

Ilzamudin Ma'mur



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Selected Readers

English for Islamic Studies



LEMBAGA PENJAMINAN MUTU
INSTITUT AGAMA ISLAM NEGERI
SULTAN MAULANA HASANUDDIN BANTEN
2014

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2014**

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PREFACE

All praise be to Allah, the Almighty, who is the creator and the sustainer of the universe and all other the creatures in it. It is because His grace and mercy that the writers could finally finish preparing and presenting this book in the present form.

This book, entitled *Selected Readers: English for Islamic Studies*, is designed with the purpose so as to reach a much wider readership target. This book covers 30 topics on Islam. Since the content of the readers, as implied by its title, is mostly focused on and dealing with interesting Islamic issues, ranging from Islamic doctrine to the present situation faced by Muslim ummah (education, politics, philosophy, mysticism, and the like), it is therefore that the book is suitable for all the students of the Islamic State Institute for Islamic Studies "Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten" irrespective their departments.

This book publication owes its existence to many parties. Therefore, it is high time for the editor to convey high appreciation and profound thank to all the parties involved. First, the present rector, Prof. Dr. H.E. Syibli Syarjaya, LML, MM., who always encourages the *civitas academica* of The State Institute for Islamic Studies 'Slutan Maulana hasanuddin' Banten, especially the lecturers, to produce scientific writings in either book forms or journal articles published nationally or internationally. Second, all the writers who have shared their writings compiled in the book, they are Ila Amalia, M.Pd., Yayu

Heryatun, M.Pd., Drs. H. Abdul Mu'in, M.M., and Prof. Dr. H. Ilzamudin Ma'mur, MA. Third, all parties involved in the preparation and the final stages of the book processing.

Finally, the editor and writers hope that this book can enable lecturers in their tasks and make students improve their reading comprehensions adequately.

Banten, October 28, 2014

Ilzamudin Ma'mur

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The Islamic World¹

The 'Islamic World' is a blanket term. It covers all those countries, regions and societies in which Muslims live together as a majority, and which are historically connected with the development of Islamic culture since the 7th century. This is traditional concept which depends on the notion that Muslims form an cultural unity, and that this unity is of greater significance than the specific traditions of individual countries or social histories. Moreover, it assumes that the Islamic world has a 'unifying bond' in the religion of Islam, that it is a space defined by its inhabitants' unified profession of Islam. Certain cultural geographers even speak of a distinct 'cultural region', which is in addition marked by certain ethnic or – to use an older term – racial characteristics. Other scholars have spoken of a specific 'cultural circle' marked by a 'common Oriental mentality'.

Such a definition of the Islamic world is based on a whole range of historical, social and psychological views that were prevalent in the 1930s and 1940s and it goes much too far. It is plausible, on the other hand, to conceive the Islamic world as a global culture: global because the limits of the Islamic world, insofar as they can be defined at all, cannot be staked out by political or social units, since the Islamic world

¹ Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, Translated by Azizeh Azodi (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), 1-7

consists of more than countries and states; and a culture because Islam consists primarily of a network of social relations that are conveyed by communication and symbolic systems and about whose content there more or less exists a consensus. It is precisely this definition that has caused 'the Islamic world' and the corresponding Arabic term *al-umma* (*al-Islamiya*) to become a conventionally accepted concept.

If the Islamic world is described as an independent cultural space or as a global culture, this means that it confronts, say, Europe or 'the Western world'. But while the unity of the West is no longer, after the secularization of the Christian Occident, defined in religious terms, in this definition religion continues to form the fundamental identity of the Islamic Orient. This is usually explained by the fact that the societies of the Islamic world have gone through no process of secularization, because, it is often argued, Islam admits of no separation between religion and state. As a result, a secular West organized into nation states confronts a religious, ethnically differentiated Islamic East.

In the last few decades, and especially after the rise of radical Islamic movements, this view has contributed to a renewal of the idea of the 'centuries-old opposition between Orient and Occident' as a conflict of systems which, 'takes the place of the ebbing East-West conflict', and marks a renewed hostility between 'Islam and the West'.

The history of the Islamic world in the 20th century is marked by three characteristics which were common to all Islamic societies in varying degrees. It is precisely these three features of 20th-century history which also form the contours

of what is today commonly called the Islamic world. They were always present in the temporal context of modernism, which – as emphasized by the interpretation of historical events in the Islamic world – acquired a global character in the 20th century. They determined the political public in Paris and London, as well as in Cairo and Djakarta. The only invariable constant, on which – despite many globalizing ideologies – the modern political public insisted was the territorial state. Even the appeals for the unity of the Islamic world, the Islamic *umma*, had the political effect of confirming the territoriality of the state from which this propaganda issued. Nationalism is thus confirmed as the dominant, extremely flexible 20th-century view of the world, which attributes absolute primacy to the constitution of a society as a territorial state.²

² Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of the Islamic World*, Translated by Azizeh Azodi (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), 1-7

Islam in Asia in 21 First Century³

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Islam is the second largest of the world's religions. The 1.3 billion Muslims of the world are spread across more than fifty-six Muslim majority countries and in a matter of decades have become a significant presence in Europe and America, where Islam is the second and third largest religion, respectively. Despite its global profile, Islam in the popular imagination—and often in the media—still tends to be disproportionately identified with the Arab world or the Middle East. Yet, in fact, the vast majority of Muslims are in Asia and Africa.

Islam in Asia in the twenty-first century has a dynamic and diverse presence in regional and global politics. Its multifaceted significance in all areas of life and society is only now beginning to be appreciated. The Muslims of Asia constitute the largest Muslim communities in the world. In this context, Asia, especially South and Southeast Asia, enjoys special importance. First, Asia accounts for 49.7 percent of all Muslims.¹ Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India have more Muslims than the entire Arab world. A rich diversity of Muslim discourse and politics stretches from the Taliban of Afghanistan to the more modern cosmopolitan societies of Malaysia and Indonesia. Second, in the last century, Asia has produced some of the most prominent and influential

³ John L. Esposito, John O. Voll, and Osman Bakar, eds. *Asian Islam in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-5.

intellectuals in the Muslim world: from South Asia's Muhammad Iqbal and Abul A'la Al- Mawdudi to Southeast Asia's Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid. Third, Islam has been used to legitimate self-proclaimed Islamic governments in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to mobilize armed opposition in Central Asia and the southern Philippines. At the same time, Asian countries like Malaysia, have achieved considerable economic development and a measure of political democracy, while emphasizing their Islamic roots and culture. Fourth, many Asian Muslim countries are multireligious and multiethnic societies with a history and legacy of religious and political pluralism and tolerance. In recent years, communal conflicts have challenged and threatened that legacy.

With the effects of globalization and the communication revolution, the flow of ideas and people within the Islamic world has vastly increased. Consequently, Muslims in Asia are affected by what is happening in the Arab Middle East and the Western part of the Islamic world. Thus, the Asian scene reflects the ideological and philosophical trends prevalent in the Western Muslim world. Similarly, extremist trends, some with affinity with groups such as al-Qaeda, exist in Asia and have been responsible for violent acts such as the bombings in Bali in October 2002 and for militant groups like Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines. For several decades, religion has become a more visible and potent force in Muslim politics. Contemporary Islamic revivalism has manifested itself in both personal and public life. Military rulers, kings, ayatollahs, Islamic organizations, and terrorist groups have justified their actions in the name of Islam. Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan established

new Islamic republics or governments; governments and opposition movements appeal to Islam to enhance their legitimacy and mobilize popular support; Islamists or Islamic activists (sometimes popularly referred to as fundamentalists) engage in political and social activism. Some have won elections as mayors and parliamentarians and served in cabinets and as prime ministers. Others have created strong social movements that are effective institution builders. They have created new institutions in civil society, offering education, along with legal and social welfare services, and they have established Islamic banks, insurance companies, publishing houses, newspapers, and websites. A small though deadly minority of religious extremists use violence and terrorism in attempts to destabilize or overthrow regimes.

The influence of political Islam in Asia reveals the fullest picture of the diverse roles of Islam in public life, both the best and the worst. The heroic image of the Afghan mujahideen as freedom fighters whose resistance movement overcame Soviet occupation gave way to a Taliban-imposed Islamic state that many in the international community regarded as a pariah. The example of the Taliban embodies for many the threat of fundamentalism with regard to global terrorism and intolerance, especially toward women and minorities. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia in diverse ways reveal the multiple roles that Islam takes in their movements toward democracy, from elected to military, and from government

manipulation of Islam to religious and ethnic communal conflicts.⁴

⁴ John L. Esposito, John O. Voll, and Osman Bakar, eds. *Asian Islam in the 21st century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-5.

Islam in Southeast Asia⁵

Muslims are the largest single religious community in contemporary Southeast Asia. About 207 million, or 45 per cent, of the region's 470 million inhabitants are Muslim.⁴ Of these, 90 per cent live in Indonesia, which has 190 million Muslims (88 per cent of its population) – the largest Islamic community in the world.⁵ There are two other majority Muslim nations: Malaysia, which has 12 million Muslims (55 per cent of the national population and 6 per cent of Southeast Asia's total) and Brunei with 230,000 (67 percent of the national total). Significant minority Muslim communities can be found in the Philippines (4 million or 5 per cent of the nation's population), Thailand (2.3 million or 4 per cent), Burma (1.7 million or 4 per cent) and Singapore (600,000 or 14 per cent). The remaining three Southeast Asian states – Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos – all have small Muslim minorities (less than 2.5 per cent). Overall, Southeast Asian Muslims constitute 18 per cent of the global Islamic community.⁶

Islam has been present in Southeast Asia for at least eleven centuries, though much about its spread remains obscure. Islam came largely via sea routes and established itself in maritime and riverine communities. From the tenth century CE, the Buddhist empire of Srivijaya based in Sumatra emissaries with Muslim names to the Chinese imperial

⁵Nelly Lahoud and Anthony H. Johns, eds. *Islam in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 153-154

court. The first evidence of a sultanate in the region is the tombstone of al-Malik al-Saleh in Pasai, north Sumatra, the inscription on which may be read to give a CE date of 1279. Other inscriptions and travellers' accounts from various parts of coastal Southeast Asia over the next two centuries bear witness to the growing cultural and political penetration of Islam. The use of Arabic script and Islamic titles becomes more common as also does evidence of the introduction of Islamic law, early evidence of which is provided by a fragment of a legal edict inscribed on the Trengganu Stone, to be dated between 1303 and 1387 CE. Gravestones in Brunei, the Malay Peninsula, and in east and north central Java attest to the transition to Islamic culture. By the late fifteenth century, powerful Islamic states were established in various parts of the Malay-Indonesian world and there is also evidence of Islam's spread to the southern islands of the present-day Philippines.⁷

There is much debate among scholars as to the exact nature of this Islamisation process. Merchants undoubtedly played an important role, the major agency of religious change being the intense trading network of the Indian Ocean. They were accompanied by artisans and religious scholars – some of them Sufis – and fortune hunters. They included Arabs as well as a variety of ethnicities from West and South Asia, who were significant in the spread of Islam in the western regions of the archipelago. It is also likely that Chinese Muslims played a role, particularly in the southern Philippines, eastern Indonesia and Malaysia. Much of the process, at least from what local chronicles tell us, seems to have been 'top-down'. Sections of the elite converted to Islam and then began to

'Islamise' their societies. On the other hand, the organisation of port states into self-governing quarters according to ethnic origin left open the possibility of Islamisation from the 'bottom-up'.

The fragmentary nature of the evidence prior to the sixteenth century makes it impossible to determine to what extent Islam had taken hold among the populace. An important aspect to note is that the adoption of Islam was usually an interactive process in which indigenous Southeast Asians consciously adapted their practice of the faith to local circumstances. Rarely was Islam imposed through conquest or force of arms. Not surprisingly, this Islamisation process was uneven. In some areas, Muslims had highly blended nativistic forms of Islamic practice, often retaining elements of Hindu, Buddhist or animist ritual and belief. In other areas, most commonly littoral, they were more rigorous in their observances of Islam. This differing level of 'Islamic-ness' created tensions within the Islamic community (*umma*), especially as the more accommodating in religious practice resisted pressure from the pious to become 'more Islamic'.

Through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Islam attained a certain political and social stability. The colonial powers, which gradually extended their power across most of the region during this time, generally left Islamic rulers in place, while ensuring their subservience to the imperial master. They were not, however, insulated from the major currents of reform and revival that took place in the Muslim world from the late eighteenth century on. With the dawn of the twentieth century, this was to become more intense.

The process of Islamisation has accelerated rapidly in Southeast Asia since the 1970s, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. Evidence for this can be found in the growing popularity of Islamic attire and devotions, as well as increasing demand both for popular Islamic literature and works of Islamic learning. Greater numbers of women are wearing headdresses and loose-fitting gowns while more men don white skull caps and collar-less long white shirts (*baju koko*). Mosque attendance has risen sharply, as also has the number of Muslims strictly observing the fast and performing the special night prayer rituals of Ramadan. Production and sales of books and magazines on 'Islamic' subjects have burgeoned in recent years and Islamic programming on television and radio is increasingly popular. The varieties of Islamic practice and belief have also expanded. Sufi orders (*tarekat*) are attracting members in seemingly record numbers, and Shi'ism is gaining a small but committed following. Other Muslims have been drawn to more puritanical or radical groups which campaign for the comprehensive implementation of Islamic law or the establishment of an Islamic state. Yet others have taken up 'liberal' Islam and have become active in seeking new interpretations and applications of their faith.⁶

⁶Nelly Lahoud and Anthony H. Johns, Eds. *Islam in World Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 153-154

Indonesia: Diversity and Pluralism⁷

There are several theories about the advent of Islam in Nusantara (now known as Indonesia) and the numerous routes and agents of the varied processes of Islamization, whether directly from southern Arabia or via India, by professional preachers or Sufi masters (Azra 2004, 2–19). For our limited purposes here, various scholarly positions can be reconciled by accepting that initial limited and superficial contacts with Muslims from Arabia, Persia, and India probably date back to the eighth century, but large-scale, sustained, and systematic Islamization began to happen much later—as recently as the eighteenth or nineteenth century, according to some scholars (Mudzhar 2003, 4–9).

There is more agreement, it seems, on the view that Islamization happened in peaceful ways, though there were instances of Muslim rulers using force to convert surrounding peoples to Islam. Intensive trade relations with the central regions of the Islamic world and Arab migration, especially from Hadramaut and Yemen, also contributed to the process. However, by its very nature, Islamization was neither uniform nor comprehensive, as it tended to depend on location, time frame, and circumstances, such as the nature and resilience of preexisting cultural and religious traditions. For example, coastal areas, with their maritime culture and cosmopolitan

⁷ 'Abd Allah Ahmad Na'im. *Islam and The Secular State : Negotiating the Future of Shari'a* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 226-227

lifestyle, were more receptive than the interior areas, with a secluded peasant culture.

Among the factors that prompted large-scale conversion in the fourteenth century was the simultaneous decline of Hindu/Buddhist kingdoms in Nusantara, such as Majapahit, Sriwijaya, and Sunda, and the rise of Islamic kingdoms, such as Aceh Darussalam, Malaka, Demak, Cirebon, and Ternate (Azra 2002, 18–19). It is reasonable to accept that the process was not only very gradual but also synchronistic, as the majority of Islamic preachers in the archipelago, especially the nine Sufi saints (*wali songo*) of Java, were willing to accommodate preexisting beliefs and practices instead of insisting on prophetic exclusiveness. In many cases, Muslim preachers are reported to have attracted many people to Islam by asserting its superior supernatural powers (Azra 2002, 21).

As happened elsewhere in the Muslim world, the “purification” of the faith from “un-Islamic superstitions” became the subject of reformist movements in Indonesia, such as the Padri movement in the first half of the nineteenth century, which was influenced by the Wahhabi theology of the Hanbali school, and more recently the Muhammadiyah movement, which was founded in 1912 (Mudzhar 2003, 10–14).

It is also relevant to note that such factors as scattered territory, diverse populations, and reliance on trade with distant peoples probably contributed to making the inhabitants of the archipelago traditionally receptive to external cultural influence. Islam adapted well to these factors by

accommodating local traditions, norms, and institutional elements whenever they were believed to be consistent with fundamental Islamic principles. This approach is traditionally accepted as the Sunna of the Prophet himself and was systematically applied by the first generations of Muslims through their initial expansive thrust into Iraq, Persia, Egypt, and North Africa.

Applying this approach in Nusantara, Muslim scholars were able to freely use *adat* (local customs, social habits, or practices, especially those relating to juridical or legal rulings) in their decisions and deliberations. As *adat* for each community changed over time, so did Islamic adaptability and the gradual processes of integration. Both *adat* and Shari'ah are said to have been treated as applicable legal systems among local Islamic communities (Lukito 1998, 27–49; Lukito 2003).

But it seems reasonable to assume that the integration of Islam into the daily lives of believers, as well as their sociocultural institutions and political relations, are better understood in terms of a wide spectrum, from the most thoroughly Islamized to the nominally Islamic. This assumption seems to be both commonly accepted and sufficient for our purposes here, though the precise role of various factors in the dynamics of Islamization in specific communities over time may need further examination.

Regarding religious diversity in particular, it is difficult to classify many Indonesians as belonging to one particular religion, let alone a uniform or monolithic understanding and practice of that religion. It is therefore not helpful to assert that the country now has the largest Muslim population in the

world, because the Muslims of Indonesia subscribe to a wide range of understandings and practices of Islam, some of which may not be recognized as Islamic at all by some Muslims in other parts of the world. At the same time, it is true that the clear majority of the population does identify as Muslim in their indigenous understandings of Islam, which have traditionally been pluralistic and tolerant of difference. It is also true that there has been a trend toward a more puritanical, "Wahhabi" view of Islam that seeks to challenge earlier, more tolerant attitudes and practices and impose an artificial religious uniformity.

PART B : ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

- 5. in Islamic World
- 6 Islam Encourages Learning And Writing
- 7 Islamic Education (Schools) in Indonesia
- 8 Islamic Art and Calligraphy
- 9 Al-Ghazzali's Thought on Education
- 10 New Perspectives on Islam and Modern Science
- 11 Classification of Knowledge
- 12 Philosophical Bases of Science Classification

Book in Islamic World⁸

A book is obviously not simply a physical thing. It is a living entity. People's lives are definitely influenced by this old and basic vehicle of communication. Our planet's civilizations and cultures, one may safely state, did not begin to flourish and expand until the book was invented. Books have become so general and extensive that we need not emphasize what is manifestly plain.

In the West, the study of the book as a vehicle of culture has been common and fruitful, but is not so in the world of Islam. There, the book, so much esteemed and cherished, has not been the subject of many serious studies as an entity and as a vehicle of cultural development. Aware of the need for further studies on the subject, the Library of Congress, which holds one of the largest collections in the world of books and other materials from the Islamic countries, convened an international conference on 8-9 November 1990, and mounted an exhibit in order to discuss and display the role of the book in the development of civilization in the Islamic world. It thus provided an opportunity for a number of distinguished scholars to examine and reflect upon this very important aspect of Islamic civilization, and it is hoped that this would open the doors for further studies. All the papers in this volume, except for my own, were read and discussed, and

⁸ George N. Atiyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World : The Written Word and Communication in The Middle East*. (Albany: SUNY, 1995), xiii-xv

sometimes debated, by the scholars who wrote them and the scholarly public who attended the conference.

The study of "the book" as an entity is complex and multifaceted. Any such study embraces the origins, production, content, use, and role of books in culture, education, and society in general. The production of books involves materials, formats, script, typography, and illustration, among other things. As an instrument of communication, the book in its many forms has been and still is the greatest factor in the growth, development, and preservation of culture, inasmuch as it carries the knowledge, the ideas, and the messages without which an advanced culture cannot exist. Whether in the form of clay tablet, scroll, codex, or volume, the book remains central to culture. In the words of Dr. Guy Story Brown, Director of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the United States Information Agency, "the idea of *culture* itself originally emerged in connection with cultivation of learning through the written word The idea of *the book* or centrality of writing as a universal human inheritance in a sense involves a fundamental change in the idea of culture, a change that itself is characteristic of modernity, and underlies the ubiquity of books."

Although the development of the book, from its rudimentary form into the codex, and later the book manuscript, owes much to Christian scholarship in the Roman and Byzantine periods, the book in the Islamic world was more fundamentally integrated with Islam as a religion and with the Arabic language and script, which were the early means of communication in the Islamic world. Scarcely has the literary

life of any other culture played such a role as in Islam. The Koran, referred to as the Book or *al-Kitāb*, has a privileged place in Islam in that it is considered to be the 'Word of God and in that it is inimitable (*mu'jizah*). It was only natural that The Book affect greatly the course of Arabic and Islamic culture. Under its stimulus, the various sciences (*'ulum*, plural of *'ilm*) developed. Science, or learning (*'ilm*), by which is meant the whole world of the intellect, engaged the interest of the Muslims more than anything else except perhaps politics during the golden age of Islam, that is, the early part of the Abbasid period. It was a period that saw the elaboration of methods of publication, transcription, bookbinding, and book selling to a great degree. The circulation of books was greatly assisted by the introduction of paper in the eighth century. Literature and the art of the book received a great impetus from the manufacture of paper. The Muslims developed paper manufacturing through the employment of new materials and the discovery of new methods. This was as much a revolution as the one achieved in the fifteenth century by Gutenberg. As Professor Irfan Shahid says, "Neither parchment nor papyrus was able to bring about such a revolution." The extraordinary efflorescence of book making is reflected in the large number of repositories, or libraries (*maktabiit*), and the large number of manuscripts that have reached us. Once the printed book came into being and the process of dethroning the manuscript began, opposition to the new technology by the Islamic '*ulamii*' grew. The '*ulamii*', until the invention and spread of printing, monopolized the transmission of knowledge. The manuscript, moreover, represented for the Muslims an historic and

cultural value. This remains so until today. Most of the Muslim scholars who visit me at the Library of Congress begin their questioning by asking how many Arabic or Islamic manuscripts the Library holds. Printing meant a new cultural direction. The manuscript, which represented the old culture, became the center of controversy between the old and the new. Although it is presented in different forms and on many levels, this controversy remains with us today.

The rise of *al-warriiq*, a person who made a profession out of transcribing books, was a high point in the "Civilization of the Book." The *warriiqun* (plural of *warriiq*) were the link between men of letters and the general public. They were interested not only in beautiful calligraphy, but also in reproducing correctly and exactly the text. They were not only copyists, but also booksellers, and oftentimes they were men of letters themselves. al-J~bi~ (d.255/868), who was a versatile author and a great bookworm, hit upon the idea of hiring booths from the *warriiqun* and spending the nights in their shops reading. In his famous book, *Kitiib al-}ayawiin* (The Book of Animals), al-Jal:ti~ dedicates a lengthy section to the topic of "the book". In it he responds to a critic of books by describing the value of the book as a companion, a vehicle of learning, and a versatile tool for the success of all human endeavors. He recites stories about book collecting, calligraphy, ancient writing, the preservation of cultural heritage, translation in general and translation of religious books, book editing, and the conflict between the written and oral traditions. Throughout the history of Islam, oral transmission of "the book" proceeded alongside the written.

⁹ George N. Atyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World : The Written Word and Communication in The Middle East*. (Albany: SUNY, 1995), xiii-xv

Many considered the written as merely a corroboration of and complement to the memory. There is indeed a great need to look into the role of the book in the development of the Islamic world and its culture. The history of the book, not only as an artifact, but also in terms of intellectual content and physical properties, needs to be seriously explored. An investigation into the creation, manufacture, and use of the book in its written and printed forms has not been systematically approached, although there have been several attempts to do so. The kinship between the book and civilization is obvious yet understudied. Investigating it, as far as the Islamic world is concerned, can offer many insights into the nature and characteristics of that world.⁹

Islam Encourages Learning and Writing¹⁰

At the advent of Islam, only seventeen men and three women of the clan of Quraysh knew how to write. When the Prophet came, he called upon his followers to become learned, to learn how to read and write. The Holy Koran is explicit in this regard. God swore by the pen. He said, "Nun, by the pen and what they write," and God commanded His Messenger to read. He said, "Recite (or read, *iqra'*) in the name of thy Lord who created, created man from a blood-clot. Recite, and thy Lord is the Most Bountiful, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know." 2 God also ordained the cultivation of learning. He said, "Seek ye knowledge even in China." China, in this context, refers to a remote point, extremely distant from Mecca and Medina (in the absence of modern means of travel and communication), and very hard to reach. He ordained teaching. He said, "He who is learned among you should teach the others." God instructed the Messenger to seek knowledge, despite its being a difficult undertaking.

One of the earliest verses of the Koran, revealed just after the emigration of the Prophet to Medina, had to do with debt. God ordained the writing, or recording (*kitabah*), of debts. He said, "O, ye who believe, when you contract a debt one upon another for a stated term, write it down and let a

¹⁰George N. Atiyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World : The Written Word and Communication in The Middle East*. (Albany: SUNY, 1995), 141-143

scribe write it between you in equity."3 Henceforth, writing came into fiscal legislation for the recording of contracts and for the protection of peoples' rights.

The Messenger ordained writing in another area, namely writing a will before death. He encouraged every person to write a will before his death, and to divide his personal property among his heirs or donate it to the poor. Great interest was shown in studying script and writing, in particular writing down the revelation of the Koran. The Messenger was illiterate, in that he did not know how to read or write. God said, "Not before this didst thou recite any Book, or inscribe it with thy right hand."4 The Prophet appointed several from among those Companions of his who knew how to write to be his writing secretaries. These included Abu Bakr, 'Umar ibn al-Khanab, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, 'All ibn Abl Ti.ilib, Zayd ibn Thabit, Ubbay ibn Ka'b, Mu'awlyah ibn Abl Sufyan, and Zayd ibn Arqum. He assigned each one of them a specific task. To Zayd ibn Thabit he assigned the writing down of the revelation, for example. The Messenger, furthermore, set up a special desk (*Ifuffah*) in the mosque for the purpose of teaching, and he appointed a special staff of teachers to teach writing. Among the teachers were 'AbdAllah ibn Sa'id ibn al-'A~~ and 'Ubadah ibn al-Samit. He also sent Mu'iidh ibn Jabal to Yemen and Hadramaut as a teacher. The Prophet's interest in teaching was not limited to the education of men; he directed that women, too, should receive proper education. He asked a woman called al-Shafa' bint 'Abd Allah al-'Adawlyah, who was conversant in the art of writing, to teach his daughter Haf~ah that art.

The Companions of the Prophet later called on people to learn how to write. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib said, "Teach your children writing and marksmanship." He also said, "Beautiful writing makes the truth clearer," and "Take up beautiful writing, it is the key to livelihood." 'AbdAllah ibn al-'Abbas said, "Calligraphy is the tongue of the hand."

One more thing should be pointed out, as it clearly indicates the Prophet's concern for promoting learning. When the battle of Badr ended with the victory over the clan of Quraysh, the number of prisoners was high. Most of them did not have the necessary funds for a ransom. The Messenger consented that each prisoner ransom himself by teaching ten Muslims who were versed in the tenets of Islam to read.

The above considerations, together with enthusiasm for learning, directed the Muslims toward the high road of knowledge and the pursuit of writing capability. These same considerations led also to the diffusion of the Arabic script and to the writing of works that numbered in the millions, including works on religion as well as in the humanities. Muslim scholars who got involved in authoring did so prolifically. The works of some individual scholars reached four hundred in number. Mention can be made here of al-Kindi the philosopher, al-Jili: the writer, al-Mada'ini the historian, Ibn 'Arabi the mystic, and alSuyuti the theologian.¹¹

¹¹George N. Atiyeh, ed. *The Book in the Islamic World : The Written Word and Communication in The Middle East*. (Albany: SUNY, 1995), 141-143

Islamic Education (Schools) in Indonesia¹²

Of the 50,000 Islamic schools in Indonesia, 16,015 of them are pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools), 37,000 of them are madrasahs (Islamic day schools) and a small minority are Sekolah Islams.³ The enrolments in Islamic schools have been increasing since the late 1980s. Currently about 5.7 million or 13 percent of the 44 million students enrolled in the formal educational system are enrolled in madrasahs.⁴ As noted in Chapter 3, Islamic schools in Indonesia can be divided into three main types: pesantren, madrasah, and Sekolah Islam.

Pesantren

Among the three types, the pesantren is the oldest form of Islamic school in Indonesia. As the most traditional type of Islamic school, it caters mostly for children from the rural areas. Maintaining their status as private educational institutions, pesantrens are the bastion of Islamic knowledge and the main provider of Islamic scholars and teachers.⁵ They focus on the transmission of the classical Islamic sciences, including the study of the Qur'an and hadith, jurisprudence, Arabic grammar, mysticism (*tasawwuf*), and the Arab sciences (*alat*).⁶ Traditionally, the pesantren students learn classical Islamic commentaries, known as *kitab kuning* (literally, yellow

¹²Charlene Tan, *Islamic Education and Indoctrination :The Case in Indonesia*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 01-95

books). According to Martin van Bruinessen, the traditional Islamic contents in the pesantrens are based on “the Ash‘ari doctrine (as mediated especially by Sanusi’s works), the Shafi‘i madhhab (with nominal acceptance of the other three Sunni madhhab), and the ethical and pietistic mysticism of Ghazali and related writers”.⁷ Although pesantrens started with teaching purely religious subjects, pesantrens today supplement their religious studies with a general elementary education. This change was partly due to state reforms in the late 1970s.⁸ Besides non-religious subjects, many pesantrens have also offered vocational courses such as agricultural skills, vehicle repair, and business enterprising skills.

Pesantrens can be further divided into three types: traditional, modern, and independent.⁹ A “traditional pesantren” tends to focus on traditional Islam and is likely to be ideologically affiliated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). NU, which commands a huge following, is an association of *kyais*—Muslim scholars who usually have their own pesantrens and teach classical Islamic texts to their students.¹⁰ A traditional pesantren is characterized by its endorsement of devotional and mystical beliefs and practices. An example is visits to the graves of local saints and great *kyais* to obtain blessings and *barakah* (holiness, virtue as inherent spiritual power) (see Figure 6.1). Other practices include chanting religious formulae (*zikir*, literally means remembrance of God) and specific devotions and mystical exercises imparted by the *kyai* to their followers.¹¹ The second type is a “modern pesantren”. As its name implies, it modernises pesantren education by introducing a structured grade system, classrooms, textbooks,

and an ethos of reform and progress.¹² Most modern pesantrens are affiliated with Muhammadiyah, which is a mass-based Muslim association like NU.

But unlike NU, it is “reformist” in the sense that it rejects the mystical and devotional beliefs and practices endorsed by NU and found in traditional pesantrens. Muhammadiyah views these beliefs and practices as syncretistic and un-Islamic.¹³ The third type is “independent pesantren” that is not associated with NU or Muhammadiyah and tends to adopt Salafi ideological beliefs.

Madrasah

The second type of Islamic school is madrasah. Although a madrasah is historically known as an Islamic college or Islamic institution of higher learning, it refers to an Islamic day school in Indonesia.¹⁴ Introduced by the first president of Indonesia, Soekarno, this type of school combines traditional religious education with a broad general component.¹⁵ The majority of madrasahs are privately owned, with state-owned madrasahs comprising between 6.4 percent and 13 percent from the primary to the senior secondary levels.¹⁶ Besides being a non-boarding school, the madrasahs are distinguished from the pesantrens in their mission and modern approaches to the school setup, curriculum, and pedagogy. Unlike pesantrens that primarily aim to nurture religious scholars, madrasahs are set up to create “learning Muslims” who are ready for secular professional jobs.¹⁷ Similar to Dutch government and Christian missionary schools, the madrasahs offer their students different levels of graded instruction,

modern classrooms with blackboards, textbooks, and structured assessments.

All madrasahs today adopt a government-approved madrasah curriculum consisting of 70 percent general subjects and 30 percent religious subjects. Recognised as on par with the public schools in the Educational Act of No 2/1989, madrasahs follow the national curricula fully and their graduates may continue their studies at both Islamic and secular public universities. While public schools offer only two hours of Islamic religious studies (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*) per week, the madrasahs offer about five or six hours per week. Furthermore, the madrasahs offer additional Islamic subjects such as *Aqidah* (theology), *Akhlak* (virtue), and Islamic history.¹⁸

Sekolah Islam

The third type of Islamic school is Sekolah Islam (Islamic school). Although “Sekolah Islam” literally means “Islamic school”, I will refer to the Indonesian term so as not to confuse this type of school with the generic term “Islamic school”. As stated in the introductory chapter, “Islamic school” is used to refer to any educational institution that emphasises the transmission of Islamic knowledge and inculcation of Islamic values and ethos.

Many Sekolah Islams are found in urban areas and cater largely for Muslim students from middle-class family background. This contributes to the general perception that they are elite Islamic schools. Their popularity is due to the desire of middle-class parents who wish to provide a modern

Islamic schooling for their children that offers a high academic standard in general subjects within an Islamic environment. Charging relatively high school fees compared to pesantrens and madrasahs, these schools are well-equipped with modern facilities such as air-conditioned classrooms, libraries, language labs, science labs and computer labs, and multimedia facilities. They are also staffed by teachers and managers who are generally highly qualified and competent.¹⁹ Examples of such schools are Yayasan Pesantren Islam (YPI) Al-Azhar, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Insan Cendikia Serpong, and Pesantren Ibnu Salam Nurul Fikri Boarding School

The students in Sekolah Islams do not concentrate on learning Islamic subjects such as Islamic jurisprudence or Islamic theology. Rather, their attention is on general subjects such as science, history, social studies, and foreign languages. At the same time, Sekolah Islams surpass the public schools by allocating more hours to religious instruction: an average of four or five lesson hours as compared to two lesson hours per week in the public schools. On top of that, they include Arabic language and Qur'anic studies in their curriculum. Sekolah Islams are known for combining a quality general education with Islamic ethos and morals; importance is placed on Islamic practices such as prayer, and attempts are made to infuse Islamic principles and values into the curriculum. For example, one Sekolah Islam includes additional religious instruction after school hours such as getting the students to recite the Qur'an after *Maghrib* (the prayer after sunset), and engage in research activities based on religious themes such as basic jurisprudence.²¹ This type of school is also known for

offering its students a rich variety of extracurricular activities so as to inculcate Islamic values through these activities.¹³

¹³Charlene Tan, *Islamic Education and Indoctrination :The Case in Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 01-95

Islamic Art and Calligraphy¹⁴

Islamic art can be defined in a number of ways. However for the purposes of this chapter, it is defined as art that is produced as part of the cultural and religious tradition of Muslims.¹ The art of Islam is essentially a contemplative one, which aims to express an encounter with the divine presence.² It has been mainly abstract and decorative in nature and style, portraying geometric, floral, arabesque, and calligraphic designs. The general lack of portraiture is due to the fact that the authorities of early Islam reportedly forbade the painting of human beings (including that of Prophet Muhammad) as many Muslims believe pictorial representation of the human form may tempt followers to commit idolatry.

Questions surrounding the legitimacy of different types of art and their relationship to Islam have long been asked. Despite the widespread belief that there is a uniform position amongst Muslims on the issue of the legitimacy of various types of art, it is interesting to note there have been significant differences among Muslim scholars and thinkers, in both classical and modern periods.

Despite difficulties in establishing what types of art conform to Islamic norms, some forms have gained wide acceptance, perhaps owing to their nonrepresentational

¹⁴ Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 85-86.

nature. The forms are patterns, particularly geometric patterns and calligraphy.

A central feature of Islamic art is the use of patterns. There are several common pattern types, the most obvious being geometric in style. Patterns appear frequently on the surfaces of important buildings and mosques. As for geometry, some argue that such patterns became part of Islamic art as a result of the strict proscription of other forms of art. To many, geometric patterns symbolize the infinite and therefore unified nature of the creation of the one God. The main reason for their popularity is that art was governed by the need for abstraction rather than direct anthropomorphic representation. Muslim thinkers recognized in geometry the unified intermediary between the material and the spiritual world. At the more intellectual levels, the desire for abstraction and the search for unity were two of the main passions which caused Islamic culture to turn to geometry.⁵

Calligraphy is perhaps the best-known form of Islamic artistic decoration and is found on a range of surfaces and relates to the total organization of language and writing in the form of image. It took a long time for Arabic calligraphy to develop. Muslim artists gradually developed a variety of calligraphic forms, using for content Qur'anic verses, the names of God, the names and titles of the Prophet and, in the case of Shi'a Islam, the names of the infallible imams.

Before Islam, an Arabic script existed. However, it was not until the Abbasid caliphate (132–656/750–1258) that calligraphy was commonly used in an artistic fashion, after a range of styles and rules governing such styles were

developed.⁶ There are several Arabic calligraphic styles, which differ from country to country, and generation to generation. Some of the most famous styles used are *kufic*, *naskh*, *thuluth* and *diwan*. Kufic appears in two major styles, modern or archaic. Kufic was the dominant script at the dawn of Islam and the Qur'an was written for several centuries using its lettering style. The main feature of the kufic script is that it has no vowel system, and can thus be difficult to read. Modern Kufic lends itself to magnificent, geometrical construction based on angular elements, which can be adapted to any space and any material, from simple silk squares to architectural monuments.⁷ Naskh is a cursive script that was common in the bureaucracy of the Abbasid caliphate and was often used in books. It influenced many Turkish and Persian scripts. Thuluth was given a liturgical function, being used for the headings of chapters in the Qur'an. It features prominently in architectural arabesques.⁸ During the Ottoman dynasty the Turks invented various styles, such as diwan, which appeared from 857/1453 onwards. It has a cursive flow, which blends into a smaller and more compact ornamented variant. Diwan was used widely from the eleventh/seventeenth century onwards.⁹

The material on which calligraphy is inscribed has also contributed to the rendering of certain letters, so that a given style may be found on wood, for example, rather than on ceramic, stone or parchment. The subject matter, whether the Qur'an, poems, official documents or love letters, also affected the style of calligraphy used.¹⁵

¹⁵ Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 85-86.

Al-Ghazzali's Thought On Education¹⁶

Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad, Abu Hamid Al-Tusi Al-Ghazzali (or Al- Ghazzalli) Al-shafi was born in 1058 at Tus in Khursan near the modern Meshed in Iran. He is also known as 'Hujjat Al-Islam' (The proof of Islam), 'Ornament of the faith', and 'Gatherer of multivarious sciences'. He was a major jurist, heresiographer and debater expert in the principles of doctrine and those of jurisprudence. Al-Ghazzali was an outstanding theologian, jurist, original thinker, mystic and religious reformer. His father died while he was still very young, and he and his brother Ahmed were left orphans at an early age. The members of his family were prominent in the study of Qanon Law. When Al-Ghazzali abandoned his teaching position at the Nizamyah school in Baghdad, he deputized his brother Ahmed, who was famous for his preaching, to replace him.

Certainly one of Al-Ghazzali's best known and most immortal books is *Ihya Ulum Al- Din (The Revival of Religious Sciences)*, in which he presented his unified view of religion incorporating elements from three sources formerly considered contradictory—tradition, intellectualism and mysticism. This book provides a complete guide to a pious life, and is one of the very greatest works of religion written by a

¹⁶Joy A. Palmer, ed. *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education: From Confucius to Dewey*, (London: Rotledge, 2001), 32-35

Moslem. The book is composed of four volumes. Volume I dealt with 'Ibadat' (cult practices), volume II dealt with 'Adat' (social customs), volume III dealt with 'Muhlikat' (vices or faults of character leading to perdition), and the last volume dealt with 'Munjiyat' (virtues or qualities leading to salvation). Each volume has ten books. The *Ihya* is thus a complete guide for the devout Muslim to every aspect of the religious life—worship and devotional practices, conduct in daily life, the purification of the heart, and advance along the Mystic way.

Al-Ghazzali's philosophical thoughts and ideas had a considerable effect on education, and his writings served to introduce logical thinking into Islamic educational thought. He undoubtedly performed a great service for devout Muslims at every level of education by presenting obedience to the prescriptions of the shari'a (Islamic law) as a meaningful way of life. In this way, he helped to develop the concept of self-control by both teachers and students in their pursuit of any educational activity. Al-Ghazzali's reflections on the nature of man's knowledge of the divine realm, and his conviction that the upright and devout man could attain to an intuition or direct experience of divine things, implied that in the realm of education a devout and hard-working learner should not be just a copier or follower. Rather, he could participate in developing and enriching the realm of knowledge, and the more sincere he was in his scholarly endeavours, the more opportunities he would have to add to authentic knowledge. When considering Al-Ghazzali's thinking, one might jump to conclusion that he stood against rationalism. This conclusion is not really valid, since Al-Ghazzali forcefully argued that religion

is the basis of rationality. Any form of rationality must, therefore, be delineated within the sphere of religion.

Al-Ghazzali's influence on educational thought was many-sided. To begin with, he emphasized the importance of raising a generation of faithful people who would be close to God and free from conflict among one another. Education should be in the service of society and bring up people with high moral standards. He also emphasized that education is a virtue, and that it should be congruent with the verses of the Holy Koran and the sayings of Mohammed, peace be upon him. Pedagogy, he argued, concerns what is in its essence a human process, and this meant that education cannot be properly practised except through humility, careful listening and the ability to respond on the basis of love and intimacy or collaboration among human beings.

Education, he insisted, is an essentially logical process, and should therefore start from the simplest aspects of life and proceed towards the most complicated. The job of the teacher is to explain even the most complex matters in the clearest terms. Pedagogy is, moreover, a moral process. Teachers should, therefore, have sympathy for their students, treat them kindly as if they were their sons, and guide and advise them. Teaching should not be a punitive process, but one of counselling. Teachers should, therefore, support their students and help them to fulfil their needs and achieve psychological and emotional stability. Teaching, Al-Ghazzali also explained, combines theory and practice. Hence teachers should serve as live models for students in their words and behaviour. As a cultural process, education vitally contributes

to the future of a society in which individuals and groups grow and progress.

Al-Ghazzali's constant stress is upon teaching as a value-building process. Students should be encouraged to cultivate good behaviour based on a sound system of such values as telling the truth, faith, honesty, humility and the avoidance of arrogance. He emphasized that education is a total process that should take care of every aspect of human beings—intellectual, psychological, social, physical and spiritual. Teaching should be sensitively conducted, so that differences among students are recognized and they are helped to develop according to their own capacities and interests.

Al-Ghazzali died in Bagdad in December 1111. Under his bed a paper was found containing the following stanza:

*Do not believe that this corpse you see is myself, I am spirit
and this is naught but flesh. I am a pearl which has left its
shell deserted. It was my prison where I spent my time in
grief. I am a bird and it was my cage when I had not flown
forth and it is left as a token, praise be to God, who has now
set me free.¹⁷*

¹⁷Joy A. Palmer, ed. *Fifty Major Thinkers on Education: From Confucius to Dewey* (London: Routledge, 2001), 32-35

New Perspectives on Islam and Modern Science¹⁸

One of the most important developments in the discourse on Islam and modern science owes its existence to the work of a few Muslim thinkers living in the West. Ironically, these new insights into Islam's relationship with modern science have not been received in the traditional Muslim lands with the same kind of enthusiasm with which the work of Maurice Bucaille and Keith Moore was received. This is a telling sign of the intellectual climate of the Muslim world, which forced many leading thinkers to leave their homes and migrate to the West. This westward movement of Muslim intellectuals and scientists is part of the general exodus that has brought millions of Muslims to Europe and North America during the last fifty years.

Muslim presence in Europe and North America is a unique historical development with far-reaching consequences. For Europeans and North Americans, Islam and Muslims are no more two unknown and unknowable mysteries—Muslims have literally become next-door neighbors. This situation promises better relations between various faith communities (a promise yet to be realized) and the Muslim diaspora has produced its unique reflections on Islam, Muslim history, Islamic civilization, and science. In many cases, this scholarship emerging from outside the *Dar-al-Islam* (the traditional abode of

¹⁸ Muzaffar Iqbal, *Science and Islam* (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 165-168

Islam) is the best available material in a given field; such is definitely the case for the Islam and science discourse.

This section provides a brief survey of certain new aspects of the discourse. A broad classification of the current discourse on Islam and modern science identifies three categories: ethical, epistemological, and ontological/metaphysical views of science.

The ethical/puritanical view of science, which is the most common attitude in the Islamic world, considers modern science to be essentially neutral and objective, dealing with the book of nature as it is, with no philosophical or ideological components attached to it. Such problems as the environmental crisis, positivism, materialism, etc., all of which are related to modern science in one way or another, can be solved by adding an ethical dimension to the practice and teaching of science.

The second position, which I call the epistemological view, is concerned primarily with the epistemic status of modern physical sciences, their truth claims, methods of achieving sound knowledge, and function for the society at large. Taking science as a social construction, the epistemic school puts special emphasis on the history and sociology of science. Finally, the ontological/metaphysical view of science marks an interesting shift from the philosophy to the metaphysics of science. Its most important claim lies in its insistence on the analysis of the metaphysical and ontological foundations of modern physical sciences. (Kalin 2002, 47)

Another way of classifying recent developments in the Islam and science discourse is to study it through the

description and analysis of positions of major thinkers (Stenberg 1996). Whatever way one chooses to classify the new discourse, ultimately it is dealing with a small body of literature that has emerged during the last half of the twentieth century. These new aspects of the discourse are intimately connected with the entire range of issues emerging from Islam's encounter with modernity.

Muslim thinkers have generally regarded this encounter as the most vital in the history of Islam and they have attempted to find viable Islamic alternatives to Western economic, social, cultural, and educational systems in order to preserve Islamic values. This search for a *modus vivendi* includes a reassessment of modern science and technology from an Islamic perspective. The enterprise of science in the West has emerged from a certain historical background; it is highly linked to other institutions of Western civilization, and notwithstanding its claims to universality it is the product of Western civilization. As such, it is deeply entrenched in a worldview different from Islam. In fact, not only science but all modern knowledge has been deemed to require an epistemological correction.

This need created a movement that conceived a program of "Islamization of knowledge." Led by Ismail al-Faruqi (1921–1986), the movement was based on the premise that the root of decline of the Muslim world was the "educational system, bifurcated as it is into two subsystems, one 'modern' and the other 'Islamic'" (al-Faruqi 1982, viii). To redress this "malaise," al-Faruqi sought to unite the two educational systems and to Islamize knowledge. Al-Faruqi's approach to

the problem of modern knowledge was based on the realization that the earlier reformers in the Muslim lands had remained unsuccessful in their efforts because they failed to understand the deep roots of modern knowledge. They assumed that the so-called 'modern' subjects are harmless and can only lend strength to the Muslims. Little did they realize that the alien humanities, social sciences, and indeed the natural sciences as well were facets of an integral view of reality, of life and the world, and of a history that is equally alien to that of Islam. Little did they know of the fine and yet necessary relation that binds the methodologies of these disciplines, their notions of truth and knowledge, to the value system of an alien world. That is why their reforms bore no fruit. (al-Faruqi 1982, viii)

The solution to this "Malaise of the Ummah," as al-Faruqi conceived it, was perceived "in concrete terms, to Islamize the disciplines, or better, to produce university level textbooks recasting some twenty disciplines in accordance wit[h] the Islamic vision" (al-Faruqi 1982, 14). This idea led to the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), which continues to pursue al-Faruqi's vision. Al-Faruqi, however, was not interested in studying the epistemological foundation of modern science, and his plan dealt only with the social sciences. Al-Faruqi's limited approach to the process of Islamization of knowledge drew attention to the absent content (the natural sciences), and a number of other scholars attempted to formulate pertinent questions regarding Islam's relation with modern science. One such attempt was led by Ziauddin Sardar, a UK-based journalist of

Pakistani origin, together with a few other scholars who formed a loose-knit group called “Ijmalis.” Sardar’s major work on the subject, *Explorations in Islamic Science* (1989), was inspired by developments during the previous decade, which had witnessed a surge of interest in Islam all over the world. Sardar focused on a related subject—the role of science and technology in the development of the Muslim World. During his research, he “visited science institutions and universities in many Muslim countries and was struck by the extent of the discussion on Islam and science” (Sardar 1989, 1).¹⁹

¹⁹ Muzaffar Iqbal, *Science and Islam* (London: Greenwood Press, 2007), 165-168

Classification of Knowledge in Islam²⁰

The disorder which rules over the modern educational curriculum in most Islamic countries today is to a large extent due to the loss of the hierarchic vision of knowledge as one finds in the traditional Islamic education system. In the Islamic intellectual tradition, there existed a hierarchy and interrelation between various disciplines which made possible the realization of unity in multiplicity not only in the domain of religious faith and experience but also in the realm of knowledge. The discovery of order and the appropriate relationship between various disciplines was the goal of the leading Islamic intellectual figures, from theologians to philosophers, from Sufis to historians, many of whom devoted much of their intellectual energy to the subject of the classification of the sciences. This subject is, therefore, a key for the understanding of a major dimension of the Islamic intellectual tradition and the Islamic education system not to speak of its role in enabling contemporary Muslim educators to cast an objective eye upon the confusion and chaos that reigns in current education curricula with their blind emulation of Western models blended often in ad hoc fashion with what has survived of the madrasah system. Considering the significance of the subject of the classification of the sciences in

²⁰Seyyed Hosein Nasr, "Foreword," in Osman Bakr, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 1998), xi-xii

Islam, it is rather remarkable that the present book is the first which deals with the subject in a scholarly fashion and at the same time in a contemporary language. Moreover, the author remains faithful to the Islamic intellectual tradition itself with its emphasis upon the unity and hierarchy of forms of knowledge which necessitates the classification of the sciences, and he is able to bring out the metaphysical and philosophical background which underlies the various classifications considered in this study. In the traditional Islamic universe, both the subject and object of knowledge are considered to be hierarchic. Object reality is not only the spatio-temporal world available to the senses. There is first of all the Absolute Reality, Allah, who alone is in the absolute sense of the word. Then there are the angelic orders, the intermediate imaginal world (the 'alam al-khayal), then the world of the jinn and the men and finally the natural world. The Qur'an constantly refers to these realities as well as the heavens and the earth (al-samawat wa'l-ard), the heavens, it needs to be emphasized, being in the plural. There is, therefore, within the more general distinction between the Creator and creation, the whole hierarchy of beings standing below the Divine Throne "from the Pleiades (al-thurayya) to the lowly dust". Obviously from the Islamic points of view the science which deals with God is not on an equal footing with the science of the human soul nor that science with the science of minerals in contrast to the modern educational system where theology, psychology and geology are placed horizontally alongside each other like so many drawers in a cabinet each containing a certain amount of information. Furthermore, in the Islamic perspective there

exists a hierarchy within the subject who knows. Man is not simply the Cartesian subject of the cogito who "knows" on the single level of what is called the mind. Man can know through the senses, through the imaginal faculty, through reason with its own several levels of activity, through the heart-intellect so often mentioned in the Qur'an and finally through revelation which is the objective counterpart of intellection with the eye of the heart ('ayn al-qalb). As the final revelation of the Word of God, the Qur'an contains all of knowledge in principle precisely because it stands at the apex of the hierarchy of modes and sources of knowing followed again in a hierarchic manner by other modes of knowing. The Islamic intellectual authorities were fully aware of both hierarchies of the object and the subject of knowledge and in the light of these realities sought to classify the sciences derived not only from the Qur'an and Hadith, but also developed by Muslim scientists and scholars on the basis of what they had inherited according to the destiny of Islam from earlier civilizations such as those of the Greeks, Persians and Indians. They developed these schemes of classification according to the intellectual perspective to which they themselves belonged and not according to individual whim and fancy, for in the Islamic tradition what is said (ma qal) always precedes he who said it (man qal). It is the major intellectual traditions which are important in determining the views of Islamic thought concerning a particular subject.²¹

²¹Seyyed Hosein Nasr, "Foreword," in Osman Bakr, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 1998), xi-xii

The Philosophical Bases of the Three Classifications of Science²²

My study of three Muslim classifications of the sciences - composed by al-Farabi, al-Ghazzali, and Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi - shows that these classifications are at once based on philosophical ideas that are common to all Islamic intellectual schools, and ideas which are specific to the intellectual and religious world-view of its author and of the school he represents. There are two dominant ideas that shape the underlying philosophical basis of each classification. One is the idea of the hierarchy and the unity of the sciences. Another is the idea of the distinction between religion and philosophy. The latter idea is also related to the distinction between revelation and reason. The general idea of hierarchy of reality is shown (chapter two) to be rooted in Islamic revelation. The Qur'an and hadiths contain numerous references to such ideas as the hierarchy of creation, hierarchy of believers and knowers, hierarchy of witnesses of divine unity, and the hierarchic structure of the Qur'an itself. Although the general idea of hierarchy is accepted by all three thinkers, it is in al-Farabi that the idea receives its most comprehensive and detailed treatment. The idea of hierarchy permeates al-Farabi's philosophical thought. There is the hierarchy of the cognitive faculties of the human soul in his psychology; the hierarchy of

²² Osman Bakr, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam : A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Cambridge: Islamix Text Society, 1998), 263-264.

sylogistic proofs and the corresponding degrees of certainty in his epistemology and logic; the hierarchy of existents (mawjiiddt) in his metaphysics; the hierarchy of virtues and goods in his political philosophy; and many other secondary kinds of hierarchy. On the basis of these different kinds of hierarchy al-Farabi formulates the idea of the hierarchy of the sciences. Since al-Farabi's classification is the first to be studied and is also the concentration of this study, the hierarchy of the sciences is established through him. There are three fundamental bases of hierarchically ordering the sciences: the methodological, the ontological, and the ethical. The methodological basis is derived from al-Farabi's hierarchical ordering of proofs, arguments, and modes of knowing things; the ontological basis, from his hierarchically ordered view of the universe; and the ethical basis, from his hierarchical ordering of human needs, goods, and goals.

These three bases are related to three main aspects of the sciences. The ontological basis is related to the subject-matters of the sciences; the methodological to the methods and modes of knowing the objects of study; and the ethical to the aims and goals of the sciences. As general principles, the three criteria of establishing the hierarchy of the sciences are accepted by all three thinkers. However, in their specific formulation of each criteria these thinkers differ from each other. Consequently, their hierarchies of the sciences are not identical. Moreover, as related to their classifications of the sciences, we do not find the same kind of emphasis given to the three criteria. The difference in their specific formulation of each criteria and in the emphasis given to it is closely

related to their specific intellectual and religious world-view, especially pertaining to the distinction between religion and philosophy or between revelation and reason. In all three classifications the distinction between philosophical and religious sciences is clearly pronounced, although the terminologies used for the two groups of sciences are different. Al- Ghazzâli distinguishes between shar'iyah (religious) sciences and 'aqliyah (intellectual or rational) sciences. The latter he also calls ghayr shar'iyah (non-religious) sciences. Qutb al-Dîn distinguishes between 'ulûm hikmiy (philosophical sciences) and 'ulum ghayr hikmi (non-philosophical sciences). The latter he treats as synonymous with religious sciences, since he is concerned with the sciences cultivated in a civilization possessing a shari'ah (revealed law). In al-Fârabi's classification, however, no specific terminology is used, because the two groups of sciences are not mentioned by name. But his enumeration of the religious sciences of kaldm and fiqh immediately follows that of the philosophical sciences, namely mathematics, natural sciences, metaphysics, and political science.

Even the terminologies used by the authors are indicative of their respective philosophical attitude toward the two groups of sciences. Al-Ghazzâli's use of the term ghayr shar'iyah (non-religious) for the intellectual sciences means that, for him, the shar'iyah sciences are paramount and serve as the basis for naming all other sciences. Similarly, Qutb al-Din's use of the term ghayr 'ulûm hikmiy for the religious sciences means that the philosophical sciences serve as his basis for comparison with the other sciences. Al-Farabi's

classification gives greater prominence to the philosophical sciences.

In fact, its main aim was to make logic and the philosophical sciences better known and more generally accepted among Muslims. The classification constitutes also al-Farabi's attempt at projecting a superior image of the philosophical sciences in relation to the religious sciences. The only religious sciences included in his classification are *kaldm* and *fiqh* but these are only briefly treated. These sciences are in fact subordinate to his political science. The important religious science of *usūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) is incorporated into political science. Al-Fārābi appeals to methodological ground to support his view that the philosophical sciences are superior to the religious sciences. Philosophy employs the most excellent method of reasoning and proof, namely the demonstrative method, whereas the religious sciences at best employ the dialectical method.²³

²³Osman Bakr, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam : A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science* (Cambridge: Islamix Text Soceity, 1998), 263-264.

The Study of Islamic Philosophy in the West²⁴

The study of Islamic philosophy has had a long history not only in the Islamic world itself but also in the West. The tradition of the study of this philosophy in the West is nearly one thousand years old and can be divided into three phases, namely, the medieval period of translation, analysis, and study of Arabic texts; the second wave of translation and study in the Renaissance following the medieval effort, and finally a new attempt to study Islamic philosophy, which began in earnest in the nineteenth century and which continues to this day. There is a certain continuity in this long history and connection between these three phases, but there are also discontinuities. It is, however, essentially with the last period that we shall concern ourselves in this appraisal. Moreover, by 'philosophy' we understand *al-falsafah* or *al-ʿikmat al-ilāhiyyah* of the traditional Islamic sources as defined in the chapters that are to follow and not the general meaning of 'philosophy' as used in modern European languages, which would extend to many other traditional Islamic disciplines such as the Quranic commentary (*tafsir* and *taʿwil*), principles of religion (*usul al-din*), the principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), Sufism, the natural sciences, and the sciences, of language.

In the common parlance of European languages, 'philosophy' evokes the idea of something having to do with

²⁴Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (New York: SUNY, 2006), 13-14

general principles, governing reasoning laws, conceptual definitions, the origin, and end of things, and still to some extent wisdom, and one speaks not only of pure philosophy but also of the philosophy of art, religion, or science. In the classical Islamic languages, however, al-falsafah refers to a specific set of disciplines and to a number of distinct schools such as the mashshā'i (Peripatetic) and ishrāqi (Illuminationist), not to just any school of thought that contains "philosophical" ideas. Moreover, in later Islamic history in the eastern lands of Islam the term al-ʿikmat al-ilāhiyyah became common and practically synonymous with al-falsafah, whereas in the western lands of Islam the older term al-falsafah continued to be used to denote the activity of the "philosophers." In both cases, however, these terms have always been used as names for specific types of intellectual activity that Muslims came to identify with philosophy or what one could also translate in the second case, "theosophy," whereas other disciplines cultivated within Islamic civilization and possessing notable philosophical dimensions in the Western sense of 'philosophy' have not been categorized in the classical period of Islamic history as either al-falsafah or al-ʿikmat al-ilāhiyyah. It must be added, however, that although we have limited ourselves here to the discussion of falsafah in its traditional sense, it is necessary to remember its relation to various fields such as Sufism, theology (kalām), law, the natural and mathematical sciences, and the sciences of language. But we shall not deal here with these disciplines in themselves or with the philosophy they contain in the general Western sense of the term.

Just as in the context of Islamic civilization, philosophy, though a very distinct discipline, has been closely related to the sciences on the one hand and Sufism and kalām on the other, it has also had ramifications in fields dealing with the practical aspects of human life, especially political science and jurisprudence. The classical division of the “intellectual sciences” and also philosophy by many early Islamic philosophers (and following for the most part Aristotle) into the theoretical and the practical, the first comprised of metaphysics, physics, mathematics, and logic and the second of ethics, politics, and economics (in its traditional sense), reveals its relation to various fields and sciences including in some classifications even the religious sciences such as theology, Quranic commentary, and the principles of jurisprudence. Not only do these fields possess a “philosophy” of their own as philosophy is currently understood—the work of Harry A. Wolfson on the philosophy of the kalām being an outstanding proof²—but also falsafah as a separate discipline has been inextricably related to many aspects of their development. It is this second aspect that belongs to any integral treatment of the study of Islamic philosophy and that in fact calls for an interdisciplinary approach that should bear much fruit in the future.

Clearly, the concept of ‘the state’ is quite modern. The term entered the lexicon of the social sciences in the nineteenth century to understand the dramatic changes in early modern Europe from the seventeenth century onwards (Kaviraj 1999). To impose the modern concept of the state on seventh-century Arab society is misleading (Asad 1997). This is

not to suggest that seventh-century Arabia was bereft of any political formation. My point is that the nature of the political configuration of the seventh century was radically different from the state as it evolved in modern Europe. The medieval European state, it is well known, governed mostly by not governing. It barely intervened in most affairs of its subjects. It stood above the societal structure without intending to change it. Even if the state desired to alter the social arrangements, it would not have been possible due to its infrastructural weakness. As such its executive scope was far too limited. It was a 'puny leviathan' (Hall & Ikenberry 1997 [1989]: 23; also see Held 1996; Poggi 1978; Tilly 1975) interested in simply extracting taxes. In contrast, the modern state developed a more penetrative reach. With the rise of print media, transportation links, and a series of other innovations, the state assumed what Giddens calls 'heightened administrative power' (1985: 256) and went beyond mere extracting taxes to impact on daily life. In Europe around the sixteenth century, notes Foucault, there was a 'veritable explosion of the art of governing' (1996: 383 see also 1982), with the result that the state acquired the pastoral power to legislate everyday life, including the intimate arenas of sexuality and care.²⁵

²⁵Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares, eds. *Islam, Politics, Anthropology*. (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2010), .140

Islamic Mysticism : al-Tasawwuf²⁶

Sufism, *Taşawwuf* (The most usual explanation is that this word means only “to wear wool (*şūf*)”, the first Sufi s having worn, it is said, only garments of pure wool. Now what has never yet been pointed out is that many Jewish and Christian ascetics of these early times covered themselves, in imitation of St. John the Baptist in the desert, only with sheepskins. It may be that this example was also followed by some of the early Sufi s. None the less “to wear wool” can only be an -external and popular meaning of the term *Taşawwuf*, which is equivalent, in its numerical symbolism, to *al-Ḥikmat al-ilāhiyyah*, “Divine Wisdom”. Al-Bīrunī suggested a derivation of *şūfī*, plural of *şūfī ya*, from the Greek *Sophia*, wisdom, but this is etymologically doubtful because the Greek letter *sigma* normally becomes *sīn* (s) in Arabic and not *şād* (ş). It may be, however, that there is here an intentional, symbolical assonance.) which is the esoteric or inward (*bāṭin*) aspect of Islam, is to be distinguished from exoteric or “external” (*ẓāhir*)

Islam just as direct contemplation of spiritual or divine realities is distinguishable from the fulfilling of the laws which translate them in the individual order in connection with the conditions of a particular phase of humanity. Whereas the ordinary way of believers is directed towards obtaining a state

²⁶ Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*. (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008), 3-4

of blessedness after death, a state which may be attained through indirect and, as it were, symbolical participation in Divine Truths by carrying out prescribed works, Sufism contains its end or aim within itself in the sense that it can give access to direct knowledge of the eternal.

This knowledge, being one with its object, delivers from the limited and inevitably changing state of the ego. The spiritual state of *baqā'*, to which Sufi contemplatives aspire (the word signifies pure "subsistence" beyond all form), is the same as the state of *mokṣa* or "deliverance" spoken of in Hindu doctrines, just as the "extinction" (*al-fanā'*) of the individuality which precedes the "subsistence" is analogous to *nirvāṇa*, taken as a negative idea.

For Sufism to permit of such a possibility it must be identified with the very kernel (*al-lubb*) of the traditional form which is its support. It cannot be something super-added to Islam, for it would then be something peripheral in relation to the spiritual means of Islam. On the contrary, it is in fact closer to their superhuman source than is the religious exotericism and it participates actively, though in a wholly inward way, in the function of revelation which manifested this traditional form and continues to keep it alive.

This "central" role of Sufism at the heart of the Islamic world may be veiled from those who examine it from outside because esotericism, while it is conscious of the significance of forms, is at the same time in a position of intellectual sovereignty in relation to them and can thus assimilate to itself—at any rate for the exposition of its doctrine—certain

ideas or symbols derived from a heritage different from its own traditional background.

It may appear strange that Sufism should on the one hand be the “spirit” or “heart” of Islam (*rūḥ al-islām* or *qalb al-islām*) and on the other hand represent at the same time the outlook which is, in the Islamic world, the most free in relation to the mental framework of that world, though it is important to note that this true and wholly inward freedom must not be confused with any movements of rebellion against the tradition; such movements are not intellectually free in relation to the forms which they deny because they fail to understand them. Now this role of Sufism in the Islamic world² is indeed like that of the heart in man, for the heart is the vital center of the organism and also, in its subtle reality, the “seat” of an essence which transcends all individual form.²⁷

²⁷ Titus Burckhardt, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2008), 3-4

Mystical Dimension of Islam : Sufi Orders²⁸

During the first four to five centuries of Islam, Sufi instruction was transmitted via an individual master (known variously as *shaykh*, *pir* or *murshid*) to a group of students. After a while, a more structurally tight-knit organization developed, more often than not named after a founder and based on a spiritual framework encompassing rules of etiquette, behaviour, meditation and other forms of worship.³² Below are some of the most influential Sufi orders.^{33A}

The Qadiriyya order

This order was named after Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 561/1166), who was born in a village in northern Iran. His ideas influenced other founders of mystical orders such as Khwaja Mu'in al-Din Chishti (d. 633/1236) and Abd al Qahir al-Suhrawardi (d. 564/1168). He is said to have remarked: 'My foot is on the head of every saint.'³⁴ The order was formed several decades after his death, and stories of his miracles were later circulated by biographers such as Ali ibn Yusuf al-Shattanawfi (d. 713/1314).³⁵ Al-Jilani viewed shari'a as the source of all spiritual advancement and culture, and followed the Hanbali school of law (see Chapter 4).³⁶ Initially, Qadiri

²⁸ Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 77-80.

teachings spread in and around Baghdad, then moved into Arabia, Morocco, Egypt, Turkestan, parts of Africa (Khartoum, Sokoto, Tripoli) and India.³⁷ It is unlikely that al-Jilani himself instituted a rigid set of prayers and rituals to follow, and different Qadiri groups have different practices, although nominal allegiance is given to the caretaker of al-Jilani's tomb in Baghdad.

Pilgrimages are often made to places associated with the Qadiri order and festivities are held in honour of the founder at which gifts are presented to his descendants. Qadiris also perform *dhikr* accompanied by music.³⁸ Al-Jilani's sermons were collected into a work titled *The Sublime Revelation (al-Fath ar-rabbani)*. In his fifteenth 'discourse', he said:

No one knows how to behave correctly with the shaykhs unless he has served them and become aware of some of the spiritual states [*ahwal*] they experience with Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). The people [of the Lord] have learned to treat praise and blame like summer and winter, like night and day. They regard them both as from Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He), because no one is capable of bringing them about except Allah (Almighty and Glorious is He). When this has become real for them, therefore, they do not place their confidence in those who praise them, nor do they fight with their critics, and they pay no attention to them. Their hearts have been emptied of both love and hate for creatures. They neither love nor hate, but rather feel compassion.³⁹

The Shadhiliyya order

In the western Muslim world, i.e. around the Mediterranean, the end of the Almohad empire in the seventh/thirteenth century gave rise to several dynastic regimes. Under one of these – the Hafsids of Tunis – the Shadhili order came into being, named after Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 656/1258).⁴⁰ His order prospered in Spain, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and under the Mamluks in Egypt, attracting notable intellectuals including the prolific author Jalal ad-Din al-Suyuti (d. 911/1505). After its initial start in North Africa, the order gained prominence in the eastern parts of the Islamic world; today it is mainly represented in North Africa with active branches in Egypt and the Sudan.⁴¹

Early Shadhilis followed the Maliki school of law (see Chapter 4) and emphasized the doctrine of the absolute unity of God (*tawhid*). Their goal was the gnostic realization of God based on strict adherence to religious law and Ash'ari dogma.⁴² From early in their history, many sub-branches of the Shadhili order sprang up. They avoided ostentatious dress or spectacular public displays, although visiting the tombs of saints was an important feature of their practice. Later, Shadhilis also played an important role in resisting European colonization of Muslim lands, and generated a number of revivalist movements.⁴³

Shadhili mystical practice conforms to the practice of religious law. It includes congregational recitation of poems, prayers and litanies. For example, 'The Cloak' (*al-Burda*), a famous poem honouring the Prophet Muhammad, was written by a Shadhili Sufi, al-Busiri (d. 695/1296). In this he says:⁴⁴

Muhammad, leader of the two worlds
and of Man and the jinn,
Leader also of the Arabs and
non Arabs and their kin.
Our Prophet, Commander of right,
prohibits evil's way,
Yet no one's speech more gentle could be
than his nay or yea.⁴⁵

The Naqshbandiyya order

Named after Khwaja Baha' al-Din Muhammad Naqshband (d. 791/1389), this order has had a far-reaching impact on Muslims all over the world. Its spiritual affiliation is with the first caliph, Abu Bakr, unlike most Sufi lineages, which reach back to the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law Ali.⁴⁶

The order was established in Central Asia, but, despite its early history in the Persian world, the Sunni-focused Naqshbandi order lost influence in Persia with the rise of the Shi'i Safavid dynasty (908–1149/1502–1736). After its founding, the Naqshbandis spread through Turkestan, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, Java, Borneo, Africa and China. The Mujaddidi branch, established by Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1034/1624), gained prominence in India, but also migrated to Turkey. Another significant Indian Naqshbandi influence came in the form of the teachings of Shah Wali Allah (d. 1176/1762).⁴⁷

The Naqshbandis did not shy away from involvement in politics. They had a generally favourable relationship with the Ottomans; the Turkish Shaykh Ahmed Ziyauddin Gumush-Khanewi (d. 1311/1894), who developed a large following that

exists to the present day, fought in the Ottoman–Russian war of 1877.⁴⁸ Other Turkish Sufi shaykhs fought in the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence, while militant Naqshbandis opposed the establishment of the secular Turkish state. In India, Naqshbandis played an important role in developing Mughal ideology; in particular, Ahmad Sirhindi attempted to reform the ruling classes.⁴⁹ The Naqshbandis, joined by the Qadiris, were also active in attempting to resist the Russian entrance into Caucasia.⁵⁰

In the present day, a prominent Naqshbandi group has moved into the United States and Europe under the direction of the charismatic Shaykh Muhammad Nazim al-Haqqani and his deputy Shaykh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani.⁵¹ According to the Naqshbandiyya–Haqqaniyya, there are three levels of daily spiritual practice depending on one's stage along the path.

Along with the obligatory practices that all Muslims perform (such as the five daily prayers and following the requirements of religious law), an initiate in the Naqshbandiyya–Haqqaniyya order repeats certain phrases, invocations, lists of the divine names and Qur'anic chapters (suras) multiple times, and also prays blessings on the Prophet Muhammad. A disciple at the next level does the same but with increased repetitions. At the third level, the disciple undergoes more rigorous spiritual practice and meditation. Periods of seclusion are required in order to heighten spiritual awakening.²⁹

²⁹ Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 77-80.

PART D : ISLAMIC LAW AND ECONOMICS

- 16. Branches of Islam and the School of Laws**
- 17. Islamic Legal Thought : Shari'a and Fiqh**
- 18. Islamic Economic Development**
- 19. The Juridical Meaning of *Riba***
- 20. The Golden Age of Islam**

The Branches of Islam and the Schools of Law³⁰

Before moving into the main body of the book, it seems to be an appropriate juncture at which, for the benefit of my non-Muslim readers, I should set out, as briefly as possible, details of the two main branches of the faith and their different schools of law. I shall be referring to these over and over again, and some readers will doubtless find much to puzzle them. It should be noted, however, that a Muslim of either sex, who has attained the age of puberty, may renounce the doctrines of the school or sub-school to which he or she belongs, and adopt the tenets of any other school or sub-school, to the law of which he or she will then be subject. There are no special formalities involved in such a change; a slight alteration in the saying of the prayer is all it will take to effect it. There are two main branches of the faith, the Sunni and the Shi'ah (also known as the Shi'ite). This division originated as a result of the dispute concerning the Imamate of the spiritual leadership of Islam, which came up for settlement on the death of the Prophet. Those who uphold the principle of election by the people, with the ultimate choice of their own imams (caliphs) by means of votes, are the Sunni, the largest branch of the faith, today comprising some eighty-five per cent of the world's Muslims. The Sunni, representing the orthodox mainstream sect of Islam, recognize the first four caliphs as

³⁰Jamal J. Nasir, *The Status of Women Under Islamic Law and Modern Islamic Legislation*, 3rd ed (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 11-13

the true successors of Prophet Muhammad. They base their teachings on the Qur'an and traditional Muslim law (the Sunnah, derived from the words and the acts of the Prophet) and regard the decisions of the jama'a (those voted into leadership by the people) as of binding authority. The Shi'ah (taken from the word sha'a—meaning to follow) are those who advocate that the office of imam should go to the Prophet's own family by right of succession, or to his nominees. They form the principal minority sect of Islam, and are mainly influential in Iran, Iraq and the Indian subcontinent. The Shi'ah is composed of the followers of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad), repudiating the authority of the Sunni jama'a and recognizing only the decisions given by its own spiritual leaders (the imams). It has its own system of law and theology, and emphasizes, more than the main Sunni branch, traditionalism and the political role of Islam.

While the Sunni have, throughout history, held the belief that just government can be established on the basis of correct Islamic practice, the Shi'ah believe that such government by election can only be inherently unjust. The dispute between the two factions gave rise to a characteristic complexity in the judicial doctrines of the two schools. It should be pointed out, however, that the difference between the Sunni and the Shi'ah centres more on the questions relating to political events of the past, rather than to any general principles of law and jurisprudence. These schools are subdivided yet again. The principle Shi'ah sub-schools are (1) The Ithna-Asharis, (2) the Ismailis, and (3) the Zaydites, and

the difference between them is not so much in the interpretation of law, as in the points of doctrine. The largest of these sub-schools, the Ithna-Asharis, is the official doctrine of Iran and of the Shi'ahs of the Arab Middle East and Pakistan (also known as the Ja'faris, after the sixth Imam Ja'far, who was the first to codify the Shi'ah law). The Ithna-Asharis are literally "the Twelvers": the Shi'ah sect which believes in twelve infallible Imams. The four Sunni sub-schools are the Hanafi, the Maliki, the Shafi'i, and the Hanbali. Each of these sub-schools derives its name from its founder. Abu Hanifa was the founder of the Hanafi School, Malik ibn Anas of the Maliki School, ibn al-Shafi'i of the Shafi'i School, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal of the Hanbali School. Their doctrines are essentially the same as regards traditional principles, and differ from one another merely in matters of detail. It may be appropriate to mention that although there are many schools of Muslim law, they have a sectarian, not a territorial, basis. The laws of the various schools might differ, but the followers of the same school in different parts of the world are governed by the same law. Unfortunately, it has to be recognized that a far more extremist approach to Islam has given rise to serious conflict, particularly in recent years, between the religious factions in areas such as Afghanistan (where the majority of the population are of the Hanafi School of the Sunni sect) and Iraq and Iran (the majority being of the Ithna-Asharis School of the Shi'ah, or Shi'ite, sect). Of course such religiously based conflicts have not been confined solely to Islam. Religious conflicts have existed, and still exist, worldwide, even among the other major religions such as Christianity, and one can

only hope that such conflicts can be resolved with a much-needed return to global peace and harmony. There is one further sect to which I will be referring when dealing with the legislations, and that is the Druzes of Lebanon and Syria.

The Druzes is one of the dominant religious communities of Mount Lebanon, separate from Islamic orthodoxy in that, although primarily Muslim, it contains some elements of Christianity. In the nineteenth century, many of the Druzes moved from Lebanon to the mountains of southern Syria. Professor Joseph Schacht, a prominent German scholar and orientalist, considered by many to be the most influential modern Western authority on Islamic Law, published several books on Islamic studies. In his Introduction to the second edition of *The Legacy of Islam*, he said that Islamic religious law and Islamic theology had always been at the centre of Islamic religious learning, owing to the fact that Islam, from its very beginnings, was first and foremost a religion of action. As a practising lawyer, I must say that I wholly agree with him. Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout, a former rector of the University of al-Azhar al-Sharif, who, by virtue of his office, was one of the most authoritative spokesmen of Islam, published a book in the late 1950s with the title *Islam: A Faith and a Law*. Of the total of just under six hundred pages, only sixty-nine are devoted to an exposé of the faith of Islam, the remainder comprising an account of the institutions of Islamic Law. This is further evidence of the fact, which I have already demonstrated, that Islam is not merely a religion in the Western sense of the word, not merely a law, but is a form of society; an ideal society in the greater part of the world of

Islam. Therefore, it is the exact science of Islamic jurisprudence, the fiqh (the meaning of the authoritative presentation of the corpus of Islamic Law) and the Shari'ah, to which I have turned in every instance to explore the subject of the rights and obligations of women under Islam to include in this book, and I think it appropriate here to quote a leading British counsel who, in the 1990s, when addressing the jury in a particular court case, said "Members of the jury, let us swim together in a sea of understanding and reality."³¹

³¹Jamal J. Nasir, *The Status of Women Under Islamic Law and Modern Islamic Legislation*, 3rd ed (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 11-13

Islamic Legal Thought : Shari'a and Fiqh³²

A key term associated with Islamic law is shari'a; in fact many often translate shari'a as 'Islamic law'. However, it is important to give a clear meaning of this term in order to distinguish it from fiqh, another key term associated with Islamic law and also often translated as 'Islamic law' or sometimes as 'Islamic jurisprudence'. The term shari'a is linguistically associated with terms such as 'the path', 'the way' or 'the road'. Inherent, therefore, in its meaning is that it is considered the path set by God for Muslims to follow in order to achieve salvation. Shari'a represents the divine guidance contained in the revelation communicated to the Prophet through the Qur'an and further illuminated by the Prophet in his sayings and deeds (Sunna). In the context of Islamic law, shari'a refers to the totality of this guidance contained in the Qur'an and Sunna and generally expressed in their commands and prohibitions.

These instructions take different forms: sometimes they are specific like the dietary and some penal laws; at other times they are principles and values which the Qur'an and Sunna want to instil in believers, such as their consistent reminder to be just and fair in one's dealings, and always to act honestly and truthfully.

³² Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 43-45.

The term *fiqh* is closely associated with *shari'a*. It originally meant 'understanding' or 'knowledge' of something. It perhaps originated from the use of the term *faqih*, a 'man of understanding', for the camel expert who distinguished the she-camels that were in heat from those that were pregnant. The term *fiqh* also occurs in the Qur'an in its verb form in this general meaning of understanding. For instance, in recounting the response of the Prophet Shu'ayb's people to his message, the Qur'an states, 'Shu'ayb, we do not understand [*la nafqahu*] much of what you say'.¹ In reference to those who reject God's commands, the Qur'an states that 'they have hearts, but do not understand [*la yafqahun*] thereby'.² Similarly, the term *fiqh* and its derivatives are found in the hadith literature. An often cited example is a blessing the Prophet Muhammad bestowed on his Companion Ibn Abbas (d. 68/687) in which the Prophet reportedly said: 'May Allah grant him deep understanding [*faqqihhu*] of religion'.³ These usages of *fiqh* have the broader sense of understanding something, and even when restricted, as in the case of the above hadith, refer to all matters of religion and not just legal matters.

From its broader usage, the term *fiqh* came to be more narrowly applied. People read the Qur'anic commands and prohibitions and attempted to understand what the Qur'an required of them in terms of what they had to do, mentally or physically, and what they had to avoid. This was carried out in the light of the Prophet's Sunna. With the passage of time, such interpretative activities brought about a positive body of knowledge which included legal, theological and ascetic material. All these *shari'a* disciplines were referred to as *fiqh* in

the early period of Islam, which roughly covered the first hundred and fifty years (610–750 CE). With the development of theology (*kalam*) and asceticism (*sufism*) in the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries, *fiqh* came to be applied only to the body of legal knowledge. Here three things need to be noted:

First, the term '*fiqh*', from being a mental act, that is, the act of understanding, came to mean something more concrete – the body of knowledge produced by examining the commands and prohibitions found in the Qur'an and Sunna. This body of knowledge at first included all shari'a disciplines but was later confined to legal matters.

Second, shari'a and *fiqh* came to be differentiated. Shari'a was the totality of commands and prohibitions found in the Qur'an and Sunna. *Fiqh* referred to specific rulings obtained through the understanding and interpretation of the shari'a material using other sources, as will be explained later. Thus the source of shari'a, for the Muslim, is God and divine, while the source of *fiqh* is human.

Third, in common usage today, shari'a refers generally to the commands and prohibitions not just as they are found in the Qur'an and Sunna but as they have been interpreted and elaborated in *fiqh* to be acted upon in everyday life. Therefore these terms are often used interchangeably.⁴

For many Muslims, *fiqh* or Islamic law covers all aspects of a Muslim's life, religious and mundane, individual and social. It gives concrete form to the shari'a principles, norms, values and specific instructions (commandments and prohibitions) related to all these areas. These norms, values and instructions

came from the Qur'an and were further elaborated in the Sunna of the Prophet. Muslim scholars needed, especially in the first three centuries of Islam (610–900 CE), to go through these to develop a legal system that would allow for the appropriate manifestation of shari'a. This encompassing conceptualization of shari'a, which resulted in the development of Islamic law, is outlined by Seyyed Hossein Nasr:

It [shari'a] is a religious notion of law, one in which law is an integral aspect of religion. In fact religion to a Muslim is essentially the Divine Law which includes not only universal moral principles but details of how man should conduct his life and deal with his neighbour and with God; how he should eat, procreate and sleep; how he should buy and sell at the market place; how he should pray and perform other acts of worship.³³

³³Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 43-45.

Islamic Economic Development³⁴

Economic development is a central and crucial issue for the majority of Islamic economists. This is for two particular reasons, the abolition of interest from the Islamic economy and the effect of Zakàh. With the abolition of interest there is more focus on the development of resources and production, and the implications for land, capital and labour. Zakàh is concerned with the distribution of output or income and with the consequences for wealth, with a view to achieving a just allocation of resources. Therefore, by necessity and Islamic economic renaissance explicitly or by implication, economic development is a topic that is well embedded in Islamic economics. And if we add to that other reasons, such as the distinction of Islamic economics from other economic systems in philosophy, mechanisms and objectives, Islamic economists would feel the urge, because of the nature of the subject, to write on economic development from an Islamic perspective.

To begin with, all Islamic economists, both those who have written on the subject and others who have not, but still express their opinion in a different form, agree that Islamic economics is value based and as such economic development in Islam will be characterized by the same prerequisite. The differences among the writers are differences of opinion on details, differences of the degree of emphasis, and their

³⁴Ahmed Abdel-Fattah El-Ashker and Rodney Wilson. *Islamic Economics : A Short History* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 388-390

perspective for the examination of development issues. Khurshid Ahmad's contribution seems to be among the most quoted and his "Economic Development in an Islamic Framework" is frequently cited and deserves a due attention. Ahmad enthusiastically calls for innovation and a full departure from imported ideas either from the West in the form of Western capitalism or the Eastern bloc in the form of socialism. Neither system can provide the Muslim nations with a model for economic development, nor would either be suitable to adapt to fit in a framework of Islamic economics (Ahmed, 1980). The major thrust of Islamic economic development is, or ought to be, directed at human life with the objective of making it purposeful and value oriented. Islamic economic development as such will be based on two main premises: first, development in an Islamic framework and Islamic development economics as rooted in the value-pattern embodied in the Qur"àn and the Sunnah, and second, this approach rules out imitativeness (ibid.). The philosophical foundations of Islamic economic development are laid down as: (a) Tawhîd, God's unity and sovereignty, (b) God's Rububiyah, divine arrangements for nourishment, sustenance and directing things towards their perfection, (c) Khilafah, man's role as God's vicegerent on earth, and (d) Tazkiyah, purification plus growth (ibid.).

In the light of, and based on, these four philosophical pillars, Ahmad derives the parameters governing the concept of development from an Islamic perspective, which are mainly (ibid.):

- (1) The Islamic concept of development has a comprehensive character and includes moral, spiritual, and material aspects,
- (2) The focus for development effort and the heart of development process is man, in that development means development of man and his physical and socio-cultural environment, a view which is also advocated by al-Ghazàli in his "Man is the Basis of the Islamic Strategy for Economic Development" (Al-Ghazàli, 1994).
- (3) Islamic economic development is a multi-dimensional activity.
- (4) Islamic economic development aims to achieve a balance between quantitative and qualitative elements of economic development.
- (5) Among the dynamic principles of social life Islam has particularly emphasised two: first, the optimal utilization of resources that God has endowed to man, and secondly, their equitable use and distribution and promotion of all human relationships on the basis of Right Justice.

Finally, Ahmad draws the goals of Islamic economic development policy as follows (op. cit.):

- (1) Human resources development
- (2) Expansion of useful production, which entails three priority area:
 - a. Abundant production and supply of food and basic items of necessary,
 - b. Defense requirements,
 - c. Self-sufficiency in the production of basic goods,
- (3) Improvement of the quality of life, which would include:
 - a. Employment creation,

- b. An effective and broad based social security system,
 - c. Equitable distribution of income and wealth,
 - d. Balanced development
- (4) New technology,
- (5) Reduction of national dependency on the outside world and greater integration within the Muslim world.

There can hardly be a disagreement on the philosophical foundations or policy objectives in Islamic economic development. The foundations are a reflection of Muslims belief and are embedded in the core of the teachings of Islam, and the objectives are a manifestation of the general feeling among Muslims in general and Islamic economists in particular for closer cooperation between Muslim economies.³⁵

³⁵Ahmed Abdel-Fattah El-Ashker and Rodney Wilson. *Islamic Economics : A Short History* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2006), 388-390

The Juridical Meaning of *Riba*³⁶

Lexically, *riba* means increase. Allah Most High says, "But when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells (*rabat*)" (Hajj 22:5), meaning: it increases and grows. He, Most Praised, also says, "lest one party should be more numerous (*arba*) than another" (Naml 16:92), meaning: more numerous. It is said "So-and-so exceeded (*arba*) so-and-so," meaning: has more than he.1

In (interest) means an increase in things specified by the Revealed Law, this particular definition being that of the Hanbali School. *Riba* is defined in the Hanafi work as a surplus of commodity without counter-value in a commutative transaction of property for property. The intent of such a transaction is a surplus of commodities, even if only legally; thus, the definition includes both credit *riba* and invalid sales, since postponement in either of the indemnities is a legal surplus without perceivable material recompense, the delay usually being given an increase in compensation.2

Riba is forbidden by the *Quran*, the *Sunna*, and the consensus of the jurists. As for the *Quran*, Allah Most High says:

• "but Allah has permitted trade and forbidden *riba*" (Baqara 2:275).3

³⁶Abdulkader Thomas, ed. *Interest in Islamic Economics : Understanding Riba* (London: Routledge, 2006), 25-26.

- “Those who devour *riba* will not stand except as stands one whom Satan by his touch has driven to madness” (Baqara 2:275).

- “O you who believe! Fear Allah and give up what remains of your demand for *riba*, if you are indeed believers. If you do it not, take notice of a war from Allah and His Messenger; but if you turn back, you shall have your capital sums; deal not unjustly, and you shall not be dealt with unjustly” (Baqara 2:278–279).

Riba was made forbidden in the eighth or ninth year after the Hegira or flight from Makka. As for the *Sunna*:

- The saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), “Avoid the seven grave sins”—and of them he mentioned devouring *riba*.⁴

- (may Allah be pleased with him) relates, “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) cursed the devourer of *riba*, his constituent, the one who acts as a witness to it, and one who acts as a notary to it.”⁵

- Hakim relates on the authority of that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “*Riba* is of seventy three kinds, the lightest in seriousness of which is as bad as one’s marrying his own mother; for the Muslim who practices *riba* goes mad.”⁶ Other such *hadiths* will follow in the section dealing with the legal causes for their impermissibility of *riba*.

Riba is also forbidden by the scholarly consensus of the entire Muslim nation. Mawardi relates, “It has even been said that it is not permissible according to the law of any revealed religion,” as can be understood from His Most High’s saying,

“they took *riba*, while they had been forbidden therefrom” that is, as in the previously revealed scriptures.⁷

The *riba*, which is forbidden in Islam, is of two types:

1 Credit *riba*, which was the only type known by the pre-Islamic Arabs. This type is taken against a delay in settlement of a due debt, regardless whether the debt be that of a goods sold or a loan.

2 Surplus *riba*, is the sale of similar items with a disparity in amount in the six canonically-forbidden categories of goods: gold, silver, wheat, barley, salt, and dry dates. This type of *riba* is forbidden in order that it does not become a pretext for committing forbidden acts, that is, in order to prevent it being used as a pretext to committing credit *riba*, such that a person sells gold, for example, on credit, then pays back in silver more than the equivalent of what he had taken in gold. This first type, which is the *riba* of the pre-Islamic period, is forbidden by the explicit text of the *Quran*. As for the second type, its impermissibility is established in the *Sunna* by analogy of the first type, since it too includes an increase without counter-value. A third type, namely the selling of disparate kinds on credit, is also forbidden by the *Sunna*; it likewise is considered a form of *riba*, since the delay of payment in one of the countervalues requires an increase. Similar to it in meaning is the loan that yields a profit, because it is an exchange of a thing for itself.⁸

The legal ruling of *riba*, regardless of whether credit or surplus *riba*, is impermissibility (*haram*), the transaction being invalid (*batil*) according to the majority of scholars, such that no

legal consequence results from the transaction; and imperfect(*fasid*) according to the Hanafi scholars.³⁷

³⁷Abdulkader Thomas, ed. *Interest in Islamic Economics : Understanding Riba* (London: Routledge, 2006), 25-26.

The Golden Age of Islam³⁸

Bernard Lewis, author of *What Went Wrong? Western Impact & Middle Eastern Response*, notes that Islamic power was at its peak from the ninth through to the thirteenth century. At this moment in world history, Islam represented “the greatest military power on earth — its armies were at the same time invading Europe and Africa, India and China. It was the fore- most economic power in the world [and] it had achieved the highest level so far in human history in the arts and sciences of civilization”. Damascus and Baghdad were the two great centres of learning during this “golden age” of Islam. Here, Muslim scholars assembled Greek manuscripts in large numbers — including the works by Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras and the other great philosophers and scientists of ancient times — which they studied, translated and provided with illuminating commentaries. They also welcomed other scholars from around the world without distinction of nationality or creed. By the second half of the eighth century, all the best mathematical and astronomical work was done by Muslims, while Muslim cartographers led the way in terms of their knowledge of world geography and methods of cartographic representation.¹⁸ At the same time, schools,

³⁸Angelo M. Venardos, *Islamic Banking and Finance in South-east Asia : Its Development and Future* (Singapore: Worl Scientific Publication,2005), 15-16

colleges, libraries, observatories and hospitals were built throughout the Islamic world. At this time, the economy of the Islamic world stretched from the western end of the Mediterranean to India, but its influence extended far further as Muslim traders and merchant adventurers pursued their commercial activities to the limits of the known world. Baghdad, the capital, was also the largest city in the Muslim world, and as well as being a great centre of learning, it was famous for its superb craftsmen and artisans, skilled in metal working, glassware and ceramics (the economy of Baghdad was largely artisan based). Sumptuous textiles of wool, cotton, linen and silk were also produced throughout the Islamic world — the carpet weavers in Persia, Azerbaijan and Bukhara were renowned far and wide, while Egypt was a leading centre for linens and cotton textiles. This kind of economic specialisation would not have been possible without a high level of trade and commerce. Initially, trading privileges were restricted to Arab (Muslim) merchants, but subsequently other groups such as Jews enjoyed equal trading rights. Commodities were transported from one end of the known world to the other via well-established maritime and overland trade routes with harbours and caravanserais acting as the main centres of exchange and transshipment. The Arabic language and culture facilitated this trade around the Mediterranean and through the Middle East to India, but equally the pursuit of commercial activities beyond the boundaries of the Muslim world encouraged the spread of Islam to other parts of the world including China and South-east Asia. The actual timing and introduction of Islam to South-east Asia is still a matter of

considerable academic debate. European historians have tended to argue that Islam was introduced to the region via trading contacts with India, but some South-east Asian Muslim scholars claim it was brought to the region directly from Arabia and the Middle East. A third faction argues that it was Muslim Chinese merchants who were responsible — Chinese ships had been present in Indonesian waters since the beginning of the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 400) and possibly even earlier.¹⁹

PART E : ISLAMIC MODERN THOUGH AND POLITICS

21. Trends in Islamic Thought Today
22. Trends in Islamic Thought Today
23. From Modernism to Neo-Modernism:
24. Discourse and Ideological Components of
Religion in Politics
25. The Idea of Women in Islam
26. Conversion to Islam

Trends in Islamic Thought Today I³⁹

The modern period has witnessed the emergence of several trends in Islamic thought. Given the diversity of Islamic thought today, it is difficult to adopt a typology that would cover such a wide range of trends and thinkers. However, I have tried to encapsulate, at least at a fairly broad level, the key trends that exist today. In previous chapters, specific aspects of Islamic thought in the modern period, from theology, philosophy, to politics, to Qur'an have been covered and therefore, in this chapter, I will not address those issues in detail. Instead, I will simply outline broad trends of Islamic thought today.

Legalist traditionalists

Legalist traditionalists follow strictly the premodern schools of Islamic law and associated theological teachings. They uphold solutions arrived at by premodern jurists and theologians of the relevant school, and view calls for reform of Islamic law and criticism of traditionalism with a degree of horror. This trend is dominant in the traditionalist seminary (madrasa) system across the Islamic world, for instance in the Middle East, Africa, the Indian subcontinent and the Malay world. Blind following of one's school (theological or legal)

³⁹Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 143-154.

remained a prominent feature of Islam from the fifth/eleventh century right up to the modern period.

Historically each locality decided which school of law it would adopt. Thus, for instance, the Ottoman Empire adopted the Hanafi school of law. In the twentieth century, Saudi Arabia adopted the Hanbali school, while Malaysia adopted the Shafi'i school. Until recently, a Muslim was expected to follow his or her school of law in matters related to rituals and other areas of Islamic law such as family law. In some communities, even mosques were at times classified as Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali or Shi'i (Ja'fari). Efforts were made during the twentieth century to bring these schools of law together. Concerned scholars therefore sought to emphasize the commonalities and similarities among them and that they all represented 'orthodox' Islam. Despite this, past interpretations of law are still dominant among certain sectors of Muslims today.

Political Islamists

Political Islamists are concerned with developing an Islamic socio-political order in the Muslim communities. They reject, at least in theory, the modern ideologies of nationalism, secularism and communism. They also reject 'Westernization'. Islamists argue for reform and change in Muslim communities, emphasizing 'Islamic' values and institutions over what they see as Western values and norms. They are interested in establishing an Islamic state. A few argue for a revolutionary approach to what they consider to be 'non-Islamic' governance of Muslim states even if this means using violence. Others

argue for a gradual approach through education, beginning at the grassroots level.

Political Islamists are particularly keen to project an alternative programme to expand the scope of what Islam means and its role in society. Those who belong to this category of Muslims are reacting to a situation in which the role of Islam in society as they see it is constantly being eroded. In their view, the causes of this erosion lie largely in the colonial period. In the post-independence period, the modern state gave way to areas such as marginalization of Islamic law, and the dominance of non-Islamic priorities.

Notable movements associated with political Islam include the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and the Jamaat-i-Islami of Pakistan. They have similar approaches to social change and adopt an ideology that emphasizes a more activist Islam that challenges the existing authorities, whether state or religious. They are determined to change Muslim societies from within. Any obstacle to the change they argue for may become a target of their challenge. Most significantly, several militant groups of activists have emerged from these movements although the movements themselves are considered 'mainstream'.

The militant activists declare that the nation-state as it exists in the Muslim world is illegitimate. Their argument is that, for a state to be legitimate, it has to derive its authority or legitimacy from God, that is, from revealed religion, rather than from the people. God's sovereignty should be supreme in the state, in which case the state should enforce and implement Islamic law, not, as they say, 'man-made law'. Since

most Muslim states do not implement 'Islamic law' these states are not seen as legitimate and are under challenge by the militant activists.

Secular Muslims

Secular Muslims see Islam as largely confined to the domain of personal belief and a relationship between God and the individual. Many value personal piety. They see no need for an Islamic state or for the implementation of what is referred to as Islamic law. Their typical opponents include anyone calling for establishing an Islamic state or an Islamic sociopolitical order, or those seeking the implementation of premodern Islamic law in society. The following is from a document called 'A Secular Muslim Manifesto' by a French Muslim, which shows the kinds of issues many secular Muslims are interested in:

- We are women and men of Muslim culture. Some of us are believers, others are agnostics or atheists. We all condemn firmly the declarations and acts of misogyny, homophobia, and anti-Semitism that we have heard and witnessed for a while now here in France, and that are carried out in the name of Islam. These three characteristics typify the political Islamism that has been forceful for so long in several of our countries of origin. We fought against them there, and we are committed to fighting against them again – here.
- We are firmly committed to equal rights for both sexes. We fight the oppression of women who are subjected to Personal Status Laws, like those in Algeria

(recent progress in Morocco highlights how far Algeria lags behind), and sometimes even in France via bilateral agreements. We believe that democracy cannot exist without these equal rights. . . . It is also for this reason that we oppose wearing the Islamic headscarf, even if among us there are differing opinions about the law banning it from schools in France.

- We believe that recognition of the existence of homosexuality and the freedom for homosexuals to live their own lives as they wish represents undeniable progress. As long as an individual – heterosexual or homosexual– does not break the laws protecting minors, each person’s sexual choices are his or her own business, and do not concern the state in any way.
- Finally, we condemn firmly the anti-Semitic statements made recently in speeches in the name of Islam. . . . We see the use of the Israel–Palestine conflict by fundamentalist movements as a means of promoting the most disturbing forms of anti-Semitism.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 143-154.

Trends in Islamic Thought Today 2 ⁴¹

Despite our opposition to the current policies of the Israeli government, we refuse to feed primitive images of the 'Jew'. A real, historical conflict between two peoples should not be exploited. We recognize Israel's right to exist, a right recognized by the PLO congress in Algiers in 1988 and the Arab League summit meeting in Beirut in 2002. At the same time we re committed to the Palestinian people and support.

Theological puritans

Theological puritans are concerned primarily with theological matters such as 'correct belief'. They seek to purify society of what they consider practices antithetical to Islam, such as reverence for saints and saint-worship, magic, certain Sufi practices and what they call innovation in religious matters (*bid'a*). They are also concerned with the literal affirmation of God's attributes without any interpretation. They rely heavily on the teachings of figures such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) and Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1207/1792) and the modern proponents of their teachings. Their hallmark is a degree of puritanism and literalism, coupled with accusations against other Muslims for being engaged in 'innovation in religious matters' (*bid'a*). Muhammad b. Salih al-Uthaymin is a

⁴¹Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 143-154.

scholar from Saudi Arabia and is considered one of the leading figures associated with this trend of Islam today. One of the areas in which a literal reading to the texts of the Qur'an and hadith is applied is in the area of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Militant extremists

The late twentieth and early twenty-first century militancy among Muslims is associated with a range of activities including localized national liberation struggles, international struggles such as the First Afghan War (as a result of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan), and anti-Western activities by extremist militants such as Usama bin Laden. In the early twenty-first century, it is anti-Western activities that dominate much of the debate on militancy and extremism among Muslims, particularly as a result of the events of September 11 and the bombings in both Muslim and Western countries by a global network of militant extremists. These are driven by a view of the world that is characterized by a deep sense of injustice against Muslims. This is supported by a narrative that reinforces this sense of injustice beginning with the Crusades and moving on to colonialism and post-colonial domination of Muslims by the West. The grievances also include 'stealing' of Muslims' resources, controlling and keeping Muslims weak, preventing them from acquiring any means to challenge this domination (economic, military, political) and occupying Muslim lands to achieve these objectives. Other grievances are what they consider to be double standards in dealing with Muslims, preventing the spread or growth of Islam through

supporting anti-Muslim missionary activities, betrayal by fellow Muslims who 'collaborate' with the West, and a deep sense of powerlessness in a world that they believe is aimed at 'obliterating' Islam and Muslims. The militant extremists also emphasize the universal brotherhood of all Muslims; they do not seem to support the concept of the nation state and are motivated by a particular understanding of jihad whose theatre is global. They believe that less resourceful people can defeat a powerful enemy, as was the case in the First Afghan War in which the Soviet Empire was defeated. Finally, they believe in using terror to achieve their objectives.

Progressive ijihadis

Progressive ijihadis come from a range of backgrounds and intellectual orientations. They can be considered intellectual descendents of modernists along the following lines: modernists → neo-modernists → progressives. A range of names is used today for progressives, which may include 'liberal' Muslims, 'progressive' Muslims, 'ijihadis', 'transformationists' or even 'neomodernists'.

It is not a movement but a broad trend with a variety of voices in it. It includes Muslim modernists, liberals, feminists, and even reform-minded traditionalists. Many leading figures of progressive ijihadis are based in the West and in Muslim countries where there is a reasonable degree of intellectual freedom. The most important characteristics of those associated with this trend are as follows:

- They adopt the view that many areas of traditional Islamic law require substantial change and reform in order to

meet the needs of Muslims today. For them, some areas of traditional Islamic law are not even relevant today, or are in need of replacement by legislation more in keeping with the concerns of contemporary Muslims.

- They seem to subscribe to the need for fresh ijtiḥād and a new methodology of ijtiḥād to deal with modern problems.
- Many combine traditional Islamic scholarship with modern Western thought and education.
- They hold firmly to the view that social change, whether at the intellectual, moral, legal, economic or technological level, must be reflected in Islamic law.
- They display neither dogmatism nor a strict attachment to a particular school of law or theology in their approach.
- They place a great emphasis on social justice, gender justice, human rights and harmonious relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Progressive ijtiḥādīs want to bring change in their communities and beyond through reinterpretation of the Islamic texts and tradition. They have moved well beyond the Muslim modernist apologetics and even some of the neomodernist limitations of how Muslims should engage with the modern world.⁴²

⁴² Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 143-154.

**From Modernism to Neo-Modernism:
Fazlur Rahman⁴³**

The modernist movement, championed by figures such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Abduh, influenced greatly the development of Islamic thought in the twentieth century. While many might consider thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman¹⁶ as 'modernists', it would be more appropriate to consider him as a 'neo-modernist'. Neo-modernists are more concerned with the essence than the form of Islamic teachings. For instance, they are more interested in whether Muslim women lead ethical, productive lives than in whether or not they wear the headscarf (*hijab*). They also believe that social change currently taking place must be reflected in the interpretation of Islamic foundation texts. Furthermore, they subscribe to the need for fresh *ijtihad* with a new methodology to deal with contemporary problems. Neomodernists believe that social and economic matters, rather than political power, should remain the priority for Muslims. They are less hostile to Western and other outside influences and more willing to acknowledge the legitimate interests of secular groups and cooperate with those groups on a sustained basis. Rahman's writings deal with all these areas, taking positions that would be unpalatable to modernists like Abduh and even Khan.

⁴³ Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 139-141

Rahman's ideas were to play a significant role in the development of Islamic thought in the late twentieth century, largely as a result of his published works and the students who studied with him at Chicago. He was one of the most daring and original contributors to the discussion on the reform of Islamic thought in the twentieth century.

Fazlur Rahman was born in 1919 in the Hazara district, in what is now Pakistan,¹⁷ in an area with strong connections to Islamic religious education. His father, Mawlana Shihab al-Din, was a scholar of religion, a graduate of Deoband seminary in India. Under his tutorship, rather than in a seminary, Rahman received his religious education in Qur'anic exegesis, hadith and law, theology and philosophy. He attended Punjab University in Pakistan, and obtained Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Arabic. He then went to Oxford, where he wrote his dissertation on Ibn Sina's philosophy.¹⁸ Though his primary interest early in his academic career was Islamic philosophy, he was widely read in Islamic law and history, ethics, Qur'anic exegesis and hadith. Having completed his studies at Oxford, Rahman moved to Durham University in northern England, where he taught Islamic philosophy from 1950 to 1958. He then left to take up the position of associate professor at the Institute of Islamic Studies at McGill University in Canada, where he remained for three years. He was invited to Pakistan by General Ayyub Khan, then President of Pakistan, who was searching for a liberal reform-minded Muslim intellectual to head the Islamic Research Institute in order to advise the government on religious matters and policies. Rahman's stay in Pakistan was short-lived (1961-8). He had to leave Pakistan for

the United States as a result of opposition to his views, which were not palatable to the conservative religious establishments in Pakistan. He was appointed Professor of Islamic Thought at the University of Chicago in 1968, and he remained there until his death in 1988.¹⁹

At Chicago he played a significant role in training a number of postgraduate students from countries such as Indonesia and Turkey. While Rahman's thought is not generally known in the Arab world or in traditionalist religious circles elsewhere, it is in Turkey and Indonesia that Rahman has been most influential. Many of his students occupy senior academic positions in Islamic studies in those countries. In the United States, where he spent the last twenty years of his life, several students of Islam took up his ideas and attempted to reinterpret specific parts of the ethico-legal content of the Qur'an. A good example is Amina Wadud, whose work *Qur'an and Woman* is an example of the application of Rahman's ideas to the interpretation of the Qur'an.

His writings are extensive and much broader than his primary field of Islamic philosophy. They include reform of Islamic education, Qur'anic hermeneutics, hadith criticism, early development of Islamic intellectual traditions, reform of Islamic law and Islamic ethics. An extensive array of books and articles attest to the depth and breadth of his scholarship.²⁰ A prominent theme in all of his work is reform and renewal, and the importance of method in this reform. Among the most important projects for him was the reform of Islamic education. Unlike many reformers of the modern period, Rahman was not involved in a mass movement, and did not seek out political

conflict. He eschewed a propagandist approach, avoided activism and was more comfortable in confining himself to the teaching and research environment of a university.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Abdullah Saeed. *Islamic Thought: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), 139-141.

Discursive and Ideological Components of Religion in Politics⁴⁵

Prior to the development of modern secular ideologies regarding political systems (more below), the main ideational fields available for political legitimacy and for conducting political contests and struggles derived from religion, in Europe as much as in the Middle East. The ruler was the 'Defender of the Faith' or the amir al-mu'minin, Commander of the Believers, the champion of enlarging the territory of Christianity/Islam and defending it against infidel enemies. Contestation from rival sources for power, or emanating from protests of the lower orders, was also couched in religious terms regarding piety, faith and justice. For example, having traced the pattern of urban movements in several Arab cities in the nineteenth century, Burke concludes that riots did not consist of aimless violence, but were indeed directed to particular targets, which were the loci of their grievances: 'The burden of the foregoing', he states, 'is that there was indeed a popular ideology of social protest in the Middle Eastern societies which centred upon the application of the shari'a by a vigilant Muslim ruler' (Edmund Burke 1989: 47–8). He goes on to enumerate the various economic provisions of the shari'a, whose application was demanded by the protesters,

⁴⁵Sami Zubaida, "Political Modernity" in Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore, Martin van Bruinessen, eds. *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2009), 60-61.

including restriction on taxation and on debasement of the coinage and the prohibition of usury. There is no doubt that the demand for justice and for a just prince was at the centre of popular protest. Notions of justice are inevitably religious and customary (the two not always being distinct in the popular or even learned mind). Indeed, even in inter-elite conflicts one party would denounce the other as traitors or deviants from religious prescriptions (al-Jabarti n.d., vol. 1: 621–2). The language of righteousness and justice was intimately tied to religion, although this is not to say that there was a precise notion of the sharia or of what actually constituted legal and illegal taxes and coinages. From the earliest times Muslim rulers had levied taxes and other dues dictated by administrative fiat and not by religious notions, and the ulama and fuqaha were not, for the most part, accustomed to raising legal objections. The exceptions were situations of conflict, disorder and crisis in which the weight of fiscal oppression, food prices and plain pillage were regular features, and in which protests whether by ulama, rival princes or the populace always laid their claim to justice in religious, that is, sharia terms. Religion and legality provided a vocabulary of demands and contests rather than a determinate notion of alternative political or legal orders. Burke and others have described these forms of contestation and opposition as 'moral economy'. The argument here is that it is best to regard this economy as a language of contestation rather than as a precise description of an existing or desired system. Within this ideological sphere of contest, the existing system of rule is taken as given: the object is to make the prince just

or to exchange him for a more just ruler. The only form of radical transformation envisaged is that of the end of time. While messianic notions thrived, in both Sunni and Shii Islam, they tended to animate rural and tribal rather than urban politics. A notable example was the Sudanese Mahdiyya in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This movement was, in large part, a response to the Anglo-Egyptian intrusion into Sudan and the imposition of a colonial order on a country characterised largely by tribal and religious local rulers and autonomies. To that extent it had elements of modernity in its constitution, and addressed a universalist message to a Muslim world. But its messianic ideology and mode of political mobilisation of tribal and Sufi religious forces shared much with pre-modern formations.⁶ Retrospective accounts from nationalist perspectives (Sudanese, Arab and Muslim) have tried to play down, if not deny, the messianic and tribal nature of the movement in order to include it in a uniform history of modern nationalism. The other discursive element of religion in politics was its definition of communal identity. Communities in pre-modern societies, and in some cases until recent times, tended to be geographically insulated, largely self-sufficient and self-managing. As such the primary markers of identity were those of locality and kinship. Religious identity tended to be taken for granted (of course, I am Muslim/Christian, what else, God forbid?). So this identity came into political play only when religious differences became the site of conflict. Religion then became a communal marker, much like Catholic and Protestant in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. Muslim/Copt relations in parts of Egypt came into

political play under certain conditions, such as the Napoleonic invasion and its aftermath at the end of the eighteenth century, which precipitated communal riots against Christians. The communal conflicts and even massacres between Muslims, Christians and Druze in Lebanon/Syria between 1840 and the 1860s are examples of the politicisation of religious difference under the impact of the transformations of the European colonisation and Ottoman reforms.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Sami Zubaida, "Political Modernity" in Muhammad Khalid Masud, Armando Salvatore, Martin van Bruinessen, eds. *Islam and Modernity: Key Issues and Debates* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2009), 60-61.

The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam⁴⁷

Islam is a complete lifestyle and world order with a clear and distinct view of the universe. Its adherents are endowed with a unique Muslim personality steeped in the values and ideals of Islam and charged with the propagation of the message of Islam toward the development of an ideal Muslim community in an ideal Muslim world. The institutions of marriage and the family have a central position in this scheme. Seeking to forge a modern indigenous identity, Muslims tend to fall into two groups: the liberal reformers or modernists, who believe in combining Islamic traditions with Western liberalism to generate a solid defensive shield against the West and its civilization, and conservatives, who cling to tradition in the belief that any deviation would subvert all Islamic social structures and efface all barriers facing incipient Western domination. The two groups share a view of women as being at the center of the movements of reforming or preserving tradition, the key to the survival of the human race, its culture, and its continuity. The surge of religious fundamentalism since the 1970s, in locations as diverse as the United States, Algeria, Iran, Israel, and India, has raised concern and stimulated the interest of scholars and laypeople alike, becoming an entrenched symbol of the twentieth century. The 1970s witnessed a mushrooming of

⁴⁷ Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam* (Florida: University Press Florida, 2003), xi-xii

Islamic movements and ideas dubbed as “fundamentalist,” “revivalist,” and “Islamist” among others, climaxing in the Iranian Revolution and the ousting of the Pahlavi monarchy to be replaced by the Islamic Republic. The subject of Islamic fundamentalism is as relevant today as ever before. With the twentieth century behind us and a new millennium dawning, it is opportune to take stock of some of the forces that shaped the twentieth century on the political, social, economic, religious, and cultural levels, and study them analytically. As a living religion and the faith of nearly one-fifth of the world population, Islam has become an important force on the national and international scene. It believes in God’s revelation, prophets, ethical responsibility and accountability, and the Day of Judgment. While some may argue that the political rhetoric of fundamentalists is of small consequence, being mere discourse, I differ and would argue that Islamic political rhetoric is part and parcel of political strategies that influence the perceptions and actions of the ruling elite and their opponents alike. Certain forms of this rhetoric facilitate fundamentalist efforts to create political openings and power, being based on utilitarian pragmatism. One such rhetoric is gender discourse. Perusing religious bookstores, street vendors’ stalls, book fairs, publishers’ outlets, and even drugstores in the Middle East today, one gains the impression that books on women in Islam are more abundant than any other subject. They range from biographies of the wives of the Prophet to guides on women’s behavior, and from rhetorical discussions of the role of women in society to women’s dress and cosmetics. Despite the plethora of such publications and

the bountiful literature on Islamic fundamentalism and ideology, little can be found on fundamentalist gender ideology, although sporadic articles on a few ideologues' views on women may be found in some periodicals and multiauthored volumes. The impact of fundamentalism on women's political and socioeconomic roles has attracted scholars who argue either its negative impact on women in these areas, or the positive aspect of politicizing women and promoting their issues. However, both groups remain essentialists in their approach and do not construct a gender theory or offer any analysis of it. It is certainly not enough to consider the factual status of women in any one region, accounts of which abound in contemporary literature. This study, therefore, attempts to outline the discourse of some prominent fundamentalists relating to women and their role in society, and the manner in which this role has been utilized in constructing an Islamic society. It will also examine the curious and paradoxical popularity of fundamentalism among women, especially because its teachings actually promote their suppression and isolation. The book, then, will try to reach an understanding of the strong bond between fundamentalist ideology and gender, and between its gender theory and conservative Islam, and elucidate apparent complexities and paradoxes that plague fundamentalist discourse. Selected prominent fundamentalists whose religio-political writings and political practices played a crucial role in the resurgence of twentieth-century Islam will be introduced and their lives and works analyzed. A gender theory will be offered, the marginalization of gender issues within the mainstream Islamic fundamentalist studies

challenged, and some of the misconceptions of the role and placement of women exposed and analyzed.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Lamia Rustum Shehadeh, *The Idea of Women in Fundamentalist Islam* (Florida: University Press Florida, 2003), xi-xii

Conversion to Islam⁴⁹

There is a huge body of literature on conversion that is also relevant for the study of conversion to Islam. Historical developments noted by sociologists of religion, such as pluralism, secularization, and privatization of religion, are vital preconditions for the state of religion in general. As such, they are also important for conversion, including conversion to Islam (Luckmann 1999; Allievi 1998). In addition, the general process of modernization and individualization, which makes the individual agent the center of his or her biography, has a direct bearing on conversion (Hofmann 1997). The changed place of religion and the process of individualization transformed religion and religious goods into matters of individual choice. Actors choose among several religious options the worldview that suits them best. Ideas of religion as a commodity on the expanding market of religious goods, picked and chosen by religious agents, are particularly applied to new religious movements (Bruce 1999; Iannaccone 1990; Finke and Stark 2000). Yet ideas of the religious market and rational choice can also be applied to Islam (Allievi 1998; Wohlrab-Sahr this volume). Islam has become one of the players on the religious market in the West, and its message makes sense to individual converts. Besides analyses of these general sociohistorical developments, conversion theories

⁴⁹ Karin van Nieuwkerk, ed. *Women Embracing Islam : Gender and Conversion in the West* (Texas: university of Texas Press, 2006), 2-5.

developed within the body of anthropological, sociological, and religious studies clarify aspects of conversion to Islam. Poston (1992) deals with different forms of *da'wa*, calling to Islam, in the West. He applies Lofl and Stark's "predisposing factors" for conversion and Starbuck's list of "motivational factors" to his sample of seventy-two American and European converts to Islam and tries to present a profile of the "typical" convert to Islam. The material in the present volume, however, shows that it is difficult to assume any typicality among converts. They are a far too heterogeneous group. Köse (1996) studies native British Muslims and applies several psychological and religious theories to his sample of seventy converts. He critically assesses "crises" theories with regard to the preconversion life histories. He finds that commonly held ideas on conversion as being induced by moral and religious crises of adolescence or failed socialization do not apply in the case of Islam. In addition to typologies of converts, diverse routes to conversion are analyzed (Rambo 1993). Allievi (1998, 1999, and 2002) develops a useful typology of conversion itineraries to Islam. He distinguishes relational from rational conversions. Relational conversions are further subdivided into instrumental and noninstrumental forms.

Noninstrumental relational conversions are induced by relationships with Muslims either by way of marriage, family, meeting immigrants, or traveling. Instrumental conversions are usually related to marriage of a European male with a Muslim woman and do not necessarily entail a religious transformation. The rational conversions, in contrast, are not induced by personal contacts but rather by an intellectual

search. This form is therefore more specifically Islamic in its discourse and rationalizations. Allievi further subdivides the rational itinerary according to intellectual, political, or mystically oriented paths.

Besides theories on the background and trajectories of converts to Islam, some analyses of testimonies and conversion narratives are available. A few books have been published that contain conversion stories or are descriptive in nature (Anway 1995; Crijnen 1999; Haleem 2003). Several Web sites have been created offering a great amount of testimonies. Hermansen has studied conversion narratives of European and Euro-American Muslims written between 1900 and 1980. Insights from postcolonial theory are applied to understanding the historical shifts that occur in converts' views of Islam and the Muslim world, as well as in their self-presentation (1999). Conversion testimonies are a specific genre with a particular narrative structure (Beckford 1978; Stromberg 1993; Luckmann 1986; Snow and Machalek 1983, 1984; Ulmer 1988). Conversion narratives are created backwards; that is, they are told after the conversion, and thus past events are reinterpreted in light of current convictions.

This reconstructing process takes place not only at the individual level but also at the group level. In the process of telling and re-telling conversion experiences, a common model is created (Hofmann 1997; van Nieuwkerk this volume). Converts do not simply reproduce a rehearsed script but include elements of the new religion's ideological rationale into their narratives. It is thus important to analyze the goals and ideologies that are promoted by Islamic organizations and

Web sites and the specific da'wah functions they perform (Haddad this volume). Conversion is increasingly analyzed as an ongoing process. Rambo (1993) developed a dynamic and processual conversion theory, integrating research within various disciplines. Conversion takes place in several stages and is usually experienced as a substantial transformation of religious, social, and cultural aspects of daily life. Conversion to Islam is embodied through taking up new bodily practices pertaining to praying, fasting, and food. In addition, important markers of identity are often changed, such as the name and appearance, including hijab or occasionally niqab. Moreover, converting frequently leads to changing social and cultural practices, for instance, those related to celebrations or contacts with the opposite sex. These transformations regularly create problems with the family of origin (Bourque this volume; Allievi this volume; van Nieuwkerk 2004).

Whereas for some new Muslims conversion is radical, others slowly transform aspects of their identity and practice. Roald (this volume) describes a three-stage process for most European converts, the stages being "love," "disappointment," and "maturity." In the initial phase many converts tend to be emotionally obsessed with the new religion and want to practice every detail of the Islamic precepts. The second stage is strongly linked to a disappointment with born-Muslim behavior and ideas, and here some converts tend to turn away from Islam. During the third stage many new Muslims search for new understandings of Islamic ideas and attitudes according to the particular cultural context they live in. Sultán (1999) observes that, paradoxically,

the features that originally attracted the converts, in particular gender issues, are later seen as sources of conflict. Converts play an important role in society and often function as cultural and political mediators between the state and Muslim communities. Some of them are engaged in the interpretation of the Islamic sources and developing new discourses (Allievi 1998; Wagtendonk 1994; Gerholm 1988; El Houari Setta 1999; Roald this volume). Allievi further maintains that converts are crucial in three fields. Converted intellectuals, in particular, offer legitimization in the eyes of society. Besides, converts can provide confirmation for immigrants of the rightness of their faith. Moreover, converts form an element of guarantee, since they are citizens who cannot, even if they act as militant Islamic leaders, be expelled from the country (1998, 2002). Female converts also play a role in the development of new discourses on gender and Islam (Roald this volume). Converts such as Amina Wadud (1999) are important in the Islamic feminist production of knowledge. Recent research indicates that Islamic feminism is also gaining ground among female converts in the Netherlands, England, and South Africa.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Karin van Nieuwkerk, ed. *Women embracing Islam : gender and conversion in the West*(Texas: university of Texas Press, 2006), 2-5.

Islam and Modernity as Civilizational Spheres⁵¹

Conceiving of Islam as a civilization does not necessarily amount to treating it as a monolithic, unchanging entity. Rather, as Ahmet Karamustafa (2003) argues, Islam is an open, dynamic, holistic civilizational project that receives its direction from the human agents—individual and collective—that comprise it. True, agency resides not in reified entities such as civilizations but in the hands of groups of human actors. Nevertheless, Islam is a supra-cultural package of values, practices, and resources that Muslims adopt to help them navigate their earthly life. The holism of Islamic civilization is, thus, to be found in the commitment of Muslims to a shared stock of ideals and key ideas and their willingness to express these in a shared idiom. Karamustafa reminds us that it is important not to reify the key ideas and practices into a rigid formula, such as the overly simplistic five pillars of faith.² Rather, we must recognize that the key ideas of monotheism, prophecy, genesis, and eschatology underwrite a set of values—about the dignity of human life, individual and collective rights and duties, and the necessity of ethical action—that are reflected in concrete human acts, which range from the necessity of greeting someone to acts of prayer, fasting, etcetera. These key ideas and practices are believed to be contained in the fundamental sources, the Quran and the

⁵¹Ali Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity, and the Human Sciences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 26-27

life of Muhammad. "It is a version of this core that lies at the heart of the centre of each and every one of the innumerable manifestations of the Islamic civilizational tradition in human history" (Karamustafa 2003: 109). Acknowledging the legitimacy of sectarian, or other local, cultural variations in the fold of Islam does not invalidate the holism of Muslim civilizations, because Islam exists in and above cultures, though it may be more proper to speak of an "Islamic civilizational sphere with numerous distinct cultural regions instead of a single, uniform Islamic civilization with an unchanging cultural kernel" (Karamustafa 2003: 105). Despite the multiplicity of Islamic discourses and despite their polysemic origins, there remains not an undifferentiated unity but a holism to those discourses, which, although dismissed by anti-essentialist theorists, remains palpable for believers (Sayyid 1997). To do away with any holistic conception of Islam goes too far, because it misses the point that the problem is not holism per se, but the reductionistic and exclusivistic version of Islam that Islamists use for their own ends.

Similarly, while the modern West may equally be divided by its own tribal and linguistic divisions, certain fundamental shared experiences and convictions provide the ties that bind the West into a meaningfully holistic category. According to the Canadian philosopher John Raulston Saul (1993 [1992]), author of *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*, it is not just the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian foundations that define the West. Rather, over the past half-millennium, a series of trials and crises, such as the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution,

and other democratic revolutionary crises, turned into basic assumptions, which have been grouped under the banner of Reason. We do not need to agree with Saul that the only decisive and consistent movement of the past 500 years has been away from Divine revelation and the absolute power of the Church and state, to accept the gist of his point: that the modern West may be treated holistically, even if not as a unity. What Saul is alluding to is that the experience of modernity encompasses myriad cognitive and social transformations. Among social transformations, one may enumerate the following: the emergence and institutionalization of market-driven industrial economies, bureaucratically administered states, modes of popular government, rule of law, mass media, and increased mobility, literacy, urbanization, etcetera (Gaonkar 2001: 2). But aside from these social transformations, with which the political imaginary has become obsessed, we need also to take greater account of the cognitive transformations, which Saul groups under the banner of Reason; here one may enumerate the following: the growth of scientific consciousness, the development of a secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, the primacy of instrumental rationality, the fact-value split, individualistic understandings of the self, and contractualist understandings of society (Gaonkar 2001: 2). Similarly, Jürgen Habermas (1981) regards modernity above all as the attempt to reveal the eternal and immutable qualities of human life through the development of objective science, universal morality and law, and art. Indeed, the hope of Enlightenment thinkers was that the development of rational modes of

thought and scientific knowledge— and consequently the domination of nature—would lead to human emancipation and liberation from the irrationalities of myth, religion, and superstition (Harvey 1989: 12).⁵²

⁵²Ali Zaidi, *Islam, Modernity, and the Human Sciences* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 26-27

An in Evitable Clash of Civilizations?⁵³

In a controversial 1993 article, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” Samuel P. Huntington warned that a “clash of civilizations will dominate global politics”⁵ and precipitated a heated worldwide debate among scholars, political leaders, commentators, and the media. Many in the Muslim world saw this important American academic and opinion maker, who had also held a prominent position in government, as articulating what they always thought was the West’s attitude toward Islam. If some academics and government officials were quick to distance themselves from Huntington’s position, the sales of his subsequent book, its translation into many languages, and the sheer number of international conferences and publications that addressed the question demonstrated that there was “a market for clash.” The attacks of September 11 and the global threat of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda have resurrected a knee-jerk response of “the clash of civilizations” for an easy answer to the question, Why do they hate us? Huntington, like many others today, played into old stereotypes by characterizing Islam and the West as age-old enemies—“Conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilizations has been going on for 1300 years”⁶—and by citing Islam’s resistance to secular Western models as necessarily hostile to human rights and progress—“Western ideas of

⁵³ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126-129.

individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic [and other] . . . cultures.” 7

In his 1997 follow-up book, Huntington concluded that “Islam’s borders are bloody and so are its innards.”⁸ His blanket condemnation went beyond Islamic fundamentalism to Islam itself: “The underlying problem for the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture, and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power.”⁹ Though Huntington has now significantly refined his position, September 11 unleashed new, updated versions as many found it more expedient to fall back on convenient stereotypes of a monolithic Islam and historic clash of civilizations rather than to examine the complex causes of terrorism.

Ironically, the clash of cultures appears as evident with reference to our allies in the Muslim world as with our enemies. Whatever the common economic and political interests, primarily centered on oil, the contrasts between Saudi Arabia and the United States are stark. The religious and cultural traditions of America’s long-time ally—religiously puritanical and exclusivist worldview, sexually segregated society, lack of political parties and elections, punishment of theft by amputation, prohibition of building churches or practicing Christianity—as well as the fact that bin Laden and so many of the hijackers of September 11 were Saudi, indicate that we live in two different worlds. Similarly, the declared war of religious extremists and terrorists against

entrenched Muslim governments and the West—all in the name of Islam—seems to underscore the incompatibility of Islam and democracy.

However, while the actions of extremist groups and of authoritarian governments, religious and nonreligious, reinforce this perception of a cultural clash, the facts on the ground present a more complex picture. Neither the Muslim world nor the West is monolithic. Common sources of identity (language, faith, history, culture) yield when national or regional interests are at stake. While some Muslims have achieved a transient unity in the face of a common enemy, as in the Iranian Revolution, their solidarity quickly dissipates once danger subsides and competing interests again prevail. The evidence that there is no monolithic Islam is abundant. The inability of Arab nationalism/socialism, Saudi Arabia's pan-Islam, or Iran's Islamic Republic revolution to unite and mobilize the Arab and Muslim worlds, the competition and conflict between countries like Egypt, Libya, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, the disintegration of the Arab (Iraq and the Gulf states) coalition against Iran after the Iran-Iraq war, and the subsequent Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and divisions in the Muslim world evident in the 1991 Gulf war are but a few examples. As James Piscatori observed, "The problem with assuming a unified response is that it conceals the reality of ... entrenched national differences and national interests among Muslims."¹⁰ The failure of Osama bin Laden, like Saddam Hussein and Khomeini before him, to effectively mobilize the Islamic world in his unholy war, despite his global terrorist network, is a reminder that Muslims, like every global religious community,

are indeed diverse. Moreover, as Islamic history makes abundantly clear, main-stream Islam, in law and theology as well as in practice, in the end has always rejected or marginalized extremists and terrorists from the Kharijites and Assassins to contemporary radical movements such as al-Qaeda.

In responding to the attacks of September 11, some charged that the clash of civilizations revolved around conflict with our modern Western way of life, with, for example, democracy, women's rights, and capitalism. In fact, capitalism exists in the Muslim world both in home-grown forms as well as Western-inspired versions. The issue for many in the Muslim world is not capitalism but the dangers of Western economic hegemony and its side effects. In fact, Islam does not have any problem with many of the essentials of Western capitalism. It is important to recall that Muhammad's early followers included prosperous merchants. He himself engaged in financial and commercial transactions to make a living. The Quran, hadith (traditions about what the Prophet said and did), and Muslim historical experience affirm the right to private property and trade and commerce. As Maxime Rodinson, a French scholar and Marxist, wrote in his *Islam and Capitalism*: "Economic activity, the search for profit, trade, and consequently, production for the market, are looked upon with no less favor by Muslim tradition than by the Koran itself."¹¹ Mosques throughout the world, such as the Umayyad mosque in Damascus and the magnificent mosques of old Cairo and Teheran, are often adjoined by magnificent bazaars. Traders and businessmen were among the most

successful sectors in society and were responsible for the spread of their faith.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126-129.

Digital Islam⁵⁵

Will it be an Islam clothed in the fashionable garbs of the new technology? Certainly, the Qur'Ān, 'adÈth and sÈra literature have survived for over 1,000 years without computers and will continue to do so.¹⁶ Computer applications to sacred and related texts will enhance accessibility; but this is not really the essence of the matter. What we are on the brink of is an epistemological revolution in the Islamic domain which may, or may not, have serious consequences for such foundational themes as tradition and authority. Profound questions arise demanding answers. The phenomenal popularization and transnational propagation of communications and information technologies ... in recent years has generated a wide range of important questions in the context of Islam's sociology of knowledge. How have these technologies transformed Muslim concepts of what Islam is and who possesses the authority to speak on its behalf? Moreover, how are they changing the ways in which Muslims imagine the boundaries of the umma?¹⁷ The Internet, especially the World Wide Web, has rightly been compared to 'an enormous bazaar' where 'the hawkers are many and the inf-goods, at first glance, seem to address every imaginable need'.¹⁸

⁵⁵Ian Richard Netton, *Islam, Christianity, and Transition: A Comparative Explanation* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2006), 2-3.

In terms of the sociology of knowledge, a revolution has taken place akin to that precipitated by the introduction of the printing presses in the fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg and William Caxton. What might be characterised as a liberation of élite knowledge combined with a fostering of new political discourses has occurred.¹⁹ Observing the use of 'book, pamphlet and newsletter' in the nineteenth century by a body of the ulama' (the Islamic scholars) appalled at the advance of European imperialism, Mandaville notes that an ineluctable by-product was 'the demise of the stranglehold' of those same ulama' 'over the production and dissemination of religious knowledge'.²⁰ But the result of today's new information technologies has been to accelerate that demise to a staggering and, for the modern ulama', uncomfortable degree as they find their custodianship of specialist, and sometimes élite, knowledge both challenged and threatened.²¹ Mandaville quotes Sa'ad al-Faqih, 'leader of the London-based "Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia" and another keen advocate of information technology', as suggesting 'that the average Muslim can now revolutionize Islam with just a basic understanding of Islamic methodology and a CD-ROM'.²²

The sometimes cherished gulf between the religious or legal scholar and the ordinary Muslim is bridged at the click of a button and the production of 'relevant texts' at a stroke.²³ There are, of course, obvious dangers in this kind of instant and, perhaps, previously unstudied, knowledge for the lay surfer of the Net: how reliable are the texts and sources placed instantly at one's disposal?²⁴ Will the age of the e-mail fatwá signal an intellectual free-for-all?²⁵ But there are

epistemological advantages too: a deeper questioning may be provoked as to what it really means to be Islamic. This may result in a sharper set or variety of foci, emphases or definitions.²⁶ The mediaeval search for authenticity, with its inevitable politics and rubrics, has revived and continues into the present.²⁷ Mandaville summarises the modern position very neatly: 'the changing connotations of authority and authenticity in digital Islam appear to be contributing to the critical re-imagination of the boundaries of Muslim politics'.²⁸

Will the Islam of the future be a faith which is in perpetual crisis as it confronts, and perhaps attempts to absorb, varying modes and articulations of 'modernity'? That term, of course, itself requires proper definition; many have been offered.²⁹ It is used loosely to provide a simple but striking rhetorical antithesis, as in Muqtedar Khan's statement that Muslim women are caught in the struggle between the imperialism of modernity and the intransigence of tradition. At times, they are victims of those who seek to protect them and, at other times, they are oppressed by those who seek to emancipate them. For Muslim women, tragedy and irony are the two dominant themes of their existence.³⁰ Here the simple motif of modernity, simply understood, is used as a powerful but fundamental counterpoint to that of tradition, in a statement which also encapsulates the underlying complexities of both positions. Modernity has been characterised as 'a particularly organised and insidious form of worldliness ... the collection of practices, processes, structures and values which have characterized European expansion' and something which 'was associated with the

establishment of the European empires.’³¹ The rationalism and individualism which formed part of the agenda were, and are, perceived by the Muslim world as both alien and threatening,³² though several aspects of the modern European experience, especially Europe’s superiority in technology, maintained a perennial appeal and attraction.³³ According to this understanding, the clash of modernity and tradition at the beginning of a new millennium may be perceived as yet another calque of the antique conflict between revelation and reason,³⁴ a clash which for many Muslims reifies the need to construct ‘a narrative of equal power to counter the corrosive effects of modernity upon the authorities that validate a distinctively Muslim identity’.³⁵ Of course, the debate about and between tradition and modernity is by no means limited to the single religion of Islam. Tradition and modernity have been defined as ‘two separate outlooks by which to judge the state of the contemporary world’, with tradition being characterised as ‘sophia perennis or primordial wisdom, which is not limited to any specific cultural or religious tradition’, and modernity having, as its defining aspect, ‘a loss of the sense of the sacred’ and representing an outlook which is essentially ambivalent and rudderless. This is ‘the malaise of modernity’.³⁶ It is to be contrasted, as a term, with the more neutral ‘contemporary’, which designates ‘that which is of the present age, be it traditional or modern’, shorn of the pejorative overtones which the words ‘modern’ and ‘modernity’ have for many traditionalist scholars.⁵⁶

⁵⁶Ian Richard Netton, *Islam, Christianity, and Transition: A Comparative Explanation* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2006), 2-3.

Arabic : Historical Perspective⁵⁷

Arabic belongs to the Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic (Hamito- Semitic) family of languages, which includes languages like Aramaic, Ethiopian, South Arabian, Syriac, and Hebrew. A number of the languages in this group are spoken in the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, and Africa. It has been documented that Arabic spread with the Islamic conquests from the Arabian Peninsula and within a few decades, it spread over a wide territory across North Africa and the Middle East. Arabic is now spoken by more than 200 million speakers excluding bilingual speakers (Gordon 2005).

Although there is a debate about the history of Arabic (including that of the Standard variety and the spoken dialects) Arabic displays some of the typical characteristics of Semitic languages: root-pattern morphology, broken plurals in nouns, emphatic and glottalized consonants, and a verbal system with prefix and suffix conjugation.

Classical Arabic evolved from the standardization of the language of the Qur'an and poetry. This standardization became necessary at the time when Arabic became the language of an empire, with the Islamic expansion starting in the seventh century. In addition to Classical Arabic, there were regional spoken Arabic varieties. It is a matter of intense

⁵⁷ Joseph E. Aoun, Elabbas Benmamoun, and Lina Choueiri, *The Syntax of Arabic* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-2.

debate what the nature of the historical relation between Classical Arabic and the spoken dialects is (Owens 2007).

Modern Standard Arabic emerged in the nineteenth century at a time when Arabic was gaining the status of official language in the Arab world, and coinciding with the emergence of Arab nationalism (see Suleiman (2003) and references therein). The process of modernization of the language started in the early twentieth century with Arab academies playing a crucial role in “preserving” the Arabic language from dialectal and foreign influence, and adapting it to the needs of modern times. Unsurprisingly, in spite of the unifying work of those academies, one can still observe regional variations in Modern Standard Arabic.

The linguistic space of the Arabic-speaking world, which spans a large geographical area from the Persian Gulf in Asia to the Atlantic Ocean in North West Africa, is shared by several language varieties, which include Modern Standard Arabic, and a number of Arabic vernaculars that remain mainly as spoken dialects. Those dialects differ from one another, with mutual intelligibility decreasing as the geographical distance between them increases. The main geographical linguistic groupings are the Maghreb (mainly North Africa), Egypt, the Levant, and the Gulf. Modern Standard Arabic and the spoken dialects of Arabic exist in a diglossic situation (Ferguson 1959): the Arabic vernaculars are what people acquire at home, and thus, they are the native languages of the people in the Arab world. Modern Standard Arabic is the language for writing and for formal speaking and is only acquired at school. Thus, not all speakers of Arabic have equal

command of the Standard dialect and their colloquial dialect. Language choice in the Arab world is not only determined by the factors that influence the functional distribution of the various Arabic varieties; it also has a political association, since Modern Standard Arabic has become a symbol of the unity of the Arab world (Suleiman 2003). In this brief introduction to the sociology of Arabic we highlighted the complex relationships that exist between Modern Standard Arabic and the various Arabic vernaculars. This complexity can also be found in the variation observed between the grammars of the different Arabic varieties.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Joseph E. Aoun, Elabbas Benmamoun, and Lina Choueiri, *The Syntax of Arabic* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1-2.

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