

# Modernist Reformers

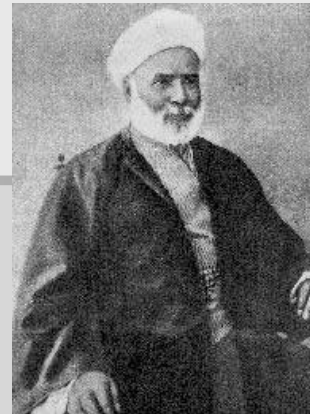
- **(Sir) Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898 CE)** (Source: <<http://www.twf.org/bio/SAKhan.html>>)
- **Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897 CE)** (Source: <[http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/jamal\\_ad.htm](http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/jamal_ad.htm)>)
- **Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905 CE)** (Source: <[http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/muhammad\\_abduh.htm](http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/muhammad_abduh.htm)>)
- **Rashid Rida (1865-1935 CE)** (Source: <[http://www.orozco.cc/Inicio/arab/arab\\_004.htm](http://www.orozco.cc/Inicio/arab/arab_004.htm)>)



(Sir) Syed Ahmad Khan



Jamal al-Din al-Afghani

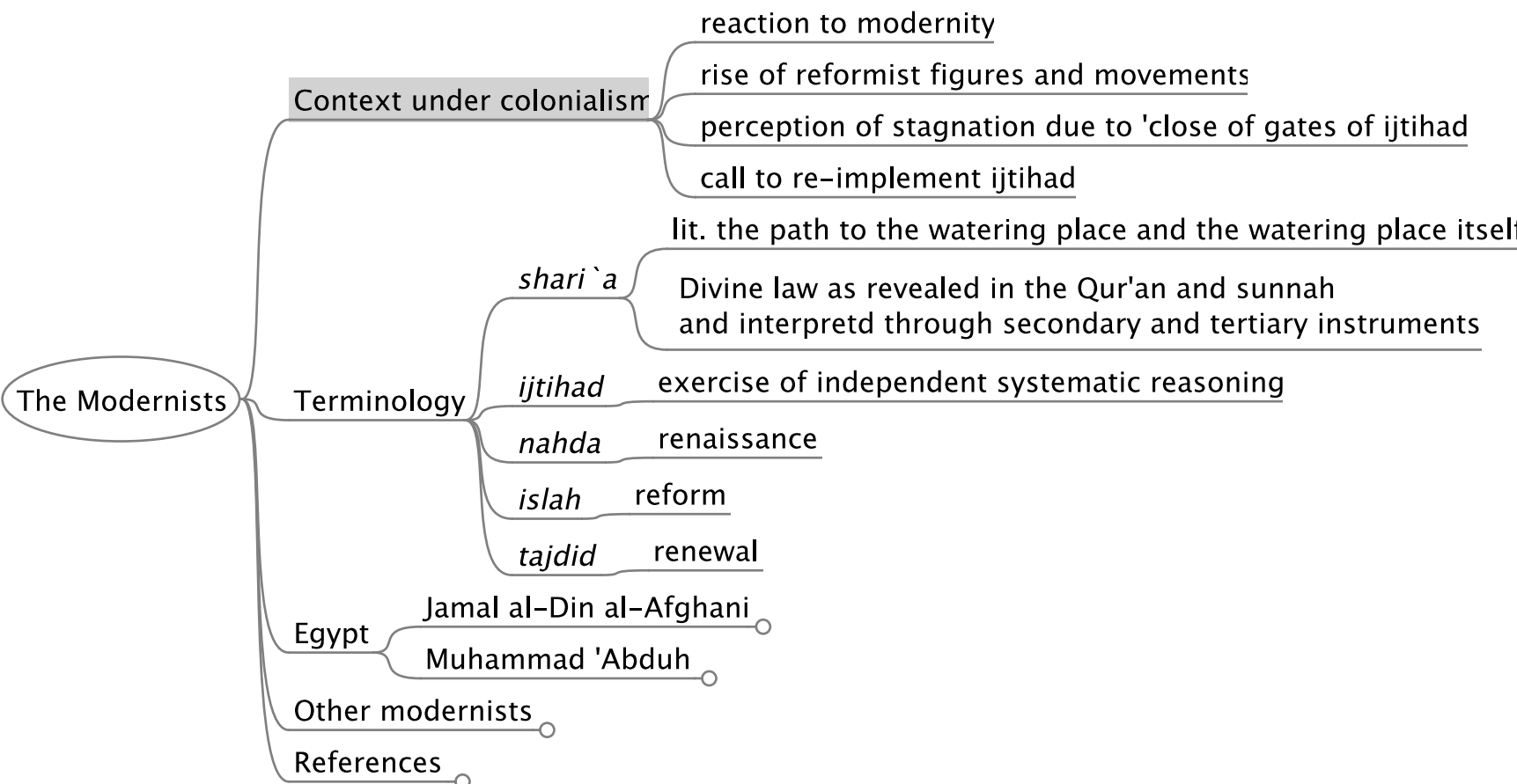


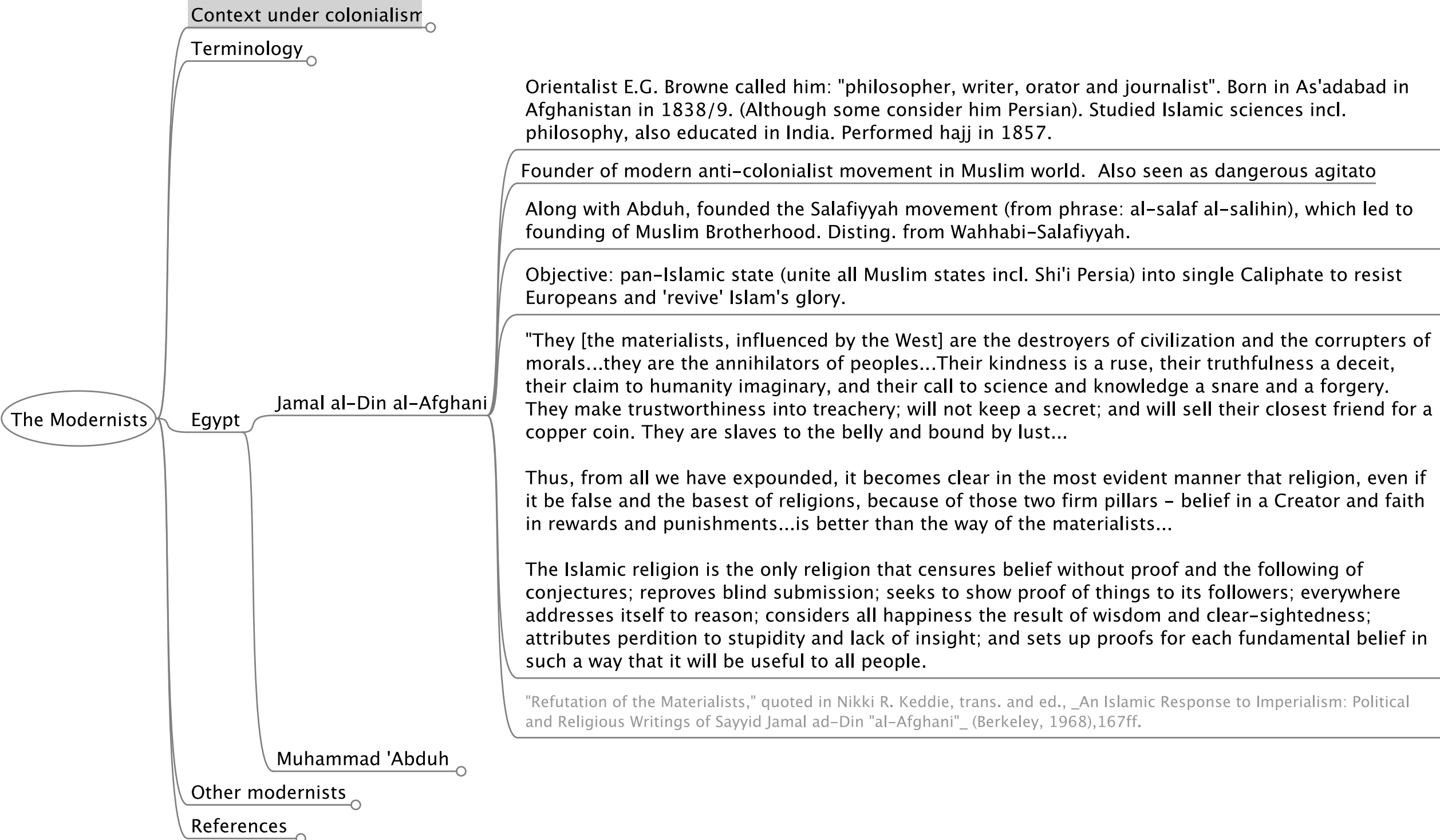
Muhammad Abduh



Rashid Rida

See: Ted Thornton, "Models of Islamic Revivalism," *History of the Middle East Database*, 17 May 2006 <<http://www.nmhschool.org/tthornton/revivalism.htm>>.





Context under colonialism

Terminology

Orientalist E.G. Browne called him: "philosopher, writer, orator and journalist". Born in As'adabad in Afghanistan in 1838/9. (Although some consider him Persian). Studied Islamic sciences incl. philosophy, also educated in India. Performed hajj in 1857.

Founder of modern anti-colonialist movement in Muslim world. Also seen as dangerous agitator

Along with Abduh, founded the Salafiyyah movement (from phrase: al-salaf al-salihin), which led to founding of Muslim Brotherhood. Disting. from Wahhabi-Salafiyyah.

Objective: pan-Islamic state (unite all Muslim states incl. Shi'i Persia) into single Caliphate to resist Europeans and 'revive' Islam's glory.

"They [the materialists, influenced by the West] are the destroyers of civilization and the corrupters of morals...they are the annihilators of peoples...Their kindness is a ruse, their truthfulness a deceit, their claim to humanity imaginary, and their call to science and knowledge a snare and a forgery. They make trustworthiness into treachery; will not keep a secret; and will sell their closest friend for a copper coin. They are slaves to the belly and bound by lust...

Thus, from all we have expounded, it becomes clear in the most evident manner that religion, even if it be false and the basest of religions, because of those two firm pillars - belief in a Creator and faith in rewards and punishments...is better than the way of the materialists...

The Islamic religion is the only religion that censures belief without proof and the following of conjectures; reproves blind submission; seeks to show proof of things to its followers; everywhere addresses itself to reason; considers all happiness the result of wisdom and clear-sightedness; attributes perdition to stupidity and lack of insight; and sets up proofs for each fundamental belief in such a way that it will be useful to all people.

"Refutation of the Materialists," quoted in Nikki R. Keddie, trans. and ed., *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani"* (Berkeley, 1968), 167ff.

Egypt

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani

Muhammad 'Abduh

Other modernists

References

The Modernists

The Modernists

Context under colonialism

Terminology

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani

Egyptian theologian and reformer, sought to modernise Islam, valued rationality, neo-Mu'tazila

Born in Lower Egypt in 1849. Learned Qur'an by heart, studied mysticism under grand-uncle. Went to study at al-Azhar. Worked as a journalist in 1876, although also became an 'alim through al-Azhar and began teaching. Exiled from Egypt 1882 for participating in Urabi uprising against British, visited Tunis, Beirut and Paris. Met al-Afghani who interested him in European modernism, and began thinking of reform. Allowed to return to Egypt in 1889 and then became Grand Mufti of al-Azhar.

Urabi uprising: 1881 revolt against European colonialism led by Urabi Bey (army colonel) "Egypt for the Egyptians!" British and French landed in Alexandria to 'protect Europeans' in 1882. Egypt became British protectorate until 1922 under Lord Cromer.

Inspired by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, teacher of Rashid Rida. Rejected taqlid, called for reopening of "gates of ijihad" as way to modernise Islam.

Salafiyyah movement gained acceptance thru Islamic world. Adopters include Qasim Amin (wrote "The Emancipation of Women" and "The New Woman")

Famous works incl. "Theology of Unity" (Risalat al-Tawhid) and his commentary on Qur'an \_al-Manar

Diff. from al-Afghani, felt gradual reform better than complete upheaval. His collection of legal verdicts \_Takrir fi islah al-mahakim al-shar'iyyah\_ led to reforms of administration of shari'a and founding of college for qadis.

Muhammad 'Abduh

- Ideas:
  - Reform of Islam by bringing it back to original condition
  - Renovation of Arabic language
  - Recognition of rights of people in relation to government
  - Knowledge comes from revelation AND reason

`Abduh maintained that religion must not be made into a barrier, separating men's spirits from God-given abilities in the knowledge of the truth of the contingent world. Rather, religion must promote the very search, demanding respect for evidence and enjoining the utmost possible devotion and endeavor through all the worlds of knowledge. He considered that the study of the contingent world, the analysis of astronomical worlds and the diverse theories of stars in their courses, the dimensions of the world's length and breadth, the sciences that study plants in their growth and animals in their quest to survive, that all of these and more belong with the relevant branches of learning and have been the area of much eager rivalry over their detailed investigation. These things, however, belong wholly with the means to material acquisition and well-being and are within those gifts of comprehension whereby God has willed that humanity be directed. Those who pursue these sciences increase in prosperity but short-comers incur only trouble. Only gradually does man attain to perfection--so runs the Divine principle. The prophetic laws are to promote endeavor along this path, in a general sense, and to sustain man in the attainment of the high dignity that God has promised to human nature. (Theology of Unity, p.103)

Other modernists

References

