

Islam, Modernity, and the Liminal Space Between

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Between

By

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I dedicate this book with great love and thankfulness to my wife and daughters. Thank you for your incredible patience and encouragement as I became more familiar with my ignorance. I love you very much.

“Ignorance is not just a blank space in a person’s mental map. It has contours and coherence, and for all I know rules of operation as well. So as a corollary to writing about what we know, maybe we should add getting familiar with our ignorance, and the possibilities therein of ruining a good story.”

—Thomas Pynchon

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

As Arab-Muslim states in the Middle East transition from oil to service economies, Middle Eastern governments are adapting Western educational systems to train nationals in science, business, and other disciplines. Such initiatives often attempt to create hybrid educational programs that leverage select aspects of Western educational practice, but retain local religious and cultural values. As hybrid higher education systems emerge from the dynamic process of adaptation in Arab-Muslim contexts, modernist values embedded in the original design of Western higher education may conflict with Arab-Muslim values. In response to the potentially disruptive shift in values, some Arab governments are allowing the development of educational institutions based on traditional Islamic philosophy. The Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture, in Amman, Jordan, is one such institution. It stands unique in the world as an institution committed to teaching traditional Islamic forms of art and architecture through a deeply traditional Islamic educational program.

The study sought to define and understand the role of traditional Islamic philosophy in Jordanian higher education through a vertical case study of the Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture (ITIAA). First, the study attempted to understand the political, cultural, and administrative processes that resulted in the development of a higher education institution based on traditional Islamic philosophy in Jordan. Second, the study describes how traditional Islamic and modernist values surface and interact in the documents, policy, planning, development, curriculum, and class time of ITIAA. Third, the study determined the role of liminality in the Institute, observing how the anthropological function of liminal space facilitates the synthesis of traditional Islamic and modernist values, as liminality assists in creating points of synthesis between value systems. Throughout the research, the study attempted to identify alternatives to modernity that were being proposed through the traditional Islamic philosophical basis of the Institute.

A qualitative research approach was particularly appropriate to investigate the role of traditional Islamic philosophy on values and in

educational processes. As Bartlett concluded, “qualitative approaches offer the epistemological advantage of showing how systems, structures, or processes play out ‘on the ground’” (2009, p. 8). By investigating a wide array of data sources, from Arab policy producers to specific courses at ITIAA, a comprehensive picture of the dynamic of traditional Islamic higher education was created.

The comprehensive approach of a vertical case study reflected the words of Hegel, who noted “The only relatively stable unit of meaning is the whole of a conceptual scheme at a given historical time” (trans. 2009, p.38). As the vertical case study moved from specific to more general units of analysis, the research process moved from individual to local, local to national, and national to transnational. This is consistent with Bartlett’s claim that, “vertical case studies de-center the nation-state from its privileged position as the fundamental entity in comparative research to one of several important units of analysis” (2009, p. 11). The nature of the study, in attempting to determine the function of traditional Islamic educational philosophy, required a comprehensive approach which did not over-emphasize the nation-state. In the vertical case study, transnational values of “modernism” and “traditional Islamic” are viewed in both the locus of individual student lives and through a variety of policy documents, observations, and interviews.

The most general focus of analysis was the dynamic of the League of Arab States interacting with the state of Jordan to leverage transnational organizations’ development efforts. Yin wrote, “once the general definition of the case has been established, other clarifications in the unit of analysis become important” (2003 p. 24). Specific units, to be discussed later, include the League of Arab States, Jordan’s Ministry of Higher Education, the Jordanian Accreditation Commission, a group of traditional Islamic philosophical leaders, and the administration, faculty, and students at ITIAA.

The concept of “liminal” assisted the study by defining a potential role of higher education in synthesizing traditional Islamic and modernist value systems. Liminal space, understood as a space that is outside of normal cultural boundaries (Turner, 2000), acted as a place of synthesis between a thesis and an antithesis. Through policy and document analysis, a student survey, observation and interviews, the study determined ITIAA functions as a liminal space that creates value synthesis, thus filling a critical need in Jordanian society by reducing cultural conflict.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Many Arab states are under great pressure to duplicate the economic growth evident in Western nations. Current events in the Middle East include dramatic power shifts in multiple states, highlighting the demand of Arab citizens for increased levels of economic security and new forms of political voice. As unrest has grown over the past ten years, some Arab governments, such as Jordan, have made significant investments in creating and sustaining new institutions of higher education. The emphasis on educational development has also been encouraged by multi-national organizations, such as the League of Arab States, whose policies flow down through national Ministries of Education, taking form in new institutions of higher education.

As Arab states have developed higher education systems, they have typically looked to models found in the West, attempting to emulate the function of scientific research and economic stimulus found in Western institutions. But in the push to create higher education systems, modernist values inherent in the systems are being inadvertently imported into an Arab-Muslim context, creating new conflicts in Arab states by increasing the contrast between traditional Arab-Muslim values and modernized, Western values. As poor citizens often lack access to higher education, the cultural gap between economic classes is also impacted, as wealthier citizens enroll in modernist educational institutions and become more Western, while poorer citizens utilize local educational options where traditional values are reinforced.

In response to the reality of the Westernization of Arab higher education, some Arab governments are fostering new institutions which focus on traditional Islamic values. While this development is a reaction, the Islamic approach to education may create a liminal space that facilitates the thoughtful engagement of both value systems. Liminal, as a space outside of the normal culture, has been understood in anthropology as a place of transition and transformation. If higher education can act as a liminal space in the context of Arab society, it may be a place that produces a synthesis of values, reflecting the strength of Arab-Muslim history and religion, while also creating paths to embrace aspects of modernity that may be critical to economic development.

To that end, the completed vertical case study examined Arab higher education development and execution as a dynamic environment in which values are engaged. The study also determined whether new efforts to establish traditional Islamic higher education can function as a liminal

space of synthesis by looking for proof of synthesis consistent with the existence of such a space.

The Research questions answered include:

1. What were the philosophical, political, cultural, and administrative elements that resulted in Jordan facilitating the development of a higher education institution such as the Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture?
2. How does traditional Islamic philosophy affect the values that surface and interact in the documents, policy, planning, development, curriculum, and class time of the Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture?
3. What role does liminality play in the relationship between traditional Islamic values and modernist values?

Definition of Key Concepts

The research hinges on four concepts: traditional Islam, modernity, Arab-Muslim, and liminal. The literature review has assessed research regarding the individual concepts, but the success of the study relied on understanding the four concepts in a dynamic relationship. Other concepts, such as policy analysis, are also crucial, but as methods, functioning in the study as a means to investigate.

Throughout the study, the four key concepts will be defined as follows:

Traditional Islam

A specific form of Islam which distinctly embraces the “sacred, the eternal, the immutable truth; the perennial wisdom as well as the continuous application of its immutable principles to various conditions of space and time” (Nasr, 2011, p. 4). “Perennial wisdom” echoes Guenon (2001), pointing toward a metaphysic that connects other traditional, monotheistic religions with traditional Islam. Singer (2009) noted that traditional Islam also embraces the idea of wisdom being tested in reality by a sequence of civilizations over time, making such forms of knowledge tested and proven to be reliable. As will be discussed later, traditional Islamic epistemology is distinct in its ability to utilize both rational and non-rational forms of knowledge.

Modernity

A worldview rooted in values developed during the European “Enlightenment,” characterized by individualism, positivism, secularism, and materialism (Schreiter, 1997). The approach is distinct from “traditional Islam” in many ways, including modernity’s emphasis on the “objective” and the “secular.” Modernity will be understood in explicit terms that inform the study and allow specific elements to be assessed through policy assessment and interviews.

Arab-Muslim

An ethnic, cultural, and linguistic group linked by geographic origin, history, religion, and the Arabic language (Lewis, Mahmoud, Rejwan). The function of “Arab-Muslim” is key to the study, allowing the research to look for specific elements in culture and to assess whether liminal space in higher education is facilitating the synthesis of cultural values.

Liminal

An anthropological concept describing a time and space outside of normal cultural boundaries that facilitates transformation through the synthesis of thesis and anti-thesis (Turner, Hegel, Marx, Horkheimer). The term has evolved over time, and the use of the concept in research has spread from religious rituals to specific space in urban environments, such as the Bastille in Paris. In the study, “liminal” will be a context in which the other key concepts reside, with humans acting as participants in the space defined as higher education at ITIAA.

The concepts have been defined individually, but the study has focused on their dynamic. The relationship between “traditional Islamic” and “modern” is in the adaptive traditional higher education systems, viewed as liminal space. Though dynamic, transient, and temporary in nature, the liminal function was investigated through policy and document analysis, a twenty item student survey, observations of classes and ITIAA student space, and interviews with faculty, staff, and students. The following section on grounded theory methodology defines how the research framework connected literally to the concepts under study, as well as the actual methods of policy assessment and interviewing that link the research plan to reality.

Conceptual Framework

As noted in the following positionality statement, the researcher's approach is informed by critical theory, defined by Rush as "an account of the social forces of domination that takes its theoretical activity to be practically connected to the object of its study" (2004). The researcher recognizes globalization as a social force of domination, and seeks to understand how Western values inherent in globalization practically impact Arab-Muslim values in operation. However, having completed an initial research trip in May, 2011, the researcher concluded that the use of critical theory as a framework for inquiry would be incongruent with the topic of study. Critical theory is the antithesis of traditional Islamic philosophy, in that critical theory is Western, rationalistic, and secular. The theoretical approach to the study would be greatly compromised if critical theory were the framework.

Instead, a grounded theory methodology was used. Schwandt wrote that grounded theory methodology, "is a specific, highly developed, rigorous set of procedures for producing formal, substantive theory of social phenomena" (2007, p. 131). The cross-cultural focus of the study, as well as the exploratory nature, precluded establishing a set theoretical framework at the beginning of the research process. The complexity of the topic required a slow, progressive accumulation of data to be sifted systematically over time.

Schwandt goes on to write that "Experience with data generates insights, hypotheses, and generative questions that are pursued through further data generation" (2007, p. 131). The study followed Schwandt's definition very well. The research proposal was written and defended before the initial research trip. The document was significantly edited before the May trip in light of Dissertation Committee comments and suggestions. During the May research trip, as data were collected through observations and interviews, more editing was done, especially to the research questions and methodology. The researcher communicated with the Committee via email to dialogue about edits. Upon return from Amman and before the second trip in September 2011, significant edits were completed as additional insights were gained from the May trip. Research design edits included the addition of a student survey, a commitment to center the vertical case study on ITIAA, and re-conceptualizing critical theory as part of the researcher's positionality instead of the primary theoretical and methodological approach, which moved to grounded theory methodology.

The Context of the Research

A brief history of Jordan

The region currently known as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is one of oldest continually settled regions of the world (Hallo, 1971, p. 10). Nabatean pottery shards can still be found in Petra, dating back to the 6th century BCE. Jordan has had a tumultuous history, buffeted over time by the Roman, Egyptian, Turkish Ottoman, and British Empires. Since World War Two, Jordan has functioned as a literal buffer zone between Israel to the west and Iraq and Saudi Arabia to the east. With a population of nearly six million, it is one of the fastest growing states in the Arab world. Jordan's vast history is beyond the scope of the study, but the following outline should create a helpful context. Specific items related to education are in italic font (adapted from the chronology in George, 2005).



Fig. 1.1

6th -4th Century BCE Nabateans settled in Jordan.

106 Nabatae, whose capital was Petra, absorbed by Roman Empire.

333 Alexander the Great attacked Jordanian cities as he advanced on Egypt.

662 Jordan was conquered by Arab-Muslims and came under control of the Ummayyad empire.

1037 Seljuk Turks began to rule Jordan.

1250 The Mamlukes, slave soldiers, seized control of the Egyptian Sultanate and ruled until 1517.

1517 Ottoman Turks conquered Jordan.

1880 Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine were part of Syria, under Ottoman rule.

1923 Britain recognized Transjordan, with King Abdullah as its leader.

The entire Jordanian educational system was comprised of twenty-five religious primary and secondary schools.

1938 *13,854 students were in Jordan's educational institutions, with only four government secondary schools enrolling a total of 243 male students (George, 2005, p. 226).*

1946 Transjordan (now Jordan) gained independence from Britain and became a kingdom.

1948 Thousands of Palestinians fled Arab-Israeli fighting and moved to the West Bank and Jordan.

1951 King Abdullah Ibn Hussein assassinated in Jerusalem by a Palestinian who feared the King would sign a peace treaty with Israel (His son, Hussein, was at his side during the attack).

1952 Hussein proclaimed King of Jordan. His cousin and very close friend, Faisal, was King of Iraq.

Total student enrollment in Jordan was 171,000, with 27% female (George, 2005, p. 226).

1957 British troops completed their withdrawal from Jordan.

1958 King Hussein dissolved the Arab Federation of Jordan and Iraq.

1962 *University of Jordan was founded.*

1967 Israel took control of Jerusalem and the West Bank during the Six-Day War.

1970 Major fighting broke out between Jordanian government forces and Palestinian guerrillas (PLO). The "Black September" crises left 2,000 people dead in 13 days of fighting.

1974 King Hussein recognized the PLO as sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

1976 *Yarmouk University was founded.*

1981 *Mu'tah University was founded.*

1982 *Jordanian Council of Higher Education was established to oversee the development of higher education.*

1985 *The Council became the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.*

1986 Jordan's government shut down all offices of al-Fatah, the mainstream group in the divided Palestine Liberation Organization. *University of Science and Technology founded.*

1987 *A national conference on educational reform was held in Amman, producing a ten-year reform plan, which was started in 1988.*

1988 King Hussein publicly supported the Palestinian uprising (Intifada) against Israeli rule.

1992 *Hashemite University was founded.*

1993 *Al al-Bayt University was founded.*

1994 Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel, ending a 46-year official state of war. Bill Clinton attended the ceremonies.

1996 *National Board of Examinations was established, overseeing "General Secondary Education Certificate Examinations."*

1997 Most political parties boycotted the Parliamentary poll in November.

Al-Balqu Applied University was founded, including the Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture.

1999 King Hussein died on February 7th. More than 50 heads of state attended his funeral. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Abdullah.

Hussein Bin Talal University was founded.

2003 The first parliamentary elections under King Abdullah II were held. Allies of the King won more than half of the seats.

61% of Jordan's total population was below the age of twenty-five (George, 2005, p. 226).

German-Jordanian University was founded.

A total of 5,376 public schools have been opened, enrolling 1.5 million students, 49% female (George, 2005, p. 226).

2007 The first local elections since 1999 were held. The Islamist Action Front, the main opposition party, withdrew after accusing the government of vote-rigging.

Tafila Technical University and the World Islamic Science and Education University were founded.

The Current Jordanian System of Education

Although the region of Jordan has a profoundly long history, its existence as a state is relatively recent, as is state-sponsored education in Jordan.

Prior to British colonial rule in the 1920s, education took place in independent Madrasahs connected to local Mosques, focusing on the study of the Qur'an, Arabic, and Islamic traditional teaching. The initial step of developing a consistent primary and secondary school system began in earnest after World War Two. In 1948, the Jordanian Ministry of Education took over the responsibility of regulating all educational matters (Bataineh, p. 17). The first public university, The University of Jordan, was launched in 1962. The early higher education institutions in Jordan were focused primarily on producing teachers for a rapidly growing public school system (Abu-El-Haija, p. 1). By 1982, as the public school system generated growing numbers of graduates, "it became apparent that a major effort was needed to develop and improve" a system of higher education large enough to provide service to the potential student body (Masri, 1997, p. 1). But before detailing the development of Jordanian higher education, it may be helpful to briefly review the primary and secondary school systems.

The Jordanian system of education, modeled on the British system, is clearly explained on the websites of UNESCO (2011) and Jordan's Ministry of Education (2011). Currently, the system requires all children from the age of six to enroll in a free, ten-year program of compulsory primary education. While some students attend pre-school before entering primary school, pre-school education is not provided by the Government and must be paid for by parents. According to the UNESCO Center for Statistics, in 2008, thirty-six percent of children of age five were enrolled in pre-school programs in Jordan. UNESCO also reports that ninety percent of eligible girls and eighty nine percent of eligible boys were enrolled in a primary school program in 2008.

After successful completion of primary school, students are encouraged to attend secondary school for two years. Secondary schools, free but not compulsory, require students to choose between two tracks, based on their interests and their assessed academic potentials. While both tracks have an academic core, one is considered academic and the other vocational. Track two is called "Applied Vocational" and requires more vocational courses, a less involved academic core, and an intensive apprenticeship program. It is important to note that the second track is not overseen by the Ministry of Education, but by the Ministry of Labor, which is responsible to develop programs and recruit students in response to vocational needs in Jordan. According to UNESCO, eighty four percent of eligible girls and eighty percent of eligible boys were enrolled in secondary school in 2008.

Upon successful completion of the Secondary level, students from track one are awarded the “Tawjihi,” which is a Secondary Education Certificate. Students from the Applied Vocational track are awarded a graduation certificate that is understood to be more specific to their vocational skill. Track two students are typically finished with school upon graduation and enter the labor force.

Track one students are given another option to continue in school or enter the workforce. Their educational options include community colleges, vocational schools, or universities, all offered through public or private institutions. UNESCO reported that forty-one percent of eligible students decided to stay in an educational program in 2008.

As noted earlier, the post-secondary system of higher education has responded to the growing student population. In 1982, the Jordanian Council of Higher Education was formed, bringing all higher education policy and funding decisions under a single body. In September of 1987, a national conference on education was held in Amman, under the auspices of the Jordanian Ministry of Education. A ten year development plan was agreed upon, with implementation beginning in 1988. Masri, the Minister of Education at the time, wrote that the plan was comprehensive, “including curriculum and textbook development, educational technology, teacher education, school buildings, pre-school education, vocational education, evaluation and examinations, legislation, educational management, educational research, and non-formal education” (1997, p. 1). For the first time, Jordanian education was being planned and financed in a comprehensive manner, from pre-school to graduate school.

The comprehensive plan also needed an undergirding philosophy. Bataineh, in his historical study of higher education in Jordan, wrote that the Jordanian culture is centered on the “Qur’an and word from the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, the educational system is centered on both” (2008, p. 31). He went on to note the Jordanian Education Act, which was adopted by the Jordanian government in 1987 and legally binds public educational programs at all levels to specific principles of education.

The first point of the Act ties Jordanian education to the principles of the “Great Arab Revolt,” which refers to the Sharif Hussein led rebellion against the Ottoman Empire in 1914 (Salibi, 1993, p. 27). The reference is to the need for Arabs to reach across territorial boundaries created by occupying powers and work toward a unified Arab nation. In reference to the revolt, Kostiner wrote “its ideology focused on establishing a kingdom, or caliphate, which would encompass most of the Arab territories; molding their Arab inhabitants into one cohesive nation” (1995, p. 47). The second

point reflects values of Islam and Arabic culture. The third point is a more generally “humanist” set of principles, but considered Islamic. The fourth connects to both nationalist and Islamic values. The four points are:

“1. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a hereditary constitutional monarchy and adheres to the principles of the Great Arab Revolt to achieve the unity of the Arab Nation as a basic necessity for its national being and future.

2. Faith in God, belief in Arab national values, adherence to the Islamic Arabic culture, and respect for thought, science, and morals are integrated to shape an effective citizen and to create national consciousness and unity.

3. The goal is to provide education for all citizens, irrespective of race, sex, or religion. An additional goal is to enhance the country’s economic and social development and the individual’s needs and wishes. These are basic factors

for the survival of the society and its individuals.

4. The general goals and objectives of education focus on preparation of the citizen who believes in God; adheres to the spirit of love for the homeland and the nation; has strong commitment to the love of truth, values, social responsibilities, and respect for law and order. The goals also emphasize harmonious growth of personality (physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and spiritually) and development of the potentialities to cope with the contemporary changes and to contribute positively to the human civilization and its momentum” (MOE, 1987, p.9).

It is important to note that under Minister of Education Masri, education in Jordan formally began to develop a new approach. “Gone are the days when education was considered exclusively a public service. Education is looked upon as an investment that needs to be subjected to socio-economic feasibility criteria that takes into consideration priorities, cost-benefit indicators, efficiencies, and selection from among various options and solutions” (1997, p. 2). Values began to shift in Jordan as economic pressures increased and employment rates did not. George noted that “twenty-seven percent of officially unemployed Jordanians in 2002 had completed secondary school or held Intermediate diplomas from community colleges” (2005, p. 236). While it was clear that more students were obtaining an education in Jordan, the job market was not able to absorb them. The pressure of providing jobs contributed to the shift of education being viewed as a tool of economic development.

The vision of Jordanian higher education as a tool of economic development is evident in the flurry of new institutions launched by the government since 1990. Seven new universities have been opened, currently enrolling nearly ninety-thousand students. As noted in the table

below, most of the institutions have a very strong focus on science and engineering. George reflected the statement of Minister of Education Masri, when he noted “the development of specialized science and technology universities reflects a longstanding official desire for educational programmes to respond to the needs of society and the economy” (2005, p. 229). Education became directly linked to economic development. As such, a balancing act began in maintaining core Arab-Muslim values with the need to produce engineers trained in secular modernist programs.

As Jordan succeeded in developing a strong system of research-based universities modeled on Western institutions, the profile of Islamic fundamentalism was increasing throughout the region. Bataineh noted that “by the 1990s, the Islamists’ role in education became proactive” (2008, p. 58). The Jordanian government responded by investing significantly in Al al-Bayt University, whose president, in an interview with George, stated “Al al-Bayt has a special mission, to teach students academic subjects; and to create Islamic moderation, Islamic tolerance” (p. 229). George believes that “Al al-Bayt was part of Jordan’s answer to the rising regional tide of Islamic fundamentalism” (2005, p. 229). Located in the northeastern section of the country, just south of Yemen and between Amman and the Iraqi border, Al al-Bayt is one of the first attempt by the Jordanian government to balance its approach in developing an essentially Western educational system.

The most recent addition to the range of Jordanian Universities is the World Islamic Science and Education University (WISE), founded in 2009. Comprised of seven colleges, the University teaches current and ancient subjects in the context of an institution based on traditional Islamic educational philosophy. The University’s mission includes to “be a beacon for Islamic civilization, research and Islamic thought.” The institution is founded on the notion that science is inherently Islamic, as Islamic culture led the world in scientific development for centuries. The primary focus of the study, the Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture, is housed within WISE. The researcher spent significant time and energy at the Institute, as it is a unique example of Islam engaging modernism on Islam’s own terms. The following table provides a listing of current Jordanian public universities:

Institution/year founded	Location	Focus of Mission	Student Population	Web Site
University of Jordan 1962	Amman, Jordan	Comprehensive Research University	37,000 Ugrad: 30,000 Grad: 7,000	http://www.ju.edu.jo/
Yarmouk University 1976	Irbid, Jordan	Comprehensive Research University	30,000 Ugrad: n/a Grad: n/a	http://www.yu.edu.jo/
Mu'tah University 1982	Karak, Jordan	Military focus, then expanded to include civilians.	17,000 Ugrad: n/a Grad: n/a	http://www.mutah.edu.jo/
University of Science and Technology, Jordan 1986	Irbid, Jordan	Engineering and medicine	21,559 Ugrad: n/a Grad: n/a	http://www.just.edu.jo/
Hashemite University 1992	Blue, Jordan	Comprehensive, mostly science and education	17,800 Ugrad: n/a Grad: n/a	Http://www.hu.edu.jo/
Al-Bayt University 1993	Al-Mafraq, Jordan	Science, Islamics	4,000 Ugrad: Grad:	Http://www.aabu.edu.jo/
Al-Balqa Applied University 1997	Salt, Jordan	Undergraduate vocational and technical	32,000 Bachelors: 22,000 Other: 10,000	Http://www.bau.edu.jo/

Hussein Bin Talal University 1999	Maan, Jordan	Undergraduate vocational and technical	47,000 Bachelors: 32,000 Other: 15,000	Http://www.ahu.edu.jo/
German-Jordanian University 2005	Oman	Science/research in partnership with German Government	2,130 Ugrad: Grad:	http://www.gju.edu.jo
Tafila Technical University 2009	Tafila, Jordan	Undergraduate vocational and technical	3,500 Bachelors: Other:	http://www.ftu.edu.jo/
World Islamic Science and Education University 2009	Amman, Jordan	Islamics, Arab-Muslim arts and culture, science	Not currently published.	http://www.wise.edu.jo/

Table 1.1

Contributions

It is hoped that the study will contribute in several ways:

Arab-Muslim Culture: As noted previously, the researcher valued protecting and preserving Arab-Muslim culture. It is hoped that the research will assist in developing a clearer understanding of how higher education may be used in the Middle East, while protecting, enhancing, and expanding Arab-Muslim values.

A clearer understanding of the effects of modernism in Arab higher education: Arab-Muslim states face significant pressure to “catch up” to Western developmental standards. Rapid adoption of Western higher education systems could assist Arab-Muslim states in achieving Western standards of economic success, but at the expense of reducing Arab-Muslim values. The vertical case study, with a strong aspect of policy assessment, may assist policy makers in understanding the value impact of pro-development policy via higher education. In light of recent developments in the Middle East, a fresh look at the role of Arab higher education as a liminal space, conducive to synthesis, may be very helpful to Arab leaders, policy makers, and higher education administrators.

Arab-Muslim faculty and students: As the study eventually focused on courses, faculty members, and students of ITIAA, it is hoped that data gleaned will provide insight to best practice regarding the support of Arab-Muslim values in the face of globalization. It is anticipated that research will be expanded, eventually being conducted in a variety of Jordanian institutions. A comparative element could assist faculty and students in understanding difference in approach and outcomes.

The study may assist in the understanding of higher education as a liminal space. Liminal spaces, which Smith noted are “symbolic aspects of space/place long prefigured by cultural anthropologists working in the Durkheimian model” (1999), may be an aspect of higher education that could be used to combat the forces of globalization. “Liminal spaces provide an alternative point of mediation between the sacred and the profane. Liminal spaces, like sacred and profane spaces, are seen as being outside of everyday place – they are a type of special place where everyday rules of life are seen as being held in abeyance” (Smith, p. 16). The study views a Jordanian institution of higher education as a liminal space (between the sacredness of the mosque and the profaneness of the global marketplace), where Arab-Muslims reflect and decide their own understanding of the dilemmas caused by globalization in a Arab-Muslim context. The concept of liminality as a space of synthesis allowed the study to look for specifics in policy and practice. Evidence of synthesis in

the lives of students and faculty can be identified and may assist policy makers and administrators in crafting higher education space as intentionally liminal and helpful in synthesizing the value systems that are present in the Middle East.

Summary

The completed vertical case study provides a vivid picture of the dynamic of traditional Islamic philosophy engaging with modernism, in the context of Jordanian higher education. The use of grounded theory methodology paints a vivid picture of values interacting in higher education policy and planning. The research also creates a corresponding “thick” description of philosophy and values in action through a brief survey and a series of interviews and observations of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. Using the anthropological concept of liminal space, the study has assessed the Institute of Traditional Islamic Art and Architecture’s ability to function as a space of value synthesis.

It is hoped that the completed research will be the first of other qualitative studies of higher education in Muslim contexts by the researcher. Traditional Islamic higher education is a vital area of inquiry with global significance. Recent events in the Middle East point directly to the need for a better understanding of the dialogue between Arab-Muslim values and modernity. It is anticipated that the study will facilitate the understanding of the potential for traditional Islamic higher education to function as a liminal space, where thoughtful synthesis can take place, contributing to the stability and strength of Arab culture and community.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED RESEARCH

The literature review confirmed that, while there has been significant research on the issues of the Arab-Muslim dialogue with modernity, the function and role of traditional Islamic philosophy in higher education has not been deeply explored. The following review of the literature represents a focused attempt to engage the dialogue that is already occurring, while assisting the study in contributing to the conversation in the future.

The review begins with a look at Islam's engagement with modernity, a key issue in the research, first through a philosophical overview of the primary viewpoints regarding the issue, and then through a broader review of a variety of issues that may be considered subsets of the issue. A review of the literature on the concept of liminality, especially as it is defined within the sphere of anthropology reveals the evolution of its application to a wide variety of areas, but also demonstrates its application to Arab culture and Arab higher education. The literature review on Arab higher education was deeply informative and helpful in framing the research. While there have been many excellent studies completed, few have taken a qualitative approach, and fewer still have utilized interviews and observations. The final section of the literature review, focused on policy analysis, was an attempt to review the wide topic of such analysis and understand its specific viability for the study.

Islam and Modernity

"In the sixteenth century of our era, a visitor from Mars might well have supposed that the human world was on the verge of becoming Muslim. He would have based his judgment partly on the strategic and political advantages of Muslims, but partly also on the vitality of their general culture"

(Hodgson, 1993, p. 97).

Islam and modernity have had a very complicated relationship, one that has been characterized through a wide range of opinions. Literature in this

area moves from the polarizing Western view of Bernard Lewis, with his telling title “What Went Wrong?” to the more nuanced perspective of such scholars as Fazlur Rahman (Islam and Modernity) and Tariq Ramadan, focusing on his most recent publication, “Radical Reform.” It also encompasses more traditional Islamic scholarship, specifically the leading work of Seyyed Hussein Nasr, currently on the Faculty of George Washington University.

Modernity

Most Western definitions of modernism begin by pointing backward, toward modernism’s emergence in Europe’s eighteenth century “Enlightenment.” Over time, the ideas that emerged through scientific method and industrial development evolved into values that define the modern era. Schwandt (2007) provided four specific doctrines formed during the enlightenment that later characterized modernism:

“The four central doctrines that form the core of the enlightenment tradition: 1) The notion of a rational, autonomous subject, a self that has an essential human nature; 2) the notion of foundationalist epistemology; 3) the notion of reason as a universal, a priori capacity of individuals; 4) the belief in social and moral progress through the rational application of social scientific theories to the arts and social institutions (law, family, education, etc.)” (p. 325).

Gradually, the doctrines of rationality, individualism, universality, and progress would become primary, distinguishing values of Western culture.

Universality is also indicative of modernity’s tendency toward metanarratives, the modern need to find or create an overarching theory that ties a wide array of concepts and ideas together in an escalating fashion. Eisenstandt (1966) called this persistent movement the “consensual mass tendencies of modern societies” (p. 15). Reflective of mass culture in general, “rooted in the growing impingement of broader strata on the center, in their demands to participate in the sacred symbols of society and their formulation” (Ibid, p. 15) as they displace traditional values and the symbols that characterized them. Universality is reflected in modernism’s tendency toward metanarratives, displacing the individual, but providing reassuring coherence to the fragmentation of rationality. Mikino (1996) saw metanarrative orientations reflected in a linear view of development.

Mikino (1996) assessed modernism by observing its presence in culture. She noted “Modernists are guided by the belief in rationality and

the linear progress of science and technology. Because the modernist perception is that science offers neutral solutions to society's problems" (p. 28). In modern culture, science is expected to always rise to the occasion when problems arise. The solution to any issue is to become more modern, as society responds by rationally applying science and technology to every issue, assured that any dilemma can be resolved. Mikino explained, "Modernists believe . . . national development is achieved, therefore, by becoming more modern. This concept of modern development, or 'modernization' theory, is based on the principles of rationality and progress that the path to a nation's social and economic improvement is found through reliance on technological advancement and 'modernization'" (p. 29). Modern societies may become trapped in the "modernity loop," the conviction that the way out of the problems created by modernity is to become more modern. To some the movement was seen as an upward spiral of development, to others a downward spin into destruction.

"Development spiral" thinking is rooted in the concept of secular evolution, another foundational tenet in modernism. Originally applied as a theory of origins, evolution was quickly applied to other aspects of culture and development. Rapport (2000) noted that "Framed through the social evolutionary thought linked to Western imperialism, culture in the singular assumed a universal scale of progress and the idea that as civilizations developed through time, so too did humankind become more creative and more rational, that is, people's capacity for culture increased. The growth of culture and rationality were thought to belong to the same process" (p. 92). In modernistic thought, culture itself became secular and evolving.

The concept of an evolving culture, combined with scientific development, facilitated an imperialistic Western perspective. Essentially, Western moderns understood their culture to be more highly evolved and superior to other traditional cultures. Labels, such as "third world" and "un-developed" were used to categorize traditional societies. Religion, carefully categorized in the secular West, was seen as the primary force "holding back" cultures from evolving upward.

As modernism developed, it became increasingly antithetical to Arab-Muslim values. As Nasr (2011) wrote, "For anyone who understood the essence of modernism based on and originating in the secularizing and humanistic tendencies of the European Renaissance, it was easy to detect the confrontation that was already taking place between traditional and modern elements in the Islamic world" (p. 2). The idea of "secular evolution" had no place in an Islamic society. Scientific development,