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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A STUDY OF TAJDĪD PARADIGMS OF SAYYID
ABŪ AL-A‘LĀ MAWDŪDĪ AND ISRAR AHMAD

BY

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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation investigates the revivalist thought of two revivalist scholars from the Indo-Pak Subcontinent, namely, Abū al-A‘lā Mawdudi and the contemporary Israr Ahmad. The dissertation first builds an analytical framework to study *tajdīd* as a paradigmatic activity, where paradigms are presented as identity creators, object of intellectual critique, and promotional devices. The dissertation traverses the history of revivalist paradigms in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent identifying their common themes and novelties.

The dissertation explicates the thought of Mawlānā Mawdudi as the first most detailed and systematic revivalist paradigm in the Subcontinent. Mawdudi’s paradigm preponderated on a rationalistic exposition of Islam as a system. For this reason, the politico-socio-economic thought of Islam receives ample attention in this paradigm. The strong point of Mawdudi’s paradigm is its ethical imperative, which forms the bedrock of its collective system. This paradigm popularized the idea of Islam as a complete way of life, its political imperative, and concepts such as theo-democracy.

The dissertation then focuses on Israr Ahmad, who was initially nurtured by Mawdudi’s Movement and went on to join Jamā‘at-i Islāmī. Ahmad later parted ways with Mawdudi and his Organization and, in due time, established his own Organization, the Tanzīm-i Islāmī. Ahmad criticized Mawdudi and the Jamā‘at for subverting their original revolutionary ideology and methodology, and deteriorating into a nationalist movement. He also identified Mawdudi’s Paradigm as suffering from an inherent weakness in understanding the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of Islam.

In the course of time, Israr Ahmad advanced his own Revivalist Paradigm designed to apply correctives to the revivalist thought and bring it closer to the ethos of Islam. Ahmad’s Paradigm revolves around upon five components: (1) *Ḥikmat al-Īmān* (the philosophy or wisdom of *īmān*), (2) a Framework of Religious Obligations, (3) the Collective Order of Islam, (4) the Prophetic Methodology of Revolution, and (5) a call for a Return to the Qur’ān Movement.

ملخص البحث

(4) (3) (2) (1) :
" " (5)

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Masters of Arts (Islamic Thought)

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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**A STUDY OF TAJDĪD PARADIGMS OF
ABŪ AL-A‘LĀ MAWDUDI AND ISRAR AHMAD**

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Dedicated to Dr. Israr Ahmad, my mentor and inspiration,
who gave me *ḥikmat al-īmān* and the dream of *Renaissance*.

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All praise is for Allah; the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Possessor and Bestower of all Knowledge; “Who has guided us to this, and never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allah had guided us.” Peace and Blessings of Allah^{SWT} upon the last Prophet, Muhammad^{SAW} ibn ‘Abdullah—the perfect model for humanity—who delivered to humanity *the Guidance (al-hudā)*.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The title of the our study contains two locutions in need of clarification and elaboration, viz., *paradigm* and *tajdīd*. Our particular conceptions of these two terms shall set the framework for the our study.

1.1 PARADIGMATIC ACTIVITY

The concept of paradigm and paradigmatic activity was popularized by Thomas Kuhn in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and although Kuhn's thesis on paradigms is preponderant in our use of this concept, nonetheless, we treat the term in a less stricter sense. By a paradigm, we mean those assumptions, beliefs, practices, and predilections that form and condition the worldview of individuals, schools of thought, or movements. At an individual level, no human being is free from an idiosyncratic paradigm. Individual paradigms also reflect, in part, the collective paradigms of their society. The collective paradigms may be religious systems or philosophical ones. To illustrate, we take the example of Islam. Islam provides, what we may call, a Meta-Paradigm, for it is based on certain Meta-Principles that constitute its distinct identity among other Meta-Paradigms (Christianity, Judaism, Logical Positivism, etc.). This Meta-Paradigm is further composed of Constituent Paradigms, each of which, while maintaining its loyalty to the Meta-Paradigm, competes against other paradigms to offer the best explanation or interpretation of the Meta-Paradigm. Within the Meta-Paradigm of Islam, there exist the Constituent Paradigms of *Kalām*, *Falsafah*, *Taşawwuf*, and *Fiqh*, all of which have been in mutual

competition to offer the best explanation of the Meta-Paradigm, and, at times, some priding themselves as *the only valid interpretation* of the Meta-Paradigm. The Constituent Paradigms are further divided into Sub-Paradigms that are also in mutual competition to best explain the Constituent Paradigms and Meta-Paradigm. Thus, we find the Ash'ārites, Mu'tazilites, and Māturīdīs in mutual competition to be the only true Sub-Paradigm of *Kalām* and offer the only valid interpretation of Islam; the competition among Muslim Peripatetics and Illuminationists is another case in point. The Constituent Paradigms and Sub-Paradigms are often involved in a cyclical process of producing thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis: a process necessary for any civilization in order to develop intellectually and advance materially.

Paradigmatic intellectual activity, we now understand, is inescapable. Normally speaking, paradigms, especially on an individual level, are implicit, unconscious realities hidden from our consciousness. However, once made explicit and popularized, paradigms serve several purposes; we attend to three of them. First, a paradigm is an identity creator; that is, it serves as the basis for a distinct identity by constructing boundaries, fortifying and detailing its unique aspects, singling out the important and relevant, and identifying its opponents. Second, an explicit paradigm becomes an object of scrutiny and critique, paving the way for more evolved paradigms to emerge. Third, a paradigm serves as a promotional device, a *da'wah* tool; for, by presenting a paradigm in an externalized form, it is offered as a unique and true picture of the Meta-Paradigm and serves to attract adherents.

1.1a Formation of Traditions

At the heart of the Meta-Paradigm of Islam persist Universal Objectives (*maqāṣid*) and Principles (*uṣūl*¹)—which we called Meta Principles above—related to law, philosophy, metaphysics, theology, morality, ethics, politics, economics, society, and so on; preserved in the two Sources of the Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. We shall refer to the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* together as the Revealed Tradition of Islam—Refer to Table 1.1 on the following page. The qualification of *Universal* means that these Objectives and Principles are (a) universal to all paradigms within Islam; (b) that they ought not to be subjected to historical change; and (c) that being of a general nature, they admit varying applications in different contexts. Synonymous with this concept of universality are the following terms: *eternal*, *permanent*, and *meta*. Among the Universal Objectives, for instance, we note *tawḥīd* (“unification” of all life under one set of rules), ‘*adl* (justice), and achievement of peace at the individual and collective levels. As instances of Universal Principles, we cite *tawḥīd* (as doctrine), the pillar of *īmān*, the Absolute Sovereignty and the Ownership of God, prohibition of *ribā*, and circulation of wealth in society. Together the Objectives and Principles constitute the animating spirit of the Islamic Meta-Paradigm. The Qur’ān captures the idea of these Objectives and Principles in the locution *al-dīn*, representing the elements of Islam common to all the Prophets and the Divine Books.

Eternal as the Objectives and Principles may be, we have to remember that religion emerges at a particular juncture in history; in a context of a society with its own peculiarities, culture, and problems. Religion, therefore, must confront history.

¹ Mawlānā Mawdudī calls them *uṣūl kulliyah* in *Tajdīd-o iḥyā’-i dīn* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 36th edn., 2004), 38; *al-‘ilm* and *‘ilm kullī* in *Islāmī tehdhīb kay uṣūl-o mabādī* (Dehli: Markazī Maktabah-i Islāmī, 1987), 148.

Table 1.1
Planes “above” an agent of *tajdīd*

Revealed Tradition (Universal Objectives & Principles)
Traditional Plane (Constituent and Sub Paradigms)
Contemporary Context

During his lifetime, a prophet is the ultimate agent confronting history on the behalf of his community. The being of a prophet is marked by a consummate intellectual, spiritual, and practical unity; for he carries in his being all the various branches of religious knowledge in an undifferentiated mode; a seed with a potential of actualizing into a full-fledged tree. After the departure of a prophet, the task of confronting history falls to his followers, none of whom is characterized by his consummate unity. History, meanwhile, marches on and the followers must forever confront it. The followers, however, do not form a monolithic entity; each follower, therefore, must confront the historical forces himself as an individual.

Every individual is a child of his age. He is born in a historical context exhibiting a panoply of protean paradigms, an “order of ideas”, a cultural milieu shaping the collective-consciousness of his environment. On a personal note, the individual’s upbringing and his educational background among other things define the boundaries of his intellectual horizons. Subjectively, his temperament plays a permanent part in predisposing his intellectual predilections—so emphasized by Shāh

Waliyy Allāh .² The subjective dimension is primarily responsible for explaining a perpetual clash of two archetypal intellectual temperaments basic to humanity,³ present in Islam under the appellations of *‘aql* (connoting “reason”, and denoting rational interpretation) and *naql* (connoting “transmission”, and denoting non-interpretive reception and transmission of received paradigm). The archetype exhibiting *‘aql* tends to be *predominantly* interpretive/rational, dynamic, positive, forward-looking, open to change, and venturesome; while the temperament marked by *naql* tends to be *primarily* literalist, rigid, negative, backward-looking, impervious to change, and defensive. These two sets of adjectives, of course, exhibit themselves in different individuals in varying proportions; the two archetypal temperaments are a matter of preponderance of one set of qualities over another. We see the two archetypes as a complementary pair of forces (in the Newtonian sense); *‘aql* symbolizing the forward push, while *naql* representing the opposite pull of friction. What is to be emphasized is that most intellectual currents are located between these two extremes.

Superimposed on these intellectual temperaments are the emotional or psychological temperaments. A person characterized by a distaste of abstract thought, a choleric temper, and an impatience for historical scrutiny will certainly propose a solution starkly different than the one depicting a penchant for philosophical learning and a knack for scholarly scrutiny. The Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) himself alluded to the significance of different temperaments when he identified Abū Bakr (R.A.) as manifesting the archetypal temperament of Ibrāhīm^{AS}, and ‘Umar (R.A.) as

² Shāh Waliyy Allāh was emphatic and keen on host of such historical and idiosyncratic factors conditioning the thought of an age, and different interpretations among scholars even in the same age; see Ahmad Dallal, “The origins and objectives of Islamic revivalist thought, 1750—1850”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 113, no. 3 (1993): 348.

³ This discourse evokes Kuhn’s discussion on the psychology of the scientist. As the processes in one mind are same as that of another, Kuhn’s discussion finds resonance with our discourse.

manifesting the archetypal temperament of Mūsā^{AS}. All external factors being common, how a Ḥamzah (R.A.), for instance, deals in a given situation is not the same as an Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī (R.A.), and what counts most for their differences are their emotional temperaments.⁴ Thus explained, the objective and subjective factors are the concomitant lenses coloring (or discoloring) and conditioning the individual's paradigm.

As mentioned, the Meta-Paradigm of Islam has inspired, throughout history, various interpretations in the form of paradigms, some of which transform into a *traditions*. By tradition we intend a paradigm within Islam that enjoys or has enjoyed in the past wide following and/or endures over successive generations. In relation to these paradigms, three observations pertinent to our discourse suggest themselves: (a) *traditions or paradigms tend to be synthetic*, (b) *are historically conditioned*, and (c) *are evolving entities*. Traditions tend to be *synthetic* because the founders of traditions absorb different streams of thought from their environment—indigenous and foreign. The different streams of thought are products of history *conditioning* the outlook of the founder of a tradition; therefore, traditions are *historically conditioned*.⁵ By *historical* we mean a *relative interpretation* subsumed under the Meta-Paradigm of Islam; synonymous with *historical*, we employ the terms *contextual*, *relative*, *temporal* and *particular*. Traditions *evolve* either through the expansion of existing traditions, or through the emergence of new ones. The first dominantly accepted *Kalām* Tradition, that of al-Ash'arī, achieved a *synthesis* of the theological doctrine of Imām Ḥanbal and the methodology of the Mu'tazilites. The particular nuances of

⁴ The conflict between al-Ash'arī and the two Jubbāis, and Shihābuddīn Suhrawardī and Ibn Sīna are further cases in point.

⁵ In describing the relationship among Islam, society, and change, Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi corroborates with our assertion: "The traditionalist thesis is historically conditioned understanding by Muslims of the teachings of the Quran and Sunna"; see, Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, "Islam, society, and change", in *Voices of resurgent Islam*, edited by John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 240.

Ash‘arite Theology would never have arisen had the Mu‘tazilites furnished satisfactory responses to al-Ash‘arī’s queries. While the Mu‘tazilites themselves would not have arisen had philosophy not infiltrated among the Muslims. Paradigms, therefore, are *historically conditioned*. Furthermore, Maturidī’s Sub-paradigm represents an *evolution* in the Constituent Paradigm of *Kalām*; Sirhindī and Shāh Waliyy advanced Sub-paradigms within the Constituent Paradigm of Theosophy. Note that the mentioned scholars did not abrogate the preceding interpretations—intentions and claims of the individual scholars and their schools notwithstanding—but founded parallel paradigms, accepted as valid by the general Muslim Community. What makes all these traditions valid is that they are anchored in the Revealed Tradition of Islam, from which the multiple traditions derive their legitimacy. In philosophical parlance, we may say that the unity of the Revealed Tradition in Islam gives birth to a multiplicity of paradigms, each animated by the spirit of Islam’s Universal Principles and Objectives. Having thus understood the dynamics of paradigmatic activity, we now turn to the dynamics involved in the phenomenon of *tajdīd*.

1.2 THE PROCESS OF TAJDĪD

The idea of *tajdīd* and *iḥyā’* have their roots in the *ḥadīths* of the Prophet Muḥammad (P.B.U.H.). The oft-quoted *ḥadīth* of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) on *tajdīd* informs us: “Allāh will send to this *ummah* at the head of each century those who will renew (*yujaddidu*) its faith for it.”⁶ Another *ḥadīth* narrates, “...the one who **revives** (*aḥyā*) a practice (*sunnatan*) from one of my practices (*min sunnatī*) **that had died** (*qad*

⁶ (Abū Dawūd, *Sunan Abī Dawūd*:3740) in *Mawsū‘at al-ḥadīth al-sharīf* [Computer Program] (n.l.: Al-Barāmij al-Islāmiyah al-Duwaliyah, 2000).

umītat) after me, then for him there is reward in similitude to the one who acts upon it, without any decrease in the reward of either of them...” [emphasis added].⁷

The first *ḥadīth* above identifies *tajdīd* as a recurring phenomenon, and the person(s) involved in this process is called a *mujaddid*(s). The second quoted *ḥadīth* mentions the word *iḥyā’*, which means “to bring to life”. Inherent in the terms *tajdīd* and *iḥyā’* is an implication of something lost, dead, or forgotten; *mujaddid* engages in *tajdīd* or *iḥyā’* to revive, re-discover, and remind of that which is no more, or does not remain in its totality. The Qur’ān recalls this same idea in terms of what we may call the *nisyān-tadhkīr* complex of reciprocity. Each prophet, according to the Qur’ān, rose to remind (*tadhkīr*) his people of those universal truths they had forgotten (*nisyān*).⁸ In this sense, every Prophet was a *mujaddid* who arose to revive the Universal teachings of Islam in his Contemporary Context.

The *Mujaddid*, needless to say, does not just come and go in a flash; he engages in a time-consuming project. *Tajdīd*, we then conclude, is a recurring process that presupposes a loss or death, an agent initiating a process of revival or rediscovery, and the ensuing process. Three related questions now immediately confront us: what is *the thing lost* or dead? Who is the *agent* of rediscovery or revival? And what is the *process* of revival?

1.2a The Dynamics of the Lost, the Process, and the Agent

The march of history necessitates change; in fact, history *is* change and *changing*, and constantly confronts religion. In face of this confrontation, religion has two choices: either it absorbs change, or change will absorb it. As long as religion absorbs change in a positive sense, without undermining its Universal Principles, it endures as a

⁷ (al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*: 2601) in *Mawsū‘at*; *ḥadīth* is *ḥasan*.

⁸ Qur’ān, *al-A‘rāf*: 44, *al-Tawbah*: 165.

vibrant entity carrying its begotten cultures and civilizations forward. However, in the course of history, as changes—guised in the form of problems of all sorts—accumulate, existing traditions lose their intellectual flexibility, become rigid, refuse to absorb change; as a result, fail to solve pressing problems. A crisis develops, threatening to collapse the respective civilizations and cultures from within. At this juncture, traditions lose their vitality, their flexibility, their attitudes towards change and history; above all, they lose the ability to distinguish between the permanently Islamic and the relatively Muslim of their inherited past.⁹ They refuse to acknowledge, on the one hand, the historicity of their own genesis; they forget, on the other hand, that the Universal Principles, re-appropriated from the Revealed Tradition, can be projected onto history, breathing fresh life into the present by the touch of the Universal aspect of the past. We gauge then that the thing lost, which *tajdīd* seeks to rediscover, is the *spirit* of Islam contained in the Universal Principles and Objectives and its relevance in changing history.

It is at the time of “acute social crises”¹⁰ that an agent of *tajdīd* rises to the occasion.¹¹ The agent of *tajdīd* receives a single or multiple traditions as his heritage. In this case, three Planes present themselves “above” him: the Revealed Tradition carrying the Universal Principles and Objectives, the Traditional Plane and *his* Contemporary Context (Table1.1). By Traditional Plane we mean the collection of all

⁹ Mawlānā Mawdudi noted Shāh Waliyy Allāh as the first person who concerned himself with sifting the Islamic from the Muslim; Mawdudi, *Tajdīd*, 69.

¹⁰ R. H. Dekmejian, “Charismatic leadership in messianic and revolutionary movements: The Mahdi (Muhammad Ahmad) and the messiah (Shabbatai Sevi)” in R. T. Antoun, & M. E. Hegland, *Religious resurgence: Contemporary cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism*, edited by R. T. Antoun and M. E. Hegland (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 78.

¹¹ Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership holds that, “he [the *mujaddid* in our case] is both intensely affected by his *crisis milieu* and powerfully affects it (by presiding over its destruction and transformation) [emphasis added]”; see Dekmejian, 80. Moreover, almost all careful researchers of the revivalist phenomenon note that fundamentalism, read *tajdīd*, has as one of its primary causes some form of a crisis; see, for instance: M. E. Marty & R. S. Appleby, “Conclusion: An interim report on a hypothetical family”, in *Fundamentalisms observed*, edited by M. E. Marty and R. S. Appleby (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 823.

the paradigms or traditions inherited by a particular agent of *tajdīd*. The Contemporary Context carries all the neoteric elements of a given age and society. The most significant and ironic observation regarding the interplay of the three Planes is that the Revealed Tradition is intervened by the Traditional and the Contemporary Planes. In other words, all understanding of the Universal is *filtered through* or *projected onto* either the Traditional or the Contemporary Planes or both.¹²

The agent of *tajdīd* faces problems in *his* Contemporary Context whose solutions may not be explicitly identified by the Revealed Tradition. Whereas the ordinary heir of a tradition—marked by *naql* temperament—clearly distinguishes between the Traditional and Contemporary, he confounds the Revealed Tradition with the Traditional Plane, in which case the historical tradition is thought to be a permanent and *the only legitimate* interpretation; any questioning or critique of his tradition is, therefore, equated with critique of Islam itself. As such, in the face of changing history, the *naql* temperament firmly holds on to its tradition, refusing to admit change in any manner. More than this, the *naql* temperament fails to recognize the changing character of history; as a result, lacks the proper awareness of the collective consciousness of his age (or *vice versa*); it is for this reason that the *naql* temperament can “close the gate of *ijtihād* (individual reasoning)”. In contrast, the agent of *tajdīd*, possessing elements of the *‘aql* archetype, consciously separates the Contemporary from the Traditional, and the Traditional from the Revealed Tradition. The stance of *naql* temperament, to be sure, neither eliminates nor solves the pressing problems. The temperament marked by *‘aql*, in contrast, then steps forward to play its role—perhaps because of the refusal or incapability of *naql* to resolve standing

¹² We recall Fazlur Rahman’s claim that “revelation was always mediated by the prevailing historical conditions”; see Fazlur Rahman, *Revival and reform: A study of Islamic fundamentalism*, edited by Ebrahim Moosa (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), .10