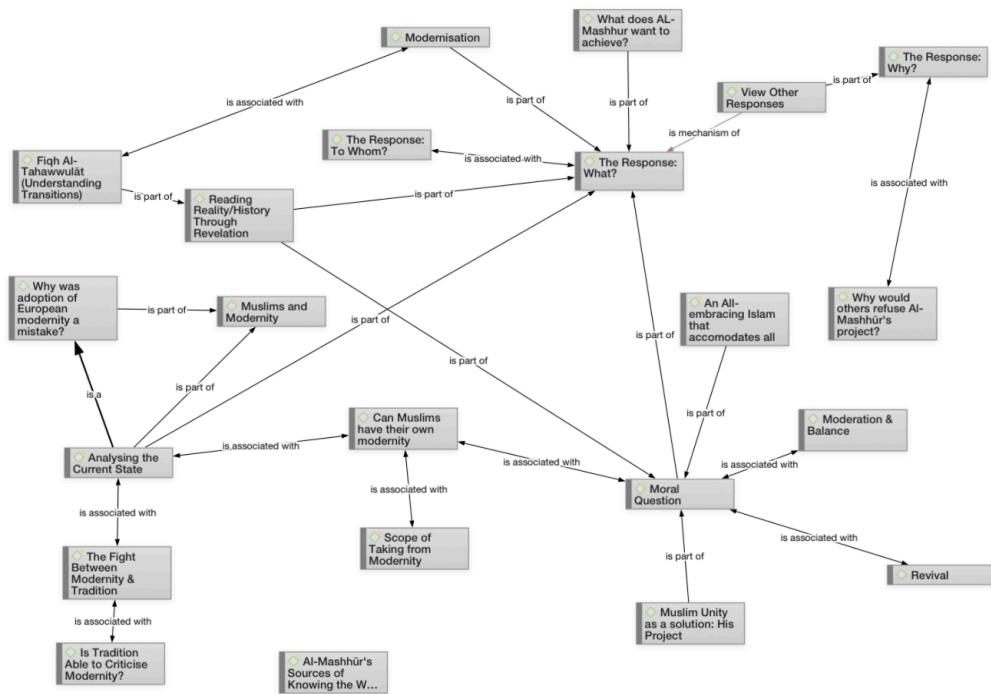
freedom, of offering increased choices and increased dislocation; thus, becoming a powerful solvent of tradition (Weaver, 2013, Berger, 1992). Equally, Loomba (2015), Smart (1990) and McCarraher (2019) criticise capitalism for leading to the loss of ascetic values sanctifying self-restraint and replacing them with mass production and mass consumption and for evacuating sacredness from material objects and social relationships; commodification and disenchantment of the world and man (Loomba, 2015, Smart, 1990, McCarraher, 2019). The transformative nature of capitalism extends beyond these criticism, for historically, the spread of capitalism is responsible for turning large segments of the artisanate into day labour and thus bringing the guild structure to an end in addition to changing the shape of the social structure by fusing new strata into the society specifically in the Middle East (Gran, 1979).

7.5. Conclusion:

Al-Mashhūr offers a pragmatic conservative project with a decolonial focus and a negotiating tone. He does not claim exclusive ownership of a solution or the possibility of an instant or radical one. Rather, he resorts to alternatives and renewed methods to deliver the transmitted frameworks which he attempts to back with the tradition. Despite creative and reconciliatory approach, the project bears fuzzy lines and lacks in details such that it seems, borrowing Habermas description of modernity, an “unfinished project” (Giddens, 1996). One of its points of creativity is expanding the three-dimensional structure of the tradition to four-components structure and in that, he empowers the tradition to decolonise itself and prove its relevance and continuity. Despite speaking in a universal tone, Al-Mashhūr’s inability to speak a Western language has forced his choices of areas to engage with to remain limited to his direct experience and mediated readings. Of the few attempts in post-colonial Muslim world to criticise modernity from within the tradition, Al-Attas’ has received much discussion, albeit no

complete evaluative account of his project has been produced. However, focussing on education and philosophy, he proposes that a response to modernity should start with a serious thinking about and understanding of its philosophy before integrating it with the tradition of Islam; but this should happen at the hands of scholars well-trained in both Islamic tradition and modern philosophy (Al-Aktiti and Hellyer, 2010). Al-Mashhūr's conservative upbringing and limited access deprive him of that full philosophical engagement but does not prevent his project the merit of contribution to changing the current narrative of traditional Muslim scholars' engagement with modernity. While the historical narrative that still dominates the majority of academic studies features traditional scholars' engagement with modernity as obstructionist, rejectionist or nostalgic as I have discussed in the literature review chapter, Al-Mashhūr's project is not obstructionist nor a cry for restoring traditional society with its institutions, but, an attempt to see the tiger of modernity tamed, less arbitrary, less vicious with Muslims feeling no tension between their faith and their modern life (Lee, 1997), no domination of their inherited social and intellectual arrangements; it is a rejoinder to the ideas and the vehicle upon which modernity was founded and carried to the Muslim world. While this thesis has mentioned names of traditional scholars whose ideas about and responses to modernity can in areas intersect with Al-Mashhūr, it is not my intention to compare any of those scholars to Al-Mashhūr since such an enterprise is beyond the scope of this thesis; the focus of this thesis is depth which can later be utilised for breadth.

Shape of His Modernity: Solution



8. Concluding Chapter: Modernisation through Preservation

In this concluding chapter, I return to my research questions offering my findings and the implications of those findings both on Islamic studies at large as well as academic studies of Muslim responses to modernity in particular. In the second of the four sections, I present the limitations of this research highlighting its strengths as well as its weaknesses before suggesting direction and areas for future studies that can benefit from the current thesis and build on its findings. I make one final reflection affirming the tasks achieved by this thesis and its contribution to knowledge.

8.1. Justification and Research Questions: Closing the Circle

This chapter begins by outlining my initial research questions and proffering my concluding analysis and answers to them through the findings offered in the body of the thesis. While it stresses the importance of this research and its findings, it considers its limitations afterwards and suggests how this research can be taken further. I started this thesis posing an overarching question on the shape of traditional Muslim responses to modernity in post-colonial Muslim world and three essential questions about Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity; answering these three questions is needed to answer the overarching one. This was preceded by justifying my choice for this research direction and Al-Mashhūr's project as a research topic. I identified three circles through which the selection is justified; one being the unsettling nature of modernity that continues to trigger questions about its spatio-temporal dimensions and whether there is one single modernity or multiple modernities. I closed this circle by concluding that, it is modernity's resistance to a process of definition that explains the divergence of Muslim responses to it. The second circle – which directly justifies my choice - investigates academic writings on Muslim responses to modernity, a topic that was discussed in detail in my literature

review chapter showing that current academic research on Muslim engagements with modernity suffers at many levels, from binary thinking and dichotomous judgments to unbalanced focus and inaccurate attribution. I have identified at the end of this second layer of the discussion that traditionalist responses suffer the most from under-representation and generalisation; a problem that damages academic integrity of the mapping Muslim responses to modernity and feeds an un-balanced and deformed view of a nuanced tradition. Reflective of the very little attention given to traditional responses in academic writings, I was able to identify only three published works; Indira Falk Gesink's *Islamic Reform and Conservatism*; *Al-Azhar and the Evolution of Modern Sunni Islam*, Junaid Quadri's *Transformation of a Tradition; Islamic Law in Colonial Modernity*, and Wael B. Hallaq's *Reforming Modernity: Ethics and the New Human in the Philosophy of Abdurrahman Taha*. Added to their limited number, Gesink (2010) work focuses on challenging the narrative of attributing Al-Azhar's reform to exclusively modernists rather than tackling a specific traditionalist response to modernity; yet, it helps generally to shake the stereotypical depiction of conservative traditional scholars as opponents of reform and upholders of stagnation (Gesink, 2010). While taking a further, but different step, through its focus on a single case study, Quadri (2021) work investigates a traditional jurist's response to modernity in colonial Egypt (Quadri, 2021). Hallaq (2019) traces an unfinished response of a philosopher not a religious scholar (Hallaq, 2019). This leaves the literature still in need of necessary works that look into post-colonial Muslim responses (as Hallaq did), but finished ones, and of shifting the geographical focus (beyond saturated countries like Egypt which normally attracts the attention of researchers). The Muslim world is vast and widening the scope of research will unveil diversity and richness of responses.

These foundational justifications of this study are expanded by showing Al-Mashhūr's significance as a leading Yemeni thinker-scholar from within the highest ranks of the traditionalist *Bā'Alawi* school, which itself has a global influence and networks in Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia and the Americas. In addition to his influence and global respect, his experience with colonial and post-colonial modernity and extensive writings on them make his project a significant one to investigate. Part of his influence is reflected in the wide number of traditional educational and research centres that he founded across Yemen in addition to a university (*Al-Wasatiyyah al-Shariyyah University for Islamic and Human Sciences*) which continue to function to this day and have students from Yemen and overseas. Overall, while the current limited studies cover an extremely restricted number of traditionalist Muslim responses to modernity, countering the problematic narrative common in academia requires more work. In addition to contributing to changing this narrative, through adding another study to the current limited literature, my work also unveils the diversity of traditional Muslim responses, offers new ways of understanding them and suggests avenues to benefit from them, across academic disciplines, to build credible and balanced representation.

Turning to the research questions, I asked one overarching mega question that justifies doing the research and three subsequent ones; the overarching question can only be answered by investigating and answering the three subsequent research questions. The questions are hierarchical and build on each other; rather than being merely sequential. While the mega question is first in order, it would be the last to answer since it needs the three subsequent questions. My mega question was concerned with whether post-colonial traditional Muslim responses to modernity take one shape; whether they are complete engagements with modernity or partial ones and why? To answer this question, I had to engage with Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity since it is a post-colonial traditional Muslim response to the challenge

of modernity. I therefore asked the three subsequent questions, the first of which was what does Al-Mashhūr grapple with or, put differently, does he have a theory or model of modernity, and what dimensions and components of it does he engage with? To answer this question, I have identified two areas that to be explored; his deconstructive project i.e. his critique of modernity and his constructive project i.e. what he offers to deal with the modernity that he criticises. Turning to the deconstructive project, analysing Al-Mashhūr's core works on modernity has shown that, at a foundational level, he views modernity through the prism of the colonial experience. The impact of colonialism, be it political, philosophical or otherwise, sets the tone of his response and dominates his discussion. The codes 'colonialism', 'impact of colonialism' have occupied the highest number of quotations across his books totalling 166 quotations, with the number increasing should we consider other codes that are related to colonialism but do not come under the word itself. In his response to modernity, Al-Mashhūr is occupied with colonialism as a vehicle and a facilitator of various components of modernity and sees its impact most in two essential areas; in the political arena and the philosophical/intellectual one; sometimes he merges elements of the two which makes the job of delineating them a tedious task.

At the political level, he holds colonialism responsible for the loss of the unified political authority embodied in the caliphate; a loss which brought with it a parallel loss of scholarly authority as well, leading to a state of disarray in the Muslim homelands manifesting in the appearance of multiple Islams, the spread of sectarianism and division and the emergence of the post-colonial nation-state with its attachments which he perceives as an agent for carrying out colonial polices and deepening the predicament of the loss of scholarly authority. The theme of authority -scholarly and caliphal- and the consequences of its loss is central to Al-Mashhūr's engagement with the political side of colonial modernity. Despite being represented

by 18 codes; political modernity includes 699 quotations which makes it the highest featured area in his writings. Colonialism and its impact (3 codes) yield 184 quotations while the loss of political and scholarly authority (2 codes) yield 81 and its subsequent Islamisms (9 codes) feature in 308 quotations. While these last ones are not as dense as the previous codes, I argue, that they should be viewed as one mega code group that unveils how his mind is occupied by the new forms of Islam that have come to replace traditional scholarly authority of which he is himself a part and I will elaborate on this point later in my answer to the second question.

The second side of colonial modernity Al-Mashhūr deals with in his deconstructive project is the philosophical/intellectual side which, in a continuous foundational criticism of colonialism, features in the production of modern knowledge which he sees as exclusivist, materialist and divorces man from metaphysical meanings. Despite lesser number of quotations compared to political modernity, the engagement with this side of colonial modernity is heavily dominated by Al-Mashhūr's criticism of modern education and orientalist anthropology as mechanisms of producing and disseminating modern knowledge. After pointing out the features of modern knowledge and the problems with it (16 codes in 250 quotations), Al-Mashhūr provides an in-depth critique of modern modes of education (4 codes in 126 quotations) and another one with orientalism and anthropology (3 codes in 189 quotations). Depth here, I argue, is of great importance because it unveils the practical nature of his project. In a total of 565 quotations distributed over 23 codes which is the total number of philosophical modernity codes, Al-Mashhūr deals with the topics of education and orientalist anthropology (7 codes only) in 315 quotations which is 55% of the total quotations, yet dedicated to 30% of codes. While this comes under philosophical and intellectual modernity, the codes and the concentration of the quotations show that it is a philosophy tending to be practical rather than theoretical. From this, I argue that Al-Mashhūr is not a philosopher of the analytic tradition; he is not interested in

theory for its own sake but more closely aligned with the philosophy of the ancients in that philosophy should serve to improve the lived experience of human beings; in other words, his thought is driven by practical application. For instance, Aristotle's works were about the practical application of logic and ethics and even his metaphysics was about understanding matter so that we can use it in the world (Glenn, 1950, Russell, 1996). Another important observation here relates to his engagement with orientalist anthropology which, although featured in 3 codes, it yields 189 quotations which suggests the centrality of the colonial project that he continues to see intellectual modernity through as he did with political modernity. Although Al-Mashhūr touches on aspects of economic and societal modernity, which I have included in my earlier discussions, such aspects occupy so limited a number of codes and quotations to warrant a consideration of an independent discussion. Rather, such limited featuring of these two aspects suggest the validity of my conclusion that his project is of political and intellectual interest par excellence. I will elaborate on this in my answer to the third question.

Turning to Al-Mashhūr constructive project or what he proposes to deal with modernity, the analysis process has revealed that it yields 22 codes that include 628 quotations, which unveils a heavy engagement with finding a way forward; another proof of his tendency towards practicality. Put into four groups, the analysis shows almost equal number of codes under each group (4-5 codes) but with larger number of quotations that focus on; what is the response (387 quotations), rather than why is the response (90 quotations). This shows Al-Mashhūr's concentration on elaborating the solution more than defending or justifying it; a tendency that reveals his reconciliatory and pragmatic tone. These key features will be discussed further in my answer to the third question. Al-Mashhūr's constructive project is distributed on four areas two of which are the most prominent; he starts by laying the foundation for discussing the

relation between tradition and modernity in today's Muslim world arguing that, in essence, the imagined conflict between tradition and modernity is caused by an assumption that modernity has to be Western. From this, he moves to identify two areas in which tradition can edit modernity producing a Muslim specific modernity, rather than rejecting the modern altogether. The two areas he suggests working on are moral and intellectual. Linking the constructive system of thought back to the deconstructive one, borrowing the terms from Hallaq (2019) description of Abdurrahman Taha, Al-Mashhūr offers two main principles to address the current irreversible situation; *al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah* (the shared principles) where Muslim factions are invited to create an alternative authority through unity on the moral principles of Islam to help the total body of the *ummah* without giving up their intellectual affiliations; this is the moral. The second is the intellectual through which Al-Mashhūr presents reading history through revelation via his proposed discipline of *fiqh al-tahawwulāt* as an alternative Islamic anthropology to address the inferiority complex and confusion Muslims suffer from under the spell of European colonial modernity. This elaborate proposal ends with a justification and a response to criticism which displays Al-Mashhūr's confidence in his epistemic framework and his trust in the viability of his project, for the execution of which he has taken serious steps when he established research centres, 32 *ribāṭ*, 178 educational centres, and an accredited university that started as a faculty in 2016 (Al-Wasaṭiyah University, 2023). These revelations of both the deconstructive and the constructive levels of Al-Mashhūr's system of thought answer the first question about the areas of modernity he engages with and confirm a partial engagement with the modern rather than a complete independent theory of it. It also leads us to the second question which will explain Al-Mashhūr's selection of these components to engage with and the tone that characterises his engagement i.e. continuous comment on the colonial project and interest in removing Muslims from intellectual subjugation and concern about their moral and religious decline.

The second question was how his contribution connects with his background or what context does his response stem from? To answer this question, I have written an analytical biography of Al-Mashhūr capitalising on his own autobiography and making use of other sources that discuss the history of Yemen during colonial and post-colonial times. Through this, I have investigated the context and the factors that shaped Al-Mashhūr's life and impacted his thought. I have identified two cities in Yemen in which Al-Mashhūr lived before he was forced to escape to Jeddah, the third city, and discussed the figures and the institutions that impacted him in each. In Yemen, where he was born and lived for the first 33 years of his life, Al-Mashhūr received and became part of the traditional education system; his father was the main provider of that type of education and he spent his time between the school, the father and the mosque. To him, this education was interrupted by colonial intervention and its traditional modes of teaching were targeted by colonial authorities that wanted to model them after modern Western secular education to keep abreast with the zeitgeist. With the departure of colonial powers, the Marxist nation-state regime, which is a Western structure, continued the modern secularising project albeit in a different direction, persecuted traditional scholars, dismantled their authority and required Al-Mashhūr, amongst others, to obtain modern qualifications to be able to continue his teacher's job. Al-Mashhūr had to leave to the KSA where he, attempting to reconnect with his old traditional education, became a disciple of Abd al-Qādir al-Saqqāf while working as an Imam. The diasporic years in Jeddah allowed Al-Mashhūr to confront Wahhabism and pushed him to defend his time-old traditional beliefs and practices. It was in these years and beyond that Al-Mashhūr wrote on modernity and its themes and formulated his ideas of *al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah*, *fiqh al-tahawwulāt* and other proposals to address the deficiency of modern education and production of knowledge. After returning to Yemen, Al-Mashhūr, while continuing to write about the themes of modernity,

took practical steps into executing his project which focussed mainly on morality, spirituality and education. He was investing his thought and vision in students and disciples of his educational institutions to bring up what he calls *jīl al-salāmah* (the generation of safety) who do not engage in bloodshed or disparagement.

This brief reiteration of the main themes of the biography explains why Al-Mashhūr chose the themes of modernity discussed in his deconstructive project to criticise and why his constructive project focuses on certain areas and embraces that specific tone. Colonialism was present in his life either directly or through the post-colonial nation state that adopted Marxism in Yemen. As a traditional scholar belonging to the '*ulamā'* and whose focus was education, his past modus vivendi as well as modus operandi were challenged, interrupted and declared irrelevant through political and intellectual colonial modernity and its corollaries. It is my argument that, beyond formulating Al-Mashhūr's views on sectarianism and the importance of unity, diaspora and dislocation provided for Al-Mashhūr another incentive to develop the idea of reading history as a continuous process through his attempts to reconnect with his traditional modes of education, preserve them and insist on the relevance of tradition even in a society which he previews as a locus of Western modernity. This mode of ensuring the continuity of tradition is evidenced by Al-Mashhūr's focus on historical writings so much so that I argue that he is a historian par excellence. Recording the history of Aḥwar in 3 volumes of more than 1500 pages, writing extensive biographies of the Hadrami '*ulamā'* and their scholarly transregional networks and modes of teaching and learning in addition to repetitive references to the religious view of history as continuous are but instances of Al-Mashhūr recourse to historical documentation as an instrument for persevering the tradition. The challenges that faced Al-Mashhūr throughout his life and his continuous movement from a place to another were always interpreted within the religious framework of tribulation; the same framework that

he recourses to in his understanding of the challenge of Western modernity and, I contend, in his pragmatic conservatism. In Al-Mashhūr's critique of modernity and his proposal to deal with it, a researcher can see a mirror of his own life and experience; of his traditional fatherly education, scholarly religious authority, conservative society, encounters with colonialism and Marxism, experiences in Westernised and divided Yemen, life in diaspora and return to the new Yemen where he attempted to bring his ideas to life. The contours of his system of thought are landmarked by the events and shifts of his life. As I have explained in the methodology chapter, a critical discourse analysis pays attention to both contextuality and positionality (Archer, 1998, Dressler, 2019, Schwandt, 1998, Engler, 2004). In this way, this thesis investigated Al-Mashhūr's system of thought and, having studied his biography, was able to link his thought to both his context and the site he is theorising from; as such performing the process of discourse analysis with utmost integrity.

The third question this research raises is on what can we make of his response, is there a shift in traditional Muslim responses to modernity and what is the shape of this shift, does his response move from a 'rejectionist' to one of reformism, adaptation or pragmatism? It is at this point that the circle of questions can be complete as this thesis challenges the current dominating narrative that traditionalist responses take one shape characterised by rejection or obstruction. It also reveals the nuanced and variant degrees of engagement that emerged within traditional school which is often neglected or reduced by western academics. R. Stephen Humphrey tries to restrict 'the conversation with the changed milieu' to Islamists and judges a tradition or conservatism as an attitude that assumes that things can and should go on much as they have for generations past (Humphreys, 1979), but Al-Mashhūr's project proves this dominating conclusion is no more tenable. It also challenges the dominant binary categorisation of modernist and conservative and its subsequent assumption of their intellectual

mutual exclusivity (Gesink, 2010). From this, I develop my argument to characterise Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity, in its deconstructive and constructive parts, as a decolonisation Muslim project. As a constructive project, it adopts a conservative pragmatist tone that focuses on preservation, relevance and practicality.

As a decolonisation project, Al-Mashhūr's response alerts Muslims to the impact of colonialism as vehicle of political and intellectual modernity; it stresses the importance of decolonising Muslim epistemology and psychology from Western domination. Starting with the common question of 'what went wrong', Al-Mashhūr's decolonisation project discards the question and declares it one that is based on a false premise of the necessity of comparison between Muslim lands and the West, one that is invalidated by the divergent historical backgrounds. The question of 'what went wrong' is pregnant with a dissatisfaction with the past that justifies a rupture from it and severance of all relationships with it. This negative relationship with the past developed by Europeans, Hallaq (2019) quotes from Abdurrahman Taha, is unjustified in the case of the Islamic past which is quite different from its European counterpart (Hallaq, 2019). Whether the question leads to the creation of an 'imaginary past' to connect to (Wagemakers, 2016) or a full embrace of a European future, it builds on a divorce and a rupture from the real past, an embrace of the periodisation of history and crisis-critique as an analytic category. In his insistence on the invalidity of this question, Al-Mashhūr establishes the basis of his decolonial project. Additionally, it is this initial refusal of the question that sets him apart from Islamists, secularists and other modernists who adopt the epistemology of 'rupture' premised on the assumption that something went wrong. This reasoned rejection of the epistemic foundation of these movements is just a stepping stone to his constructive project; one that is rooted unapologetically in tradition to which he frequently refers as an epistemological framework for his arguments; thus, embraces it as sound and

continually valid. If we consider colonisation as an attack on tradition in the Muslim world (in political, social, philosophical and economic sense), Al-Mashhūr's project is in effect the tradition decolonising itself in that he does not use any foreign mechanisms but instead drawing from within its own paradigm. Even at the level of terminology, Al-Mashhūr produces his neologism to describe the crisis of modernity and its manifestations but, in producing these neologisms, he does not depart from the tradition. What sets him apart from other anti-Western Islamists is his rejection of rejection; he refuses to cast out wholesale the results of modernity considering this attitude to be alien to the Islamic tradition (as it encourages believers to adopt, after serious consideration, wisdom wherever it is found) and instead rooted in the modernity that he seeks to critique.

Al-Mashhūr's conservative pragmatism is clear in the 'alternatives model' that he proffers in his constructive project. To Al-Mashhūr, Islam represents layers of engagement where one is no more feasible, a Muslim should tactfully move to the other preserving what they can. In face of the decline that occurred in the circles of politics in the early days of Islam, shifting the focus to the scholars as *khulafā'* was an alternate method of preservation. At the cusp of decline of the caliphate and the *ummah* falling into worthlessness, his call for *al-qawāsim al-mushtarakah* is a way of preserving the minimum level of the Islamic spirit of unity and brotherhood. Likewise, instead of falling into the concepts of rupture and crisis and asking the question of what went wrong which is loaded with comparativism, Al-Mashhūr proposes *fīqh al-tahawwulāt* as, I would argue, an alternative anthropology; a practical and a pragmatic method of his decolonising narrative in addition to evoking a novel concept in itself. In all of that, he does not borrow from anywhere other than the tradition, but without rejecting modernity; this is pragmatic conservatism par excellence. Remaining faithful to tradition, Al-Mashhūr does not intellectually accept the offerings of Western modernity but pragmatically

understands the reality of its presence and prudently prioritizes a moral and an intellectual project to navigate through it while ensuring the continuity of tradition and its relevance. In doing so, he analysis the core areas that Muslims need to decolonise before they are able to build their own modernity. Of importance here is to highlight that he shifts the attention and focus to the priority of thought over action to appreciate/deal with current decline and this sets him apart from many Islamic movements that focus on societal action, which is a concept that makes them closer to Marxism.

Al-Mashhūr's pragmatism, it should be noted, encourages a negotiation with modernity rather than a denial or rejection of its existence, taking from it in a way which disrupts neither the preservation of the past nor of traditional authority. It takes note of its surroundings and the reality of the modern world, ensuring that what is preserved is relevant. This does not take away its decolonial character, for decoloniality does not propose a nostalgic and ethnocentric return to traditions, but an engagement in the present with forms of knowledge that have been discarded and deemed obstructive to modern notions of progress (Gallien, 2020 p.31). What sets his decolonial project apart from the current ones is that it comes via a different route of knowledge informed by a tradition that is founded on revelation. The epistemic hierarchy of this tradition gives supremacy to revelation; yet does not prevent him from acknowledging other methods of any *a posteriori* method of knowledge production as long as the hierarchy that confirms the primacy of *a priori* revealed knowledge is not reversed or disturbed; because such disturbance interrupts the whole tradition.

In seeing modernity as a reality, viewing it through the analytic framework of tribulation, and shifting the focus to editing its proposals via the moral component and the complementary traditional education side by side with the modern school, Al-Mashhūr's project displays

practicality. Equally, his insistence on being an authentic representative of the tradition while not eschewing other factions of Islam or excommunicating them from the larger Islamic household is an evidence of both practicality and pragmatism. At another level, Al-Mashhūr's work on modernity is marked by the consistent use of terms such as 'negotiation', 'preservation', and 'reconciliation'. The use of these terms reflects his intensely practical approach in dealing with modernity as a lived reality, and demonstrate clearly that his method is not at all reliant on rejectionism. This approach yields an edited modernity rather than advocating for a return to a premodern reality. This effort demonstrates pragmatism in avoiding rejectionism and conservatism in his insistence in preserving the tradition. Given that we all are modern, but modern in very different ways (Jung, 2016), Al-Mashhūr's offering is modern in that it arises from his interaction with the modern context. What it is *not* is European or Eurocentric, and thus, results in the crafting of at least one, and potentially multiple Muslim modernities.

In commenting on the Kafkan parable 'He', Arendt (1961) captures a feature of the modernity that Al-Mashhūr rejects. In the modern condition, 'He' is no longer able to live with the weight of the individual and/or inherited communal past, and finds himself torn between it and his yet-to-be-formed future. Such conditions result in the existence of what I term an *atemporal* gap between past and future in which man, or rather, an *atemporal* abstraction of man - for Arendt conceived of the gap as a mental construction without an extramental reality - exists, pulled between them. The antagonism between these forces prevent the Kafkan 'He' from deciphering even his own intentions, torn as he is between them, but yield rather the wish in him to transcend the antagonism entirely and become the adjudicator judging between the two. Such an adjudicator must be omniscient to accurately assess the past, and thus is himself at the top of his epistemic hierarchy of values (Arendt, 1961). The antagonism between past and future

demonstrates the sense of ‘rupture’ at the centre of the modern paradigm, and is directly challenged by Al-Mashhūr’s insistence on reading history through the lens of the revelation which sits atop the epistemic hierarchy of the Islamic tradition from which he writes. For Al-Mashhūr, it is not possible to divorce man from his individual or communal past. History is instead linear, and man’s present condition is to be understood within the wider context of his position within historical time. It is knowledge of this history which allows man to understand how Prophetic authority, derived from revelation, was instantiated by generations of Muslim scholars, and it is this historical but continually living consensus that provides the authority necessary for the cultivation of an ethically, religiously, and spiritually healthy society. For Al-Mashhūr’s practicality, the cultivation of this society is predicated not on action, but action preceded and followed by deep thought. The primacy of thought over action ensures intentionality- itself central to the Islamic spiritual tradition- and ensures the upholding of responsibility by the relevant actors. Current attempts to address the present are informed either by action only or preoccupied with thought only. By establishing the necessity of both, with action only consequential to thought; and in reconciling the two, Al-Mashhūr’s practicality is displayed.

Al-Mashhūr’s contribution to the study of modernity and the negotiation of the harms it has caused Muslim societies and traditional frameworks – on the whole- focuses on constructing a method by which modernity can be reckoned by Muslims, and, I conclude is far more useful to thinkers as a result. The method is in a large part described – as previously discussed – by terming it ‘conservative pragmatism’, but this alone does not capture the depth of the method in its entirety. This depth is largely dependent on Al-Mashhūr’s ability to move with dexterity between multiple sciences within the Islamic scholarly tradition – itself a result of the traditional education he championed – and was demonstrated in detail in his responses to

articles by Bujra and Knysh. He was able to re-categorise the debate Bujra described away from class warfare and power struggle into the realms of law and intellectual difference by virtue of his training in the Islamic juristic tradition. Equally, he was able to draw on Qur'anic verses and prophetic narrations to construct the framework by which he views history, giving interpretative meanings to terms such as ‘the stage of worthlessness’ (*al-marhalah al-ghuthā'iyyah*) to understand the linear history of the *ummah* by virtue of his training in the respective traditional disciplines. He was also able to challenge the supposition shared by Knysh and Bujra that the Bā'Alawis in Yemen had maintained and propagated a system which allowed them to monopolise and cling to power by highlighting their longstanding distance from political authorities and refusal to engage in administration, all by virtue of his prowess as an historian.

More fundamentally, in advocating for a framework around shared principles, Al-Mashhūr's methodology creates a space for competing Muslim groups to work – if not collaboratively, then not antagonistically – to address modernity in their Muslim communities. The genius of his approach is not restricted to newness, but in Al-Mashhūr's deep reliance on his traditional credentials; the embracing of pluralism is familiar to him and his classical predecessors in their recognition of the validity of multiple legal and theological schools despite differences between them. In the creation of this space without ceding ground to groups he disagrees with (themselves promoting shades of Islamist thought), Al-Mashhūr's method is unique and has the potential to equip multiple streams of thought within the Islamic fraternity to create multiple, compatible Muslim modernities.

Together with other alternatives Al-Mashhūr offers in dealing with modernity, *fīqh al-tahawwulāt* is central, not just as a component of a traditional engagement with modernity, but

as a contribution to the centuries old concept of traditional Islam itself; an extension of the three-component traditional structure of legal, theological and spiritual to a four-components structure. The fourth component here, being *fiqh al-tahawwulāt* is developed into a discipline with its own curriculum the study of which enables Muslims to navigate the challenges of the modern with a sound legal, theological and spiritual praxis. In extending the components of the tradition, Al-Mashhūr insists that he is not transforming or amending it but activating and triggering its potential to face challenges by drawing on its sources. For him, *fiqh al-tahawwulāt* is a shield, it is the *fiqh* of the current stage that is needed to protect people from questioning their religious sensibilities and doubting their tradition's ability to protect its three foundational components. Eschatological texts often-viewed as pointing only at the future in an apocalyptic manner, are brought to the present and seen in different light as composites of a dynamic traditional analytic framework that understands political and intellectual transitions and changes such that Muslims feel comfortable with their religious tradition while engaging with the pertinent questions of the time.

Revealing the nuances of Al-Mashhūr's project, through answering these questions, shows a new shape of traditional Muslim responses to modernity that goes beyond the 'obstruction' and 'disengaging' characterisations that dominate the academic narrative drawn by people like Lapidus (2014), Hunter (2009), Kurzman (2002) and Bennett (2005) and this closes the circle of questions and answers the thesis' mega question. This revelation is crucial in pointing out how traditional responses to modernity are wrongly simplified and harshly neglected in current academic works and how the understanding of traditionalism is misplaced. My research thus pushes for a rethinking of traditionalism and its potentials and contributes to a change in the academic narrative; a change the intellectual implication of which is challenging misrepresentation, addressing imbalance, restoring academic integrity as well as changing

stereotypes and combating violence. In this, I walk a path similar to the very few academics like Gesink (2010), Hallaq (2019) and Quadri (2021) albeit a uniquely different one that goes beyond the contours of change into its components and degrees, substance and implications.

8.2. Research Limitations:

Despite the originality of this research and its ability to answer its questions and contribute to the story of traditional Muslim responses to modernity and the larger understanding of traditional Islam, specially through its focus on post-colonial Muslim world, one of its limitation is taking a single case study as its scope and focus. While this choice is justified by impact and contextualisation both necessary for studying the knowledge produced in the context and in this way, it challenges the current generalised narrative depicting traditional Muslim responses to modernity as ‘obstructionist’ and ‘rejectionist’, it cannot tell if the subject of the case study – Al-Mashhūr- is a typical representation of a wider trend within traditional scholarship or that his project can be taken as a representative sample. This seeming limitation can in fact act as a stepping stone for studying other traditional scholars and their engagement with modernity specially in postcolonial Muslim world; when an adequate volume of this works becomes available, we can build – through comparative analysis – an understanding of the trends in their work and thus can accurately situate Al-Mashhūr’s project within the wider traditional literature. As I have explained in methodology chapter, single case study, despite limitations, provides a significant contribution to knowledge through challenging current narratives and confirming certain arguments (Yin, 2014). Although limited in breadth, single

case study's prioritisation of depth is a necessary procedure to ensure the validity of further studies that attempt a level of breadth. That is when a limitation turns out to be a merit.

Another limitation that may be associated with this research is its disinterest in the correctness or otherwise of the views, the critiques and the proposals of Al-Mashhūr such that it is not so much a comparison with other thinkers' views on modernity – whether Western or Islamic. However, this was never the intention of the research; its main intent is to challenge the current narrative representing traditional Muslim responses to modernity by examining the response of a post-colonial traditional Muslim scholar that moves beyond the current narrative of obstructionism. Another intent was to address a lacuna in studies and highlight an under-represented area. This, I reckon, is significant enough to start further studies of this yet-to-be explored area as it creates the essential knowledge leading to it. It is important to highlight that, in the body of this thesis, I have engaged many Islamic and Western thinkers as part of my analysis. Those thinkers can be candidate interlocutors for future comparative studies that take my current work further exploring a trend of traditional responses – across faiths – for example. The nuances of Al-Mashhūr's response have contributed to the limited studies that open the door to a genre of knowledge about Islamic tradition's continued engagement with the modern and the *‘ulamā*'s ability to regenerate relevant answers via reference to the epistemic framework of that tradition; thus, proving its resilience and technologies of relevance. As MacIntyre (1990) notes that at the core of any adequately embodied tradition lies in the possession and transmission of the ability to recognise in the past what is and what is not a guide to the future (MacIntyre, 1990), Al-Mashhūr's rootedness in tradition drives him to creatively distinguish what is and what is not a guide to prove both its relevance and versatility. This does not mean that he argues from a ground alien to modernity; rather, it just reflects what can be done further with this kind of knowledge.

8.3. Where Do We Go from Here?

Al-Mashhūr's project contains embedded flexibility and versatility; which widens the scope of its impact and utility for further academic research. Seen as a decolonial Muslim narrative, it alerts us to a particular body of post-colonial knowledge that is overlooked by current writings on decolonisation which tend to overlook the *'ulamā'*'s writings in this field because they are not revolutionaries. The paucity of studies on decolonial traditional narratives suggest that current postcolonial and decolonial writings tend to dismiss traditional responses to modernity as narratives of decolonisation because they draw on religious frameworks. Research on this topic has shown one study that explores a dialogue between traditional Islam and decolonial critiques of modernity and the researcher states that his thesis is the first project on that topic (Sparkes, 2020). As this would require a degree of comfort with the metaphysical tradition of these religions, avoiding engaging with them inadvertently leads decolonial scholars to rely on the exclusivist production of knowledge that Al-Mashhūr argued against. If decolonial studies aim to focus on the production of alternative discourses with and from subaltern perspectives without repudiating any relevant knowledge, this can only be achieved when traditional decolonial narratives of insiders are equally considered and included (Gallien, 2020, Costa, 2014, Mishra and Hodge, 2005), or else we remain entrapped in epistemic arrogance. Seen here as a method or a strategy of a traditional narrative of decolonisation, conservative pragmatism – witnessed in action in Al-Mashhūr's project – can be further explored in future research of other decolonial narratives stemming from religious traditions. While future research exploring traditional decolonisation narratives may also reveal a variety of methods of decolonialisation, it can show that, while confirming non-traditional deconstructive conclusions, a critique of

modernity drawn from tradition allows for new constructive projects utilising the richness of those traditions and that are not available for secular non-traditional decolonisation narratives.

Another research enterprise that can benefit from this thesis and build on it is related to the biography genre as a decolonisation method. Al-Mashhūr's biography proved essential in understanding the tone, the choices and the focus and the larger narrative of his project i.e. decolonisation. But while biography, in this thesis served as a context, a preparation to engage with the ideas and proposals, it can in future studies become the research subject itself and as such generate larger interest in single case analysis or comparative biography studies as sites of decolonisation. While autobiographies can be seen as the subject's insider story, both biographies and autobiographies can be examined as narratives of decolonisation in and of themselves as they contain views, epistemologies and a plethora of rich topics that each contain layers for investigation. Biographies recast spiritual, intellectual and creative choices in a new light and details like personal identity, education, belonging and border crossing are never separable from views on terrains of history, language, modernity and colonialism; as such they offer narratives of decolonisation (Berger, 2010, Schechter, 2011).

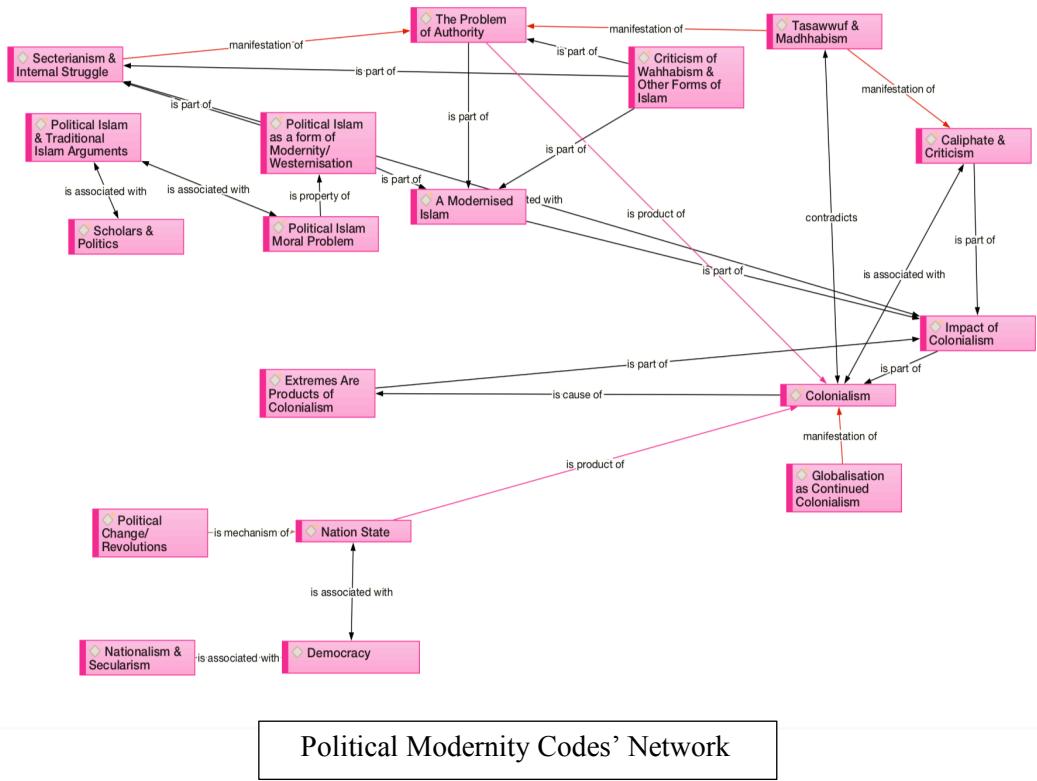
At another level, the current thesis on Al-Mashhūr's response to modernity gives analysts of modernity a way to root their analysis in the paradigm of Islamic tradition and therefore move away from positing comparisons between traditionalism and modernity as mutually exclusive categories that are always ready to be juxtaposed with each other. If some interlocutors like Hallaq (2019) and Abdurrahman Taha do not accept a wholesale of modernity and offer the spirit of modernity as a philosophical ingredient for creating an Islamic modernity (Hallaq, 2019), Al-Mashhūr's invigoration of the tradition is the next step where he provides practical tools beyond the mere philosophical discourse. This invigoration of the tradition shifts the

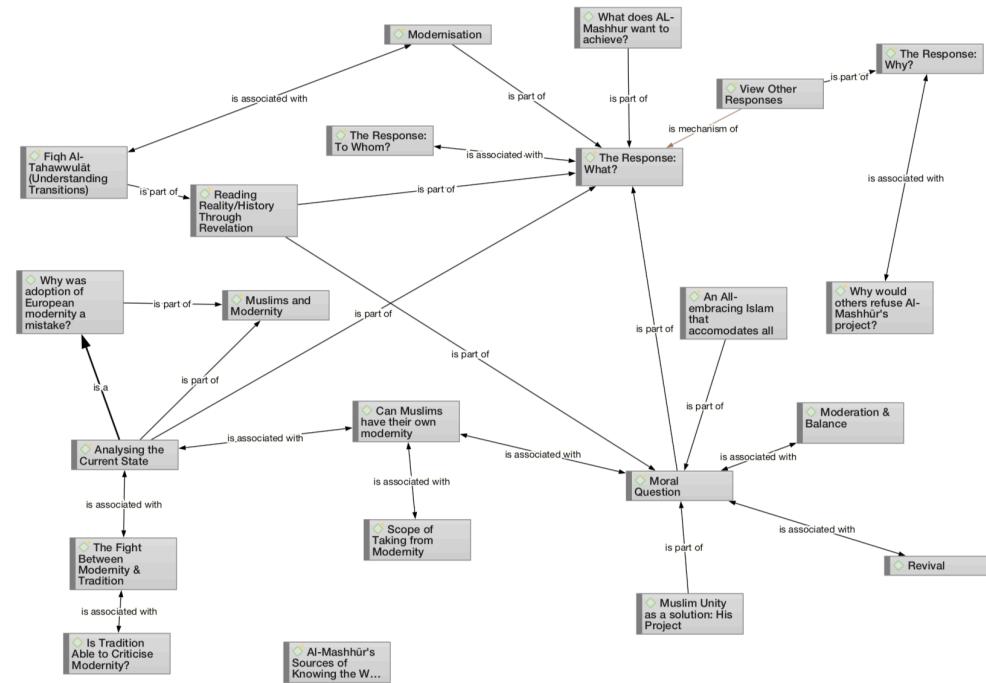
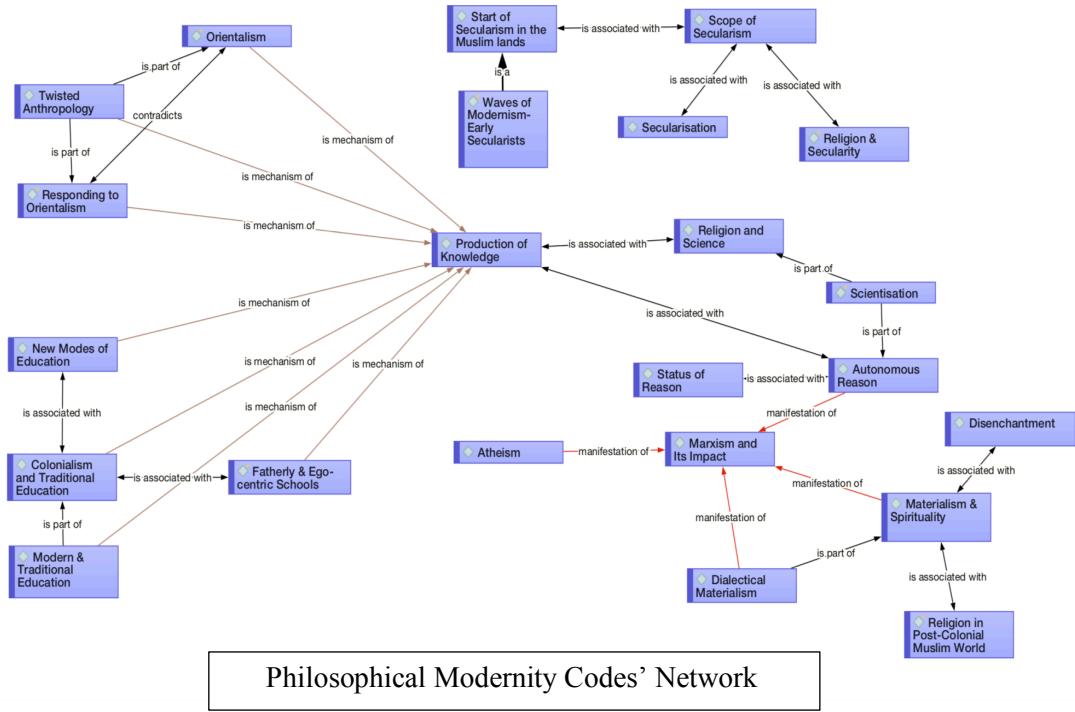
focus of Asad (Anjum, 2007) – another interlocutor – and his concept of ‘discursive tradition’ from how it worked in the past to how it functions confidently in the present. Further research can look into these implications and bring other interlocutors’ proposals into comparative studies.

8.4. A Final Reflection:

A human work is tied with incompleteness but in that lies its importance and contribution because, as much as it attempts to add to knowledge by highlighting what is lacking, thus proving its significance, it sets its boundaries and limitations and, in this, envisage and direct next steps, and thus proving its relevance and continuity. In its incompleteness therefore lies its power and integrity. This thesis has performed these two tasks; fill in gaps that already exist in current knowledge and provide a space for moving to future research enterprises. Through changing the current narrative, unveiling diversity of traditional Muslim responses to modernity and offering new avenues for research, this thesis offered the two essential undertakings of significance and continued relevance. This gives credibility and integrity not only to it but to the larger body of academic research that it belongs to.

Appendix 1: Networks & Numbers





Theme	Codes	Quotations
Philosophical Modernity	23	565
	Education and Similar (4 Codes)	126
	Orientalism- Anthropology (3 Codes)	189
Political Modernity	Production of Knowledge and Similar (16)	250
	18	699
	Colonialism, Impact..etc (3 Codes)	184
	Caliphate & Loss of Authority (2 Codes)	81
Shape of His Project	Nation-state, democracy, nationalism, revolution (4 Codes)	128
	Islamisms-Sectarianism..etc (9 Codes)	308
	22	628
	Analysing the Current State (5 Codes)	143
	What.. (2 Codes)	101
Individual-Other	Moral Components (4 Codes)	140
	Intellectual Components (5 Codes)	146
	Why.. (5 Codes)	90
	Knowledge about the West- limitation (1 Code)	9
	7	50
Total Number	Capitalism-Communism (3 Codes)	27
	Symbolism (1 Code)	13
	Women Issues (3 Codes)	10
Total Number	71	1942

Codes, Groups and
Quotations distributed
on the different aspects

Appendix 2: Codex of Al-Mashhūr's Core Works

ATLAS.ti Report

Al-Mashhur Core Works

Codes

Report created by Ahmed Saad on 12 Oct 2023

- A Modernised Islam
- Al-Mashhūr's Sources of Knowing the West
- An All-embracing Islam that accomodates all
- Analysing the Current State
- Atheism
- Autonomous Reason
- Caliphate & Criticism
- Can Muslims have their own modernity
- Capitalism
- Colonialism
- Colonialism and Traditional Education
- Communism
- Criticism of Wahhabism & Other Forms of Islam
- Democracy
- Dialectical Materialism
- Disenchantment

- Extremes Are Products of Colonialism
- Fatherly & Ego-centric Schools
- Fiqh Al-Tahawwulāt (Understanding Transitions)
- Globalisation as Continued Colonialism
- Impact of Colonialism
- Is Tradition Able to Criticise Modernity?
- Marxism and Its Impact
- Materialism & Spirituality
- Moderation & Balance
- Modern & Traditional Education
- Modernisation
- Moral Question
- Muslim Unity as a solution: His Project
- Muslims and Modernity
- Nation State
- Nationalism & Secularism
- New Modes of Education
- Orientalism
- Political Change/Revolutions
- Political Islam & Traditional Islam Arguments
- Political Islam as a form of Modernity/Westernisation
- Political Islam Moral Problem
- Production of Knowledge
- Reading Reality/History Through Revelation
- Religion & Secularity

- Religion and Science
- Religion in Post-Colonial Muslim World
- Responding to Orientalism
- Revival
- Scholars & Politics
- Scientisation
- Scope of Secularism
- Scope of Taking from Modernity
- Sectarianism & Internal Struggle
- Secularisation
- Source and Approach
- Start of Secularism in the Muslim lands
- Status of Reason
- Symbolism and Language
- Tasawwuf & Madhabism
- The Fight Between Modernity & Tradition
- The Intrusiveness of the Modern State
- The Problem of Authority
- The Response: To Whom?
- The Response: What?
- The Response: Why?
- Twisted Anthropology
- View Other Responses
- Waves of Modernism-Early Secularists
- What does AL-Mashhur want to achieve?

- Why was adoption of European modernity a mistake?
- Why would others refuse Al-Mashhūr's project?
- Women In Islam
- Women in the Modern Muslim World
- Women in the West

Appendix 3: List of Al-Mashhūr's Books

(Autobiography Works & Core Works Highlighted)

No	Transliterated Title	Translated Title	Publication Year
1	<i>Al-Hafr 'ala Jidār Al-Dhākirah:</i> <i>Rihlat Al-Hayāh Bayn al-Wāqi' wa</i> <i>al-Qawāqi'</i>	Engraving on the Wall of Memory: A Life Journey between Reality & Shells	1986
2	<i>Shurūt Al-Itiṣāf li man Yurīd Al-</i> <i>Muṭāla 'ah fi Kutub Al-Aslāf</i>	Prerequisites for Those Who Want to Read the Books of the Predecessors	1995
3	<i>Bayna Yadayy Al-Dajjāl</i>	Before the Advent of the Dajjāl	1996
4	<i>Qabasāt Al-Nūr fī Īdāh Ḥayāt</i> <i>Sayyidi Al-Wālid 'Ali b. Abi Bakr Al-</i> <i>Mashhūr</i>	Glimpses of Light: A Biographical Account of My Father Ali b. Abi Bakr Al-Mashhūr	1996
5	<i>Jany Al-Qiṭāffī Manāqib Al-Habib</i> <i>'Abd al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf</i>	Reaping the Fruits: A Biographical Account of the Virtues of Habib 'Abd al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf	1998
6	<i>Al-Rumūz wa al-Asābi bayna</i> <i>Qaramiṭat al-Ams wa Qarāśinat al-</i> <i>Yawm</i>	Symbols and Fingers: Between the Qarmatians of Yesterday and the Pirates of Today	2001
7	<i>Al-Khurij min al-Dā'irah al-Hamrā'</i>	Leaving the Red Circle	2001
8	<i>Al-Abniyah Al-Fikriyah Al-Jāmi'iyyah li</i> <i>Thawābit Al-Tariqah Al-'Alawiyyah</i>	Intellectual Structures Encompassing the Foundations of the 'Alawi Path	2001
9	<i>Al-Īdāh wa al-Ishārah Lima Aṣab al-</i> <i>Ummah min Hazāim al-Suqūf al-</i> <i>Munhārah</i>	Clarification & Indication of What Afflicted the <i>Ummah</i> from the Defeats of the Collapsing Ceilings	2002

10	<i>Al-Mustashriqūn wa al-Tanwīriyyūn:</i>	Orientalists & Enlighteners: Dubious Collaboration in the Phase of Worthlessness towards a Common Objective	2002
11	<i>Al-'Utrūhah: Wujhat Nazar Tahlīliyyah li Maḥw al-Ummiyah al-Dīniyyah al-Muṭbiqah 'ala al-Wāqī' al-Īlāmī al-Mu'āṣir</i>	The Thesis: An Analytic Perspective to Eliminate Religious Illiteracy Dominating the Current Media Reality	2002
12	<i>Al-Tanṣīṣ Al-Mathbūt li Ibrāz Al-Mawāqif Al-Ālamīyyah fi Manhaj Āl Al-Bayt bi Hardamawt</i>	A Documented Demarcation: An Exposition of the Universal Stances of the Way of the Prophetic Household in Hardamawt	2002
13	<i>Al-Munāṣarah wa Al-Mu'āzarah li Kāffat Mansūbi Madāris Āl Al-Bayt fi Al-Marḥalah Al-Mu'āṣirah</i>	Assisting and Supporting Those Attributed to the Schools of the Prophetic Household in the Current Stage	2002
14	<i>Al-Muhājir ila Allah: Aḥmad b. Ḫasā</i>	Aḥmad b. Ḫasā: The Migrant to God	2002
15	<i>Ubayd Allah b. Al-Muhājir</i>		2002
16	<i>Al-Imām Muḥammad Ali Bā'Alawi</i>		2002
17	<i>Al-Ashrāf Banū Jadīd</i>	The Sharifs of Banu Jadīd	2002
18	<i>Al-Ustādh Al-Āzam Al-Faqīh Al-Muqaddam</i>	Al-Faqīh Al-Muqaddam: The Senior Teacher	2002
19	<i>Al-Imām Muḥammad Mawla Ad-Dawīyah</i>		2002
20	<i>Al-Īṭr Al-Ūdi fi Tarjamat Al-Shaykh Sa'īd Al-Amūdi</i>	The Agarwood Scent: A Biography of Shaykh Sa'īd Al-Amūdi	2002
21	<i>Shaykh 'Abdullah Bā'Alawi</i>		2002

22	<i>Al-Imam ‘Abd Al-Rahmān Al-Saqqāf</i>		2002
23	<i>Al-Imām ‘Umar Al-Mihdār</i>		2002
24	<i>Al-Shaykha Sultānah Al-Zubaydiyyah</i>		2002
25	<i>Al-‘Aydarūs Al-Akbar</i>	Al-‘Aydarūs: The Senior	2002
26	<i>Jilā’ Al-Hamm wa Al-Hazan bi Tarjamat Ṣāḥib Ḥadan</i>	Removal of Sorrow and Distress: A Biography of the Saint of Aden	2002
27	<i>Al-Shaykh Ma ‘rūf Bā Jamāl</i>		2002
28	<i>Al-Shaykh ‘Abdullah Bā Nāfi‘</i>		2002
29	<i>Al-Iḥāṭah wa Al-Iḥtyāṭ min Al-Wuqū‘ fi ma Akhbara bihi Al-Nabiyy ‘Inda Qurb Al-Sā‘ah min Al-‘Alāmat wa Al-Ashrāt</i>	Knowing and Being Wary of Falling into The Prophetic Foretold Portents and Signs Occurring Close to the Last Day	2002
30	<i>Al-Muslimūn fī Mujtāmat al-Dhillah bayna Siyasat al-Dajal wa ‘Ibadat al-Ijl</i>	Muslims in Societies of Humiliation between Deception Politics and Calf Worship	2004
31	<i>Iḥyā’ Lughat Al-Islam al-Ālamiyyah</i>	Reviving the Universal Language of Islam	2005
32	<i>Al-Talīd wa Al-Tārif: Sharḥ Manzūmat Fiqh Al-Tahawwulāt wa Sunnat Al-Mawāqif</i>	The Old and the Novel: A Commentary on a Didactic Poem on Understanding Transitions and Prophetic Stances	2006
33	<i>Fiqh Al-Da‘wah fī Al-Marhalah Al-Mu‘āṣirah</i>	Understanding Da‘wah in the Current Stage	2006
34	<i>Al-Taraf Al-Aḥwar fī Tārīkh Mikhlāf Ahwar (1, 2, 3)</i>	A Contrasted Beautiful Eye: A History of the Province of Ahwar (3 Volumes)	2007

35	<i>Dalīl Al-Ṭā’ah Qadr Al-Istiṭā’ah</i>	A Manual for Good Deeds as Per One’s Means	2007
36	<i>Iḥyā’ Manhajiyat Al-Namāṭ al-Awsat</i>	Reviving the Methodology of the Middle Path	2009
37	<i>Al-Dalā’il Al-Nabawiyyah Al-Mu’abbirah ‘an Sharaf Al-Madrasah Al-Abawiyyah</i>	Prophetic Indications to the Honour of the Fatherly School	2010
38	<i>Manhaj Al-Salāmawh Al-Wā’i Al-Munqidh min Ṭūfān Al-Wahan wa Al-Tadā’i</i>	The Wise Way of Safety: A Salvation from the Flood of Weakness and Domination	2010
39	<i>Al-Manzūmah Al-Gharrā: Mulakhkhaṣ Ḥayāt Al-Siddīqah Fatimah Al-Zahra</i>	A Unique Poem Summarising the Life of the Lady Saint Faṭimah Al-Zahra	2010
40	<i>Manzūmat Al-Āyād Al-Mawsimiyyah Al-Munṭawiyah fī Dhikrayāt Al-‘Ashr min Dhi Al-Hijjah Al-Ālamīyyah</i>	Seasonal Festivities that Happen Within the Universal Ten Days of Dhi Al-Hijjah	2011
41	<i>Al-Nubdhah Al-Ṣughra fī ‘Alāmāt al-Sā’ah Al-Kubrā wa Al-Wusṭa wa Al-Ṣughra</i>	Introductory Synopsis to the Major, Middle and Minor Signs of the Hour	2012
42	<i>Al-Iqd Al-Munazzam Hawla Mashrū‘iyat ‘Ashūrā’ wa Al-Muharram</i>	The Pearled Necklace: A Poem on the Permissibility of Āshūrā’ and Muḥarram	2012
43	<i>Mukhtaṣar Al-Ḥadīqah Al-Naḍirah fī Naẓm Al-Ṣīrah Al-‘Aṭīrah</i>	The Flourishing Garden: A Poetic Summation of the Blessed Prophetic Life	2012

44	<i>Al-Muzn Al-Thajjāj fī Sard Qissat Al-Isrā' wa Al-Mi'rāj</i>	The Flowing Cloud: A Poetic Rendering of the Story of Night Journey and Ascension	2012
45	<i>Al-Iqlīd fī Mafātīḥ Al-Ulūm Al-Khamsah</i>	The Necklace: A Key to the Five Sciences	2013
46	<i>Dawā'iř Al-I'ādah wa Marātib Al-Ifādah</i>	Circles of Reconnection and Stations of Benefit	2013
47	<i>Al-Wathīqah: Intiṣār Wāṭ li Al-Madrasah wa Al-Taqrīqah Al-Abawiyyah</i>	The Writ: A Conscious Support of the Fatherly School and Path	2013
48	<i>Salāmat Al-Dārayn Sharh Mawāqif Al-Sibṭayn</i>	Safety in Both Worlds: A Commentary on the Stances of the Two (Prophetic) Grandsons	2013
49	<i>Risālah Shakhṣiyah li Abnā' wa Banāt Al-Sādah Al-'Alawiyyah</i>	A Personal Message to the Sons and Daughters of the 'Alawi Sayyids	2013
50	<i>Al-Hullah Al-Sīrā' fī Sīrat Al-Sayyidah Al-Humayrā'</i>	The Silky Gown: A Poem on the Life of The Fair Lady (Ā'ishah)	2013
51	<i>Sharḥ Al-Aثار fī ma Warada 'an Shahr Ṣafar</i>	Commentary on the Narrations about the Month of Ṣafar	2013
52	<i>Dalīl Al-Tā'iħ Al-Hayrān fī ma Warada 'an Laylat Al-Nisf min Sha'bān</i>	Guiding the Confused to the Narrations About the Night of Mid-Sha'bān	2013
53	<i>Al-Mā'idah Al-Rabbāniyyah fī Al-Wazā'if Al-Ramadāniyyah</i>	The Divine Banquet: A Manual to the Supplications of Ramaḍān	2013
54	<i>Al-Manzūmah Al-Durriyyah fī Dhikr Al-Ghazwah Al-Badrīyyah</i>	A Radiant Poem on the Battle of Badr	2013

55	<i>Tālib Al-Faḍl wa Al-Ajr ‘an ma Yakhūṣṣ Al-Muslim wa Al-Muslimah fī Īday Al-Adḥa wa Al-Fiṭr</i>	Seekers of Bounty and Reward: A Manual of Righteous Deeds Required from Muslim Men and Women on the Two Eids	2013
56	<i>Al-Khitām fī Tawdī‘ Al-Ām</i>	Bidding Farewell to the Year	2013
57	<i>Risālah ila Shabāb wa Banāt Al-Muslimīn</i>	A Message to Young Muslim Men and Women	2013
58	<i>Maqālat Paris</i>	Paris Essays	2014
59	<i>Al-Šiddīq Al-Akbar wa Al-Wālid Al-A barr</i>	The Great Saint and Most Righteous Father	2014
60	<i>Qārūrat Al-Zujaj fī Dhāmm Al-Udhūbah wa Faḍl Al-Zawāj</i>	A Poem on Merits of Marriage over Single Life	2014
61	<i>Kahf Al-Sab ‘ah fī Waṣa’if Yawm Al-Jumu‘ah</i>	The Cave of Seven on the Rituals of Friday	2014
62	<i>Fayḍ Al-Laṭīf fī Al-Ta’rīf Al-Sharīf</i>	The Grace of the Gentle One on the Blessed Introduction	2014
63	<i>Daw’ Al-Sirāj fī Istiqbāl Al-Hujjāj</i>	Lantern Light on Receiving Pilgrims	2014
64	<i>Al-Balsam fī Naẓm Ḥayāt Al-Masīh Ḥisa b. Maryam</i>	The Cure: A Poem on the Life of Ḥisa b. Maryam	2014
65	<i>Al-Usus wa Al-Munṭalaqāt fī Tahlīl wa Tafsīl Ghawāmiḍ Fiqh Al-Tahawwulāt</i>	Foundations and Starting Points for Analysing and Detailing the Ambiguities of <i>Fiqh Al-Tahawwulāt</i>	2015
66	<i>Al-Mahya ‘Al-Wādiḥ Al-Maymūn</i>	The Blessed Clear Path	2015
67	<i>Lawāmi Al-Nūr fī Dhikri Nukhbah min A’lām Hardamawt Al-Ṣudūr</i>	Shimmering Lights: Selected Biographies of Elite Scholars of Hardamawt (2 Volumes)	2015

68	<i>Al-Tabṣirah al-Da‘awiyyah bi Sharḥ al-Manzumah al-Nasawiyyah</i>	The <i>Da‘awi</i> Manual: A Commentary on the Didactic Poem on Women	2015
69	<i>Iż-ħar Al-Ilm Al-Maknūn</i>	Unveiling the Well-Kept Knowledge	2015
70	<i>Al-Wurayqāt Al-Khaḍrā fi Nazm Hayāt Al-Sayyidah Khadījah Al-Kubrā</i>	Green Leaves: A Poem on the Life of Lady Khadījah	2015
71	<i>Al-Manzūmah Al-Sultāniyyah</i>	The Sultanic Poem	2015
72	<i>Manzūmat A-Sidrah fi Al-Hijrah</i>	A Poem on the Hijrah	2015
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74	<i>Al-Sharaf Al-Asnā: Manzūmat Al-Ṣalāh ʻala Al-Habīb</i>	The Resplendent Honour: A Poem on Sending Blessings to the Beloved Prophet	2016
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79	<i>Al-Silsilah Al-‘Arīqah fī Mashrū‘iyyat wa Fadl Al-‘Aqīqah</i>	The Noble Chain on the Legitimacy of ‘Aqīqah	2016
80	<i>Bawwābat Riḍwān fī Khatm Al-Qur’ān</i>	Riḍwān Gate on Completing the Recitation of the Qur’ān	2016

81	<i>Mukhtasar Tartīb Ad’iyat Layālī Ramadān</i>	A Summary of the Supplications of the Nights of Ramadān	2016
82	<i>Al-Masfūfah Al-Umm: Manzumat Manhaj Al-Damj Al-Rubā’ī Bayna Al-Thawābit wa Al-Mutaghayyirāt</i>	The Main Well-Arranged Poem: A Didactic Poem on the Method of the Four-Component Merging of <i>Thawābit</i> and <i>Mutaghayyirāt</i>	2017
83	<i>Al-Takwīn Al-Ādami bayna Sirr Al-Abawiyyah Al-Nabawiyyah Al-Shariyyah wa Bayna Sharr Al-Anawiyyah Al-Iblīsyyah Al-Tab iyyah Al-Wad iyyah</i>	The Adamaic Composition between the Secret of the Legal Fatherly Prophetic Way and the Evil of the Ego-centric Iblisi Naturalistic Positivism	2017
84	<i>Barā’at Al-Taqrīz fī Naẓm Al-Khalīfah Al-Sādis ‘Umar b. Abd Al-Azīz</i>	A Beautiful Ornament: A Poem on the Life of the Sixth Caliph Umar b. Abd Al-Azīz	2017
85	<i>Al-Awj Al-Shāmikh wa Al-Maqām Al-Bādhikh</i>	The Pinnacle of Fame and Station of Acclaim	2017
86	<i>Ibtisāmat Al-Thaghr fī Nazm Munāsabat Laylat Al-Qadr</i>	The Smile: A Poem on Celebrating the Night of Power	2017
87	<i>Al-Mawrid Al-‘Adhb</i>	The Sweet Fountain	2018
88	<i>Al-Wishāḥ Al-Muwashsham Tarjamat Al-Faqīh Al-Muqaddam</i>	The Ornamented Band: A Biography of Al-Faqīh Al-Muqaddam	2018
89	<i>Iqd Al-Jawāhir fī Naẓm Ḥayāt wa Hijrat Al-Imām Al-Muhājir</i>	Necklace of Jewels: A Poem on the Life and Migration of <i>Al-Imām Al-Muhājir</i>	2018
90	<i>Al-Jumānah fī Ḥayāt Rabi’at Hadramawt Al-Shaykha Sultānah</i>	The Rare Pearl: An Account of the Life of Al-Shaykha Sultānah the Rabi’ah of Hadramawt	2018

91	<i>Maṭālī Al-Is ‘ād fī Naẓm Sīrat Al-Imām Al-Haddād</i>	The Beginnings of Felicity: A Poem on the Life of Imam Al-Haddād	2018
92	<i>Al-Buṭūlāt wa Al-Fidā’ fī Naẓm Sīrat Sayyid Al-Shuhadā’</i>	Heroism & Sacrifice: A Poem on the Life of the Master of Martyrs	2018
93	<i>Tajādīd Al-Uḥūd fī Nazm Mashrū‘ iyyat Ziyarat Qabr Al-Nabi Hūd</i>	Renewing Pledges: A Poem on the Legitimacy of Visiting the Grave of Prophet Hūd	2018
94	<i>Al-Manzūmah Al-Malādhīyyah fī Naẓm Al-Sīrah Al-Mu‘ādhīyyah</i>	A Refuge: A Poem on the Life of Mu‘ādh (b. Jabal)	2018
95	<i>Shawāhid Al-Sāḥah fī Dhikr Shuhadā’ Mu’tah</i>	Landmarks of the Field: An Account of the Martyrs of Mu’tah	2019
96	<i>Dalīl Al-Murīd Al-Sālik</i>	A Guide for Spiritual Traveller	2019
97	<i>Kashf Al-Ghummaḥ an Al-Ummah: Tawjīh Marḥali lil Ḥālah Al-Istithnā’iyyah li Jā’iḥat Kurūna</i>	Helping the Ummah during the Affliction of Covid19	2020
98	Al-Marṣad Al-Nabawi (1,2,3)	The Prophetic Observatory (3 Volumes- Collection of Articles)	2010 -2016
99	<i>Halāwat al-Tajribah al-Murrah</i>	The Sweetness of a Bitter Experience	Manuscript
100	<i>Sanawāt al-Istithmār al-Mufīd</i>	Years of Beneficial Investment	Manuscript
101	<i>Bukā’ Al-Qalam</i>	The Weeping of the Pen	Manuscript
102	<i>Al-Istidādāt al-Hathīthah li Ḥimāyat al-Arbiṭah min Muzāḥamat al-Madrasah al-Ḥadīthah</i>	Urgent Procedures to Protect the Ribāts from the Rivalry of Modern School	No Date
103	<i>Taqlīb Al-Arq Al-Khāshi‘ah fī Al-Dhabb ‘an Minhāj Al-Fi‘ah Al-Mukhbītah Al-Tā’i‘ah</i>	Stirring the Desolate Land: Defending the Way of the Obedient Reverent Group	No Date

104	<i>Sharḥ Bidāyat Al-Hidāyah</i>	A Commentary on “The Beginning of Guidance”	No date
105	<i>Al-Laṭā’if fi Adab Al-‘Awārif</i>	Subtleties from the Spiritual Discipline of the ‘Awārif	No date
106	<i>Al-Finjān fī Bayān ‘Ajā’ib Al-Insān</i>	A Glimpse from the Wonders of the Human Being	No date
107	<i>Siyāḥah fī Dīwan Al-Imām Al-Haddād</i>	An Immersion in the Anthology of Al-Imām Al-Haddād	No date
108	<i>Dirāsah ‘an Ḥassān b. Thābit</i>	A Study on Ḥassān b. Thābit	No date
109	<i>Nafathāt min Al-Shi’r Al-Hadīth</i>	Literary Outpourings from Modern Poetry	No date
110	<i>Al-Fuṣūṣ Al-Thamīnah fī Dhikr Mashāhid Al-Madīnah</i>	Precious Stones: A Poem on the Landmarks of Madinah	No date
111	<i>Al-Manzūmah Al-Rajabiyyah</i>	A Poem on the Month of Rajab	No Date
112	<i>Al-Nafshah Al-Rahmāniyyah fī Al-Khasā’is Al-Sha’bāniyyah</i>	The Divine Breeze on the Merits of the Month of Sha’bān	No date
113	<i>Kashf Al-Aqni ‘ah ‘an Al-Wujūh Al-Ghuthā’iyah Al-Muqanna ‘ah</i>	Removing the Masks of the Faces of Worthlessness	No Date
114	<i>Rasā’il Al-Ifṣāḥ ‘an Sharr ma Ta’tī bihi Al-Riyāḥ</i>	Letters of Disclosure on The Evils Brought by the Wind	No Date
115	<i>Al-Ufuq Al-Dayyiq: Khulāṣah Muftidah li Munāqashāt Hādifah</i>	The Narrow Mind: A Beneficial Summary of Constructive Discussions	No Date
116	<i>Īdah Al-Ma ālim fī Ishtabaha ‘ala Ibn Al-Ālim</i>	Exposition of Matters that Confused Ibn Al-Ālim	No Date
117	<i>Rasā’il Hadramawt (1) (2)</i>	Hadramawt Messages	No Date

118	<i>Tafnīd Al-Aqwāl fī ma Yaṣil ila Al-Amwāt min Thawāb Al-A‘māl</i>	Refuting Arguments on the Rewards Delivered to the Dead	No Date
119	<i>Majmū‘ Al-Khuṭāb Al-Minbariyah</i>	A Collection of Sermons	No Date
120	<i>Jalā‘ Al-Khāṭir fī Rabṭ Sanad Al-Awā‘il bi Al-Awākhīr</i>	Removing Distress: Connecting Early Generations to Late Ones	No Date
121	<i>Al-Thabat Al-Ma‘mūr li Ḥal Al-Mashhūr</i>	The Blessed Collection of the Chains on Al-Mashhūr Family	No Date
122	<i>Rashf Al-Sulāffī Fawā‘id Kalam Al-Habīb ‘Abd Al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf</i>	Tasting The Pure Drink: Benefits of the Lectures of Al-Habīb ‘Abd Al-Qādir Al-Saqqāf	No Date
123	<i>Al-Burhān Al-Ashmal fī Muṣhāhadāt Al-Sayyid Aḥmad Al-Ahdal</i>	The Encompassing Proof: A Travelogue of Sayyid Aḥmad Al-Ahdal	No Date
124	<i>Nadā Al-Azhār fī Tarjamat Al-Habīb ‘Abd Allah Al-Bār</i>	The Dew: A Biography of Al-Habīb ‘Abd Allah Al-Bār	No Date
125	<i>Tahqīq Kitāb Al-Jawhar Al-Shaffāf</i>	Annotation of ‘the Pure Jewel’	No Date
126	<i>Siyāḥah fī Rasā‘il Al-Imām Al-Ghazālī</i>	An Immersion in The Epistle of Al-Ghazālī	No Date
127	<i>Qatr Al-Khuzāma wa Al-Bishām fī Riḥlatī ila Al-Urdun wa Dimashq Al-Shām</i>	Extracting Fragrance: An Account of My Journey to Jordan and Damascus	No Date
128	<i>Rijāl Al-Manābir wa Al-Maqāmāt Ashadd Al-Nās Hājah ila Al-Akhlāq</i>	Those of Pulpits and Positions Are the Neediest for Good Manners	No Date

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