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Makmor Tumin

Editorial

This December 2022 issue of IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies extends our commitment to engage with a wide range of topics related specifically to Islamic religious studies, politico-social history, history of Islamic architecture, as well as contemporary social studies.

The first article by Homam Altabaa and Muhammad Naqib bin Othman entitled “Mystical Dimensions of Morality in the Selected Short Stories of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī” critically assesses the moral messages embedded in five selected short stories narrated in Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī’s work, *Mathnawi*. The stories were scrutinized by the authors against several examples of moral characteristics outlined by al-Qushayrī in his work, *al-Risālah* which include awareness of God (*murāqabah*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), renunciation (*zuhd*), patience (*sabr*), sincerity (*ikh̄lās*), striving (*mujāhadah*), repentance (*tawbah*), humility (*kh̄shuʿ*) and generosity (*sakh̄hāʿ*). The finding shows that the moral messages of the stories are in line with a good practice of Sufi.

Centred on a well-known character mentioned in the Holy Quran, Dhu’l-Qarnayn, the second article, “The Phenomenology of Dhu’l-Qarnayn’s Community Engagement: A Theoretical Model for Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) Sustainability” co-authored by Saheed Abdullahi Busari and Noor Mohammad Osmani aims to explore the community engagement approach of the historical figure towards the people of Turkish territory and compares it with the modern model of ESG sustainability, a concept that measures the sustainability and ethical impact of business activities. The outcome of the study, according to the authors, illustrates several principles that characterize Dhu’l-Qarnayn approach which are compatible with the ESG in modern society. The said principles are knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, engagement and empowerment.

Next, “*Tawhīd* as a Fundamental Element of the Islamic Worldview and Its Implications for Moral Thoughts and Values” by Akeem Olayinka Kazeem is an analysis of the *Tawhīdī* worldview from the standpoints of moral epistemology and moral psychology. Starting with some views on *Tawhīd* (the doctrine of the Oneness of God) expounded by several Muslim scholars like Imam al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah, the author then dwells on how the *Tawhīdī* concept, the core of the Islamic worldview, affects Muslims’ moral thoughts, values and behaviours. To validate his hypothesis, the author selects several names and attributes of Allah, namely The Ever-Provider (*al-Razzāq*), The Oft-Hearing (*al-Samī‘*), The Oft-Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*) and The One Who is Swift at Reckoning (*Sarī‘ al-Ḥisāb*) and demonstrates the implications that these names and attributes have on believers, morally, intellectually, as well as spiritually.

Moving to a slightly different theme, “Civil Society in Iraqi Kurdistan: A Historical Perspective” by Jamal Mohammed Ameen Hussein and Abdulwahed Jalal Nori discusses the history of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Iraqi Kurdistan. The authors opt for a chronological approach, presenting the history of the CSOs throughout different periods in Iraqi Kurdistan that is, starting from the monarchy era (1921-1958), the Iraqi Republic (1958-1991), and 1991 onwards, i.e., after the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Given the importance of the CSOs which symbolise democracy and freedom of the Kurdish society, the paper highlights the political factors that conditioned the rise and decline of the CSOs, pointing out the periods during which the CSOs were repressed and the underlying causes, as well as the times when the CSOs experienced growth. The discussion ends with some challenges and problems faced by the CSOs in their efforts to remain relevant in the Kurdish society.

The fifth article by Nurul Shahirah binti Majlan and Alwi Alatas, “The Importance of Alhambra as a Fortress and Palaces during the Nasrid Dynasty: The Case of the Alcazaba, the Palace of Comares, and the Palace of the Lions” seeks to demonstrate the different roles of one of the most iconic monuments in the history of Islamic architecture, Alhambra. The authors shed light on its fortress, the

Alcazaba, and two of its prominent palaces, the Palace of Comares and the Palace of the Lions, pointing out the main features and traits of these structures. For avid readers of history, not only will they learn about the contributions of the Nasrids in laying the foundation of and perfecting the Alhambra, but also the socio-economic and political factors surrounding its construction, particularly the imminent threat that the Muslims faced vis-à-vis their relations with Christians in Andalusia or Iberian Peninsula.

The next article by Dwimay Fawzy, Aini Maznina A. Manaf and Tengku Siti Aisha Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen with the title “Countering Islamophobia through Webcomics on Instagram” seeks to bring to light the efforts made by some Muslims individuals and groups to counter against the negative stereotypes of Muslims and Islam through social-media particularly via webcomics. For this purpose, the authors choose one Instagram account i.e., @yesimhotinthis that belongs to a comic artist named Huda Fahmy, where the visual and textual messages of seven webcomics that she produced and uploaded via her Instagram were assessed to identify their representations in encountering Islamophobia. The findings indicate three representations that are meant to work against Islamophobia, namely the notion of various Muslim realities as a minority, the notion of inclusive Muslims, and lastly, the notion that emphasizes equality.

Meanwhile, the recent pandemic is the focus of study for Nur Atiera Binti Yunus and Iyad M. Y. Eid who write on “Coping Strategies IIUM Malay Undergraduate Students Adopted to Proceed with Online Learning during COVID-19”. Using a qualitative research approach and face-to-face semi-structured interviews, a sample group was formed involving ten (10) IIUM Malay undergraduates to ascertain the methods and ways used by them to overcome problems studying online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study shows that the students managed to find some coping mechanisms which enabled them to continue with the learning process despite some difficulties, and these include to control the learning environment, to communicate with someone for help, to regularly write a diary, and take short breaks.

Finally, there is a review by Makmor Tumin of a book entitled *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought* by Andrew F. March (published in 2019 by the Belknap Press, Harvard University Press). The author of the book seeks to explain the theory of democracy in Islam by examining the concept of sovereignty of God versus sovereignty of the people. In doing so, he traces the origin and development of the concept of khalifah based on his understanding of the work of a contemporary Muslim thinker, Rached Ghannouchi. The author of the book, according to the reviewer, holds the view that the idea of sovereignty in the West i.e., sovereignty of the people, is potentially applied in the Muslim world and urges his readers to accept a similar view. The reviewer concludes that while March displays a good knowledge of Islamic and Western political thoughts, he lacks what it takes to examine the concept of *khalifah* in the same way some renowned Muslim scholars did.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to extend my gratitude to all contributors and reviewers who involved in this December issue. It is hoped that their valuable ideas and works will contribute to the enrichment of knowledge particularly in civilisational studies and be of interest to scholars and readers of history and civilisation worldwide.

Finally, I also wish to express my gratitude to all members of the Editorial Board, our Editor Dr. Mohd Helmi Mohd Sobri, and Associate Editor Dr. Alwi Alatas, without whose efforts and dedication, the publication of this issue will not become a reality. Thank you.

Fauziah Fathil
Editor-in-Chief
December 2022

Mystical Dimensions of Morality in the Selected Short Stories of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

Homam Altabaa,¹ Muhammad Naqib bin Othman²

Abstract: Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's works are famous for educating readers regarding morality. They have been read and quoted by various people from different backgrounds. However, it is easy to misinterpret the messages in his works, especially his short stories, as they appeal to a wider audience. This study examines the mystical dimension of morality in Rūmī's short stories. The study was conducted using a critical moral approach, which analyses the moral messages that are present in five selected short stories found in Rūmī's *Mathnawi*. The moral messages in the selected short stories are analysed based on several examples of moral characteristics that are defined by al-Qushayrī, using textual analysis. The analysis shows that Rūmī's moral messages in his short stories are related to the journey of a Sufi on the path. The moral messages can be connected to the characteristics of a good Sufi that are described by al-Qushayrī. Additionally, this study found that the characteristics of Sufi morality described by Rūmī show its superiority against other moral theories.

Keywords: Rūmī, *Mathnawi*, Morality, Mysticism, Short Stories

Introduction

This study analyses the mystical dimension of morality and various examples that can be found in the famous short stories of Jalāl al-Dīn

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Rūmī (henceforth Rūmī) in the *Mathnawi*. Additionally, this study analyses the implications of the moral messages portrayed in the short stories based on Sufi mystical concepts. In the journey on the Sufi path, a Sufi must be guided by his teacher. The teacher is responsible for ensuring that the student is not being led astray from the path. Rūmī is one of the most famous Sufi teachers. His literature is one of his methods of reaching people on the mystical path. Rūmī presents some of his advice in the form of short stories and poetry. According to Choo (2021), the messages found within literature can be used to educate the readers regarding morality. It is common to view literature as a didactic tool, rather than merely for entertainment. In a similar manner, Rūmī attempts to educate readers about Sufism and Sufi morality through his writings. Furthermore, Rūmī was interested in presenting the practical aspects of Sufi teachings in the form of stories to make it easier for readers to apply its teachings in their daily lives. This study aims to analyse the mystical dimension of morality and the examples shown in the five selected short stories of Rūmī.

Rūmī's works have been known to be poetic and full of messages that could educate the readers. Currently, his works have attracted readers from various backgrounds, not just Sufi and Muslim readers. The mystical concepts that are preached in his works can be related to other religions, such as Christianity. The core of Sufism is related to the refinement of morality and character for those on the Sufi path, and this is what Rūmī preaches in his works. In addition, Sufi morality concerns two aspects, which are the internal and external dimensions of morality. The Sufi journey is a process where the heart undergoes purification. In this process, the good inner dimension of morality will manifest itself externally as good moral values and acts. However, without prior knowledge of mysticism and Sufism, readers could misinterpret the messages that are present in Rūmī's works, therefore deviating from the messages that he is preaching. This claim is supported by Chittick (2005), who mentioned that the moral messages portrayed in Rūmī's works require an in-depth understanding of Sufism in order to correctly interpret the messages within. Furthermore, the abundance of emerging moral theories that use science and reason, especially in modern times, have created a society that doubts the relevance of a moral theory that focuses on mysticism.

Therefore, this study attempts to analyse the mystical dimension of morality in Rūmī's collection of short stories from the *Mathnawi* based on several examples of moral characteristics, which are awareness of God (*murāqabah*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), renunciation (*zuhd*), patience (*sabr*), sincerity (*ikh̄lās*), striving (*mujāhadah*), repentance (*tawbah*), humility (*k̄hushu'*) and generosity (*sakh̄ā'*). These moral characteristics are defined by al-Qushayrī (2007), who preaches Sufi morality through the journey of internal refinement of the heart. These moral characteristics emerge when the internal dimension is refined with practices of worship in pursuit of being closer to God. By analysing the moral messages in Rūmī's *Mathnawi* from a Sufi perspective, the true essence of the messages can be correctly understood.

Theoretical Framework

This study analyses the mystical dimension of morality in Rūmī's five selected short stories found in the *Mathnawi*. Multiple theories can be adopted to analyse morality in a literary text. Since Rūmī was a Sufi writer, a Sufi moral approach is appropriate to analyse aspects of morality in his short stories. This section provides an explanation of morality in Sufism and the different moral characteristics.

In Sufism, the development of morals is not static. It is a journey that a Sufi must take to purify his soul while improving his moral characteristics. This journey takes him on a path to becoming the perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*). According to Chittick (2005), the embodiment of the perfect Man is Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Prophet Muhammad has shown multiple moral characteristics that are exemplary for Sufis to follow. The journey that a Sufi takes on the path is to become like Prophet Muhammad.

Next, Heck (2006) noted that there are two moral goals that Sufis strive to accomplish in the journey. The first moral goal is the annihilation of the lower soul from its inclination towards evil. Similarly, Sameh (2020) noted that in Sufism, perfection in morality could only be obtained after one has successfully overcome the ego (*nafs*). The ego, which is responsible for Man's self-centred nature, prevents him from having authentic moral characteristics. Without overcoming the lower soul, one's action, however good it may seem externally, will not be

moral in Sufism. The second moral goal mentioned by Heck (2006) is to progress the soul through different stations (*maqām*) and states (*hāl*). The way to truly achieve this is to practise perpetual recitation. As the soul is purified, the external dimension will reflect it as good manners or moral characters.

The book *al-Risālah* by al-Qushayrī is used for this study's analysis. It presents a list of good characteristics and manners that are derived from the teachings of past Sufi masters and the words of the Prophet. The moral characteristics that are used in this study are awareness of God, trust in God, renunciation, patience, sincerity, striving, repentance, humility and generosity.

The first moral characteristic is awareness of God. Al-Qushayrī defined this moral characteristic as being aware of the presence of God in our daily lives. To elaborate, the awareness that a Sufi feels of God's presence is as if he could see God, even though he cannot, because God is able to see his every action. The people who have mastered this virtue will always maintain good behaviour. This awareness also involves the internal dimension in which the human thought and heart reside. In this case, the Sufi is also aware that every single thought and intention are under the observation of God and, therefore, his intentions must remain pure.

The second moral characteristic is trust in God, which is defined by al-Qushayrī as having the utmost trust in God. It creates a person who is unbothered by any challenge that he is facing. As a result, his behaviour will always reflect positively in any situation. Furthermore, it creates a person who remains satisfied with the position that he is in. In other words, he is not being driven by greed and lust for momentary success in this world.

The third moral characteristic is renunciation, which is defined as rejecting the temptation for worldly pleasures. This includes sins that are clearly wrong as well as pleasures that are permissible but could drive a person further away from God. A Sufi who possesses this moral characteristic finds pleasure in being closer to God and actively practises worship for the love of God. The pleasure that he feels from being closer to God is far greater than the momentary pleasures that he can obtain from this world.

The fourth moral characteristic is patience, which is defined as enduring the challenges and the temptation of this world. A person who possesses this characteristic will manage to stay on the right path as he cannot be distracted by other things that could lead him away from God. Patience is needed for a person to tread on the mystical path because of its challenging nature.

The fifth moral characteristic is sincerity, which is defined as being sincere to God in every action. The level of sincerity that is practised by a person who possesses this characteristic is extremely high. In Sufism, a person who is truly sincere in his actions towards God is not aware of it. If a person is aware that he is being sincere, then there is still an element of the self in his actions. Furthermore, a person who is sincere disregards the view of others about his actions. This means that he does not care what others might think of his actions.

The sixth moral characteristic is striving, which is described as being committed and hard-working on the path. The journey towards mystical perfection is an active pursuit. This means that a person must go through active practices of worship to reach the goal and be united with God. Therefore, it is necessary that a person possesses this characteristic for him to be successful.

The seventh moral characteristic is repentance, which is typically listed as one of the earliest in the list of moral characteristics that a Sufi must possess on the path. For a person to stay on the path, repentance is necessary as it cleanses any past sins. A pure heart is important on the journey as it serves as the foundation for one's characteristics.

The eighth moral characteristic is humility. To put it simply, humility is defined by al-Qushayrī as the absence of pride. However, the implication of being humble in Sufism is much more complex. Although humility stems from the heart, it will translate to the outward appearance of the person. A person who possesses this characteristic disregards any greatness that he possesses and attributes them to the greatness of God.

The final moral characteristic that is used in this study is generosity. Al-Qushayrī (2007) mentioned that the definition of generosity is having an easy time giving to others. Even though people who give others abundantly can already be considered as generous by the general

population, a Sufi can be considered generous when he gives to others while leaving very little or nothing for himself. This action shows that a Sufi is completely separated from his interests while looking out for others.

These characteristics are some of the most common good characteristics that are found in Rūmī's short stories in the *Mathnawi*. The moral characteristics that are taught in these short stories are those of a Sufi who follows the model of the perfect Man. To capture the true essence of these moral characteristics, the death of the lower soul (*nāfs*) has to take place. Essentially, a soul that is plagued with worldly intentions deviates from the pursuit of the true goal, which is to be closer to God.

To analyse the mystical dimensions of morality in Rūmī's short stories, this study opts to use textual analysis as the method. According to Mckee (2001), textual analysis is the method used to analyse the meaning behind the content of a text. Furthermore, Allen (2017) mentioned that textual analysis includes understanding the text's language, symbols and pictures in order to understand how people communicate through it.

This study utilises the English translation of Rūmī's five selected short stories found in Maryam Mafi's *The Book of Rūmī: 105 Stories and Fables that Illuminate, Delight, and Inform*. First, the moral message in the short stories is analysed using textual analysis. Then, this study compares the analysis with a list of moral characteristics given by al-Qushayrī (2007). However, it must be noted that this study does not strive to present an accurate interpretation of the text used. Mckee (2001) explained that there could be multiple possible interpretations of a single text. Some are more accurate than others, depending on the situation. This analysis merely presents one possible interpretation of the text through a Sufi moral lens.

Overview of Analysis

In this section, this paper analyses each of the five selected short stories from the *Mathnawi* by identifying the moral messages and the mystical concepts within in order to elaborate on the moral implications of the moral messages. The moral messages are analysed through

the motifs used by Rūmī in each short story. This paper agrees that Rūmī's messages in the selected short stories suggest that morality through God's commands is superior in forming a moral individual. Furthermore, this paper analyses the characteristics and the outcome of Sufi morality as described by Rūmī in the selected short stories.

Analysis of "Spitting at Imam Ali"

The first short story analysed in this paper is titled "Spitting at Imam Ali". The story tells the tale of Imam Ali, who refuses to kill an enemy while being influenced and motivated by his anger. In this short story, the moral messages found are to control one's emotions, to be aware of God, and to align one's actions with one's intentions. First, the moral message about controlling one's emotions is portrayed through the character, Imam Ali, who abstains from performing actions while being influenced by his anger. The moral characteristic that reflects this ability is patience (al-Qushayrī, 2007). This characteristic can be seen in the line, "What suppressed your anger at that instant?" (Rūmī, 2018, p. 26), following Imam Ali's action of not killing the enemy he fought against after being spat on. His answer to that question entails that he is refraining from doing anything motivated by his own emotions, in this case, anger. The sword in this story symbolises the emotions of a Sufi. Although emotions still exist, a Sufi has to be aware of when they would bring him closer to God or further away from him. The control that Imam Ali had over his emotions can be seen when he said, "Anger is my obedient slave" (Rūmī, 2018). A Sufi who has successfully controlled his emotions can be seen as a person who has successfully overcome his ego (self).

Through this moral characteristic, a person can practise self-control so as to prevent him from acting irrationally. For example, a person influenced by anger might commit actions that harm others, or even break laws to maintain order. This example is true for most human emotions, such as happiness and sadness. In the case of a Sufi, a rational mind is one that is connected to the will of God through his commands. By abstaining from performing actions influenced by one's emotions, one can stay on the right path, which is towards unity with God. Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh (2010, p. 57) mentioned a similar message in his discussion of intense emotions: "Do not fear that the way (to Allah)

may be puzzling to you but feel afraid of passion overpowering you.” This aphorism by the Sufi master warns about the dangers of emotions or “passion” because it can threaten a person’s “spiritual prospects”. This means that a person’s connection with God is threatened when he acts according to his own emotions.

Second, Rūmī communicates the idea that God views our actions. Consequently, a servant who is aware of this will be much more aware of his actions. This characteristic reflects the mystical station of awareness (al-Qushayrī, 2007, p. 202), whereby a person is aware that his actions and intentions are being viewed by God. As a result, everything that he does is in the interest of God’s will. In this story, Imam Ali is aware that God views his every single action. Therefore, he refrains from performing actions for egotistical reasons. The lines that capture this are, “I only fight for God.... I’m not in the business of saving my own skin” (Rūmī, 2018, p. 26). For a person to possess the characteristic of awareness, he must first identify his own weaknesses to avoid being influenced by his ego. Once he is aware of it, he can avoid performing actions that deviate from the will of God.

Through this moral characteristic, Rūmī proves the relevance of Sufi morality. In this short story, Rūmī is implying that the presence of God is constant. Despite being in a situation where another human being is absent, one still must act morally because every single one of our actions is being viewed by God. The belief in this idea encourages a person to act morally in every situation, despite not being seen by others. For example, if a person is thrown into a forest, he is still obligated to act according to God’s commands. If every human being successfully practises this moral characteristic, the occurrence of crime would be diminished, thus creating a perfectly moral society.

Next, the idea that one’s actions must be aligned with one’s intentions is reflected in this short story. Imam Ali refrains from killing the soldier because of his anger, despite having nobody else to judge his intentions. In this case, we can see that the message preached by Rūmī involves not just moral action, but the principles and intentions behind it. This is preached in a famous Hadith in Islam:

Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended. Whoever migrates with an intention for Allah and His messenger, the migration will be for the

sake of Allah and his Messenger. And whoever migrates for worldly gain or to marry a woman, then his migration will be for the sake of whatever he migrated for. (*Sahih Bukhari & Muslim*)

The above Hadith highlights that the intention of one's action plays a huge role in the eyes of God. If the intention behind an action is not pure, then despite seeming as morally correct, the action will be deemed morally incorrect. In addition, this Hadith is also in line with the mystical station of sincerity (al-Qushayrī, 2007). A person who possesses this characteristic performs every single action for the sake of their love for God. This characteristic is essential in a Sufi's actions because his love for God serves as the primary motivation for his journey (Zarrabi-Zadeh, 2014).

If a person successfully practises this concept, this closes the option for him to manipulate the idea of morality for his own cause. He can perform an action that is considered morally correct by society, but for an egotistical reason. For example, if Imam Ali were to kill the soldier that he was fighting against, his action would be justified as he was in the middle of a war with the soldier. Therefore, his action can be deemed as morally correct without knowing his intention. Furthermore, no other human being in this story could judge his action other than himself. However, he still refrains from killing the soldier because he practises the characteristic of awareness. Furthermore, he believes that the guidelines provided for him by religion are superior to his own reasoning. Therefore, he refrains from performing this specific action by his own logic.

Analysis of "The Angel of Death"

"The Angel of Death" tells the journey of a man who is struggling to escape death by seeking the help of Prophet Solomon. Two moral messages that can be extracted are about the power of Divine decree in Sufism and the negativity of being too attached to this world. First, as part of the Islamic faith, a Sufi must be faithful to what God has decided for him as this is essential in becoming a moral Sufi. This characteristic is displayed in al-Qushayrī's (2007) writing, in which

trust in God as one of the mystical stations (p. 178). In this short story, Rūmī illustrates the antithesis of faith through the character of the man and how it impacts his life. For example, the character is shocked when he catches the angel of death staring at him. The line reads, “We all know that Azrael takes his orders only from God and never wavers in his duty.” Rūmī is pointing out the fact that one should not worry about matters that have been decided for him, in this case, death. Human willpower holds no power against the power of the Divine. Therefore, believing in the fact that one could change his own destiny, against Divine decree, creates a person who assumes that he could abuse his time in this world. For example, a person who thinks that he could manipulate his own destiny would become reckless in his actions. This is because he would assume that he could repent before his death.

On the contrary, a person’s faith in preordained matters will make him committed to purifying his soul while building good moral characteristics. One figure who has discussed similar messages in his work is Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh. In a translation of his aphorism on predestination, Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh (2010) mentioned, “Intentions cannot intrude the walls of preordained things” (p. 3). He tried to portray similar messages using Quranic verses, just as Rūmī did in the short story. As mentioned before, Rūmī emphasises on the message of death in the short story. Therefore, instead of being fixated on death, one ought to focus on building his relationship with God by venturing on the path. By focusing on this aspect, one can become closer to God, therefore becoming a moral individual.

Second, Rūmī implies in the story that the attachment of an individual to this world is a negative quality. Based on Sufi teachings, a person must be detached from the pleasures of this world, including attachment to one’s life. In this story, the character’s unwillingness to die according to his fate, as he saw the angel of death staring at him, shows that he is too attached to the idea of living in this world. This is captured in the lines where he asks for the Prophet’s help to save him from the angel of death: “I beg of you, my life’s in your hands. Please tell the wind to carry me to India, where I’ll be safe from Angel’s harm” (Rūmī, 2018, p. 8). From this scene, it is quite clear that the man was unwilling to leave the world that he loves very much, instead of loving God. Al-Qushayrī (2007) elaborated on the moral characteristic of renunciation, in which a person abstains from performing acts that are

clearly prohibited in Islam as well as things that are allowed but could bring pleasures that would distract a person from God. For instance, a person's obsession with living in this world could reflect an absence of this moral characteristic.

Rūmī is trying to warn readers not to be distracted by the pleasures of this world. In the context of the short story, the man is too worried to leave this world for the world of the hereafter. This is because he is too distracted by the pleasures that he could obtain when he is in the world of the living. As a result, he intends to cheat his death by seeking the assistance of a Prophet. Similar messages can be found in Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh's (2010) aphorism, which mentions that a heart that is distracted by worldly pleasures will not be illuminated with the light that attracts people towards God (cleansing the heart of blemishes). Without the Divine light to guide a person, he will continue to drown in his own lust. Both Rūmī and Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh preach attachment to God and the hereafter because it creates a person who is wary of committing sin. When a person is warier of sin, the possibility of committing it becomes lower. For example, if a man is set to walk through a road filled with thorns, the thorns are symbolic of the sins that a person can commit in his life. If he is more aware of the thorns on the road, then he would walk more carefully, avoiding the thorns in order to get to the other side of the road.

Analysis of "The Fly Who Thought She Was a Sailor"

"The Fly Who Thought She Was a Sailor" tells of two characters, a hardworking donkey following the instructions of its owner, and a fly who is lost in her own pride. In this fable, Rūmī is implying two moral messages, which are to be careful with one's pride and to constantly work towards being closer to God. First, Rūmī implies the danger of pride in the story through the fly: "The fly was gloating in her pride, floating on the stream of urine, believing that she was sailing the seven seas" (Rūmī, 2018, p. 9). Here, Rūmī is trying to demonstrate the role of pride in clouding a person's judgment of what is right and wrong. Since the fly is too consumed with her pride in being a captain, she fails to notice the reality of the situation. This entails an absence of the moral characteristic of humility (al-Qushayrī, 2007), which leads men to drown in pride, believing that they possess greatness produced

by their own skills. Without pride, men would be open to looking at the real picture, which is to find God. Pride becomes an agent that aids the illusion of greatness that leads a person away from God. This discussion leads to the mystical idea of illusion versus reality.

Chittick (2005) discussed the concept of illusion as the ego and reality as unity with God. Through this short story, Rūmī is encouraging readers to undergo this transformation, known as *fana'* and *baqa'*, in order to be able to realise the reality of the world through the correct path (*ṭarīqah*), which is towards union with God. In addition, Rūmī talks about the pleasures of the world as another agent that traps people in an illusion. This can also be seen in the character of the fly in its monologue: "I'm sailing away on the sea. I'm the captain in this ship, and what a perfectly seasoned navigator I am! Who dares to stop me now?" (Rūmī, 2018, p. 9). From these lines, we can infer that the fly is drowning in the pleasures of sailing in the urine, not realising that she is indeed in a filthy substance. Through this, Rūmī is trying to portray the urine as the pleasures of this world, such as wealth and lust. Through the lens of a man who is influenced by his greed, the man is not aware that the pleasures that he feels are nothing but a filthy thing that distracts him from his journey on the path.

Illusion is connected to the concept of unveiling, which is another common idea discussed among mystical scholars. The pride of Man and the pleasures of the world act as a veil that clouds human judgment from seeing the true reality, which is unity with God. Chittick (2005) mentioned that this veil is called the ego. The ego is responsible for separating Man and God. If human beings do not eliminate the ego, they will forever live under the illusion of it, separated from the ultimate reality. As a result, they will not be able to fulfil their true potential as servants of God. As they become aware of the existence of the ego, they can start the process of internal refinement that could subdue it. Eventually, the good internal dimension will reflect itself externally as good moral characteristics.

The illusion that prevents Man from seeing reality can be seen as a form of delusion. Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh (2015) described this delusion as something that stirs up the focus of human beings from their true purpose. He mentioned that illusion "misleads" (deludes) a person into thinking that his true purpose lies in being great in this world, instead

of being a great servant. Furthermore, the goals that human beings set in delusion can cause them to do terrible acts in pursuit of those goals. For example, a person obsessed with being wealthy might be involved in corruption and bribery as a way to accumulate more wealth. In this circumstance, he will neglect his true responsibilities as the servant of God, while being drunk in the pursuit of wealth. In addition, a person who hopes to become a better servant must actively pursue the goal. Since Sufism's moral goal of inward refinement can only be achieved through practices of worship, a servant must continue to do so in order not to be swayed.

Second, Rūmī implies the importance of spiritual progression in the Sufi's journey. During his journey towards mystical perfection, a Sufi must work towards his soul's progression throughout the mystical stations. This journey is necessary for him to become mystically and morally enlightened. In the fable, Rūmī illustrates this characteristic through the donkey. The donkey is characterised as an animal that is very committed to his job of carrying heavy loads for his owner. This characteristic can be seen in the line, "A poor donkey had been patiently carrying his heavy load all day long without a moment's respite" (Rūmī, 2018, p. 9). This reflects the characteristic of a Sufi who is ardently committed to his continuous and long journey, while motivated by the love for God. Without the commitment of the Sufi, he would not be able to fulfil the journey towards mystical perfection. Furthermore, the characteristic of being committed is related to one of the mystical stations that is listed by al-Qushayrī (2007), which is striving. This station is important because it creates an individual who continues to work hard to purify his soul and progress on the journey towards mystical perfection.

Furthermore, a Sufi who is committed to his journey also follows the Divine command. Since one of the dimensions of Sufism includes law (*shariah*), this means that a Sufi must first master the rules of Islam and practise them while on the journey. Although his journey to purify his soul concerns mainly the mystical and internal dimensions, the laws set forth in the Quran and Hadith are still the main guidelines for his behaviour. Moreover, in the fable, another symbol that reflects the Sufi's efforts on the journey is the urine released by the donkey after a long day, which can be seen as the renunciation of a committed Sufi from the worldly pleasures and sins that he ignores. It is these sins and

pleasures that are instead enjoyed by the fly, which represents those who are ignorant.

A Sufi's commitment to his journey is extremely important because his value is based on the efforts that he has shown while on the journey. Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh (2010, p. 134) preached this in one of his aphorisms on a person's lifespan: "Some lives are long in terms of years but short in terms of results, while others are short in terms of years but abundant in terms of results." This aphorism talks about the productive life of a person who strives towards mystical perfection. Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh mentioned that the longevity of a person's life is irrelevant if it is not filled with efforts to be closer to God. This aphorism highlights the importance for a person to continue to work and progress on the journey to become someone with value. In the fable, Rūmī is comparing the life of the donkey, which contains more value, to that of the fly. So, a person who understands this moral message will be motivated to embark on the journey towards mystical perfection.

Analysis of "Chinese and Greek Painters"

The short story titled "Chinese and Greek Painters" tells of two great groups of painters, the Chinese and the Greeks, who engage in a battle to prove themselves as the superior painters of the world. The two different techniques that are used by each group contain important mystical messages that reflect the moral education that is being taught by Rūmī to the readers of the *Mathnawi*. The two moral messages are the cleansing of the heart and the pursuit of Divine beauty. First, Rūmī hints at the idea of cleansing the soul. As part of the Sufi moral upbringing, the cleansing of the heart is a big part of the journey that a Sufi must undergo to achieve mystical perfection and become the perfect Man. Rūmī explains the need for this spiritual cleansing through this short story by using the Greeks to represent the Sufi masters who have completed this process. Al-Qushayrī (2007) mentioned the mystical station of repentance. Although different Sufi scholars have debated on the number of mystical stations, most agree that the station of repentance is a necessary step in the journey towards mystical perfection. Furthermore, this station is typically listed as the earliest by most scholars, proving its importance at the beginning of the

journey. In Islam, the one who successfully repents from his sins can be completely forgiven, essentially being pure from all his past bad deeds.

The houses mentioned in this story play a significant role in the first moral message presented by Rūmī. They are symbolic of the human heart (Nicholson, 1925). When the Greeks remove the old paints of the house by “polishing the surface of the walls”, Rūmī is portraying the act of repentance, which is cleansing the heart of past sins and evil intentions (Rūmī, 2015). By doing so, one can start the journey with a pure heart. In contrast, Rūmī uses the Chinese painters to portray a different group of people or method used on the journey. In the short story, the Chinese do not clean the years of accumulated dirt and old paint that had tainted the walls of the house. Instead, they ask for bright and beautiful colours to cover up the walls. Although the result turns out to be very beautiful, it still fails to compete with the beauty of the house that the Greeks decorated by first cleaning its walls. Similarly, on the journey towards moral and mystical perfection, a person must cleanse their heart before proceeding with any action to achieve the goal of unity with God. Even if a person becomes highly knowledgeable in religious affairs, without a pure heart, he can never reflect the true beauty of God preached by Rūmī.

Similarly, Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh (2010) preached on the process of cleansing the heart so as to achieve enlightenment from God, which results in good moral characteristics. He preached regarding the eligibility of people to receive the “light” that guides them in their actions. Only a person with a pure heart is eligible for that guidance from God. Authentic moral characteristics cannot be produced without a pure heart, which is essential in becoming a moral Sufi. Without the help of God, a person can continually be swayed by the illusions of this world. When he attempts to do good deeds, he can be manipulated into doing things that are not truly good, or even be influenced into doing bad things. To successfully cleanse the heart of corruption, one must first weed out the human attributes that sway him away from God. Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh mentioned that the existence of negative human attributes, such as pride and greed, can prevent a person from being closer to God. Rūmī illustrates this example through the Chinese painters who covered their corrupted hearts with beautiful colours. The temptation of negative human attributes, such as greed, create superficial beauty, such as wealth and lust, which keeps a person from undergoing the

process of eliminating these attributes. This is because human beings are blinded by it. Servanthood is the core human personality that contributes to acquiring the qualities of the perfect human being. The qualities that do not reflect servanthood steer a person further away from God. As a result, any other attributes are considered unnecessary; therefore, weeding out such a personality is needed in order to achieve the perfect attributes of a servant of God. By contemplating this moral message, readers of the *Mathnawi* would realise that the cleansing of the heart is a necessary act to be closer to God.

Second, Divine beauty is a mystical idea that is pursued in a Sufi moral upbringing. There are two types of beauty in this world, which are Divine beauty and superficial beauty. Divine beauty is the true beauty that reflects the true reality, while superficial beauty is a temporary pleasure that disguises itself to sway human beings. According to Sufi beliefs, all beauty seen in this world is a reflection and manifestation of Divine beauty (Lumbard, 2021). Therefore, a Sufi must contemplate and work towards reflecting true Divine beauty on the journey. Thus, his journey to purify the heart is intended for the search and reflection of Divine beauty. In Rūmī's own mystical journey, he was faced with a similar situation. Iqbal (1991) mentioned about Rūmī's activities before his famous meeting with Shams al-Tabrizi. During that time, he was focused on acquiring knowledge of the religious sciences without going through the internal transformation necessary to achieve mystical perfection. However, after his meeting with Shams, Rūmī changed his way of living as Shams indirectly convinced him of the relevance of the mystical path. Therefore, this short story reflects his experience of purifying his heart in order to obtain the authentic moral characteristics that he preaches in his short stories.

In addition, Rūmī is trying to warn readers about the dangers of superficial beauty instead of the desired Divine beauty. A Sufi who fails to reject the temptation of superficial beauty would have failed to achieve the mystical station of renunciation (al-Qushayrī, 2007). Rūmī uses the characters in the short story to exemplify this failure. For instance, the Sultan is responsible for holding the competition between these two groups of great painters. When the Sultan sees the paintings by the Chinese, he becomes reluctant to see the result of the Greek painters' work in the other cottage. This is because he is seduced by the superficial beauty shown by the Chinese painters in their house.

These two houses could be equated to the beauties of this world as well as the hereafter. Similarly, when people are presented with things that could bring them pleasure in this world, they will become distracted. As a result, they will not try to seek the true Divine beauty that could bring them ultimate pleasure, as it is presumably incomparable to the pleasures of this world.

Furthermore, Rūmī describes the distinction between superficial beauty and true beauty, or Divine beauty. The paintings produced by the Chinese can be categorised as superficial beauty, as opposed to those of the Greeks. This is because the beauty of the Chinese paintings on the wall only covers up the years of accumulated rust and dirt. Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh characterised the idea of superficial beauty as a veneer. He mentioned that:

There are two types of veneer (protection): one that protects you from disobedience and one that protects you in disobedience. The layman who is afraid of losing his status among people seeks Allah’s covering in disobedience, while the privileged one who is afraid of losing his position with the Real King seeks Allah’s protection from disobedience. (Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh, 2010, p. 70)

The Chinese painters in the short story can be categorised as people who seek God’s protection to cover up their sins. When a person is plagued with disobedience and seeks God’s protection to protect his reputation, he will be dragged further away from God. The reason behind it is that when one commits sin, without any direct consequences, there are possibilities that those sins will be repeated.

In a real-world scenario, this type of behaviour could lead to acts of corruption, such as bribery and theft. For example, a person who holds power in managing a state treasury might steal some money from it. However, he could hide this act by bribing others who also manage the treasury. The hope that they would not get caught for their immoral actions is the veneer that they seek. Although this sort of behaviour is frowned upon by any moral standards, the advantage of Sufi morality to curb this behaviour is by promoting the believers of God to cleanse their hearts from the greed to seek such pleasures. By

ultimately blocking the tendency to seek such wealth, human beings are less likely to commit such crimes.

Analysis of “The Shaykh and the Tray of Sweets”

The short story titled “The Shaykh and the Tray of Sweets” tells the tale of a Shaykh who is considered as one of the most generous people of his time. His generosity transcends the normal definition of a generous person as he always gives to people to the extent that he possesses very little or nothing for himself. The moral messages of this short story are being generous and having trust in God, as embodied in the characteristics and actions of the Shaykh in his daily life. The first and most obvious moral message that Rūmī portrays in this short story is about generosity. During the journey on the path, one of the spiritual stations, as stated by al-Qushayrī (2007) is generosity, which is a required characteristic to achieve mystical and moral perfection. The standard for generosity in Sufism is high, where a person can only be regarded as generous when he is truly concerned about others to the extent where he loses the tendency to care about himself in terms of wealth. This is shown in the short story, where Rūmī (2018, p. 30) writes, “With the last donation he received, he built a Sufi House, leaving himself with nothing.” The word “nothing” plays a significant role in this story. It reflects the tendency in Sufism to be selfless in all actions, here being in terms of wealth. This reflects a Sufi’s journey of attempting to void himself from having the desire for worldly gains and riches. The desire to be financially wealthy is driven by greed, an unfavourable characteristic that prevents a Sufi from attaining his desired goal in life.

Nevertheless, there is a motivation taught in Islam for a person to be generous with his material wealth. This motivation is recorded in one of Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh’s (2010, p. 40) aphorisms on rewards: “He chose the hereafter as a place to reward His believing servants.” This highlights the existence of rewards in the hereafter. Since this world is not the only world that exists, the rewards that will come for generous people will be given in the hereafter, which is an eternal world compared to the current living world that is temporary. Since the Islamic faith includes the existence of life after death, the balance of reward and punishment is not fulfilled in this world, but in the hereafter. However, the expectation

of reward is not central to the Sufi moral tradition. During a Sufi's moral upbringing, he is taught to be selfless by removing the aspect of the ego or selfishness in every course of action. This causes the motivation behind his every action to be only for the love of God. This also promotes the idea of caring for others before himself. Through this, Rūmī presents the idea about Sufi morality that is beneficial not just for individuals, but also for others. Furthermore, the values of kindness and generosity are universal moral values that are known to benefit other people, not just an individual. Some moral theories might suggest that the actions of the Shaykh would be considered as immoral. For example, consequentialism might dictate that the Shaykh's action is unfavourable because giving to others excessively might have a negative impact on the person giving the donation. However, the concern towards an individual in Sufi morality encourages a Sufi to give regardless of his wealth. Furthermore, the Shaykh's physical state of imminent death shows that a person does not have to be physically healthy to be kind and generous. One can show kindness even when faced with something as adverse as death.

Second, Rūmī promotes the idea of trust in God through the Shaykh's actions in the short story. As mentioned before, an established characteristic of the Shaykh is being generous, and this is possible because of his trust in God. Like generosity, trust in God is another mystical station that must be obtained by a Sufi to achieve mystical perfection. This station is described by al-Qushayrī (2007) as one's complete and utmost trust in the fate dictated by God. This characteristic can be seen in the line, "He remained untroubled, through as his debts had always been paid through the grace of God" (Rūmī, 2018, p. 33). The level of trust that a person must have to fulfil the requirement of this spiritual station is not bound only by wealth, but also in every other aspect of this world. For example, if a person is plagued by problems, such as a disease, he must have faith in God's fate after he has tried to cure his disease. Such faith in God can lead a person to have a serene heart and be unbothered by the problems that are plaguing him. As a result, he can focus on his goal of achieving mystical perfection by continuing his worship.

Having trust in God also makes a person quantify the value their good deeds less. This makes his actions more sincere, creating authentic moral characteristics. As mentioned by Ibn 'Aṭā Allāh (2010, p. 1),

“Losing hope when a slippage occurs is a sign of relying too much on (one’s own) deeds.” He elaborated that trust in God makes a person be less bothered by his mistakes because he knows that his value is not measured through his sins and deeds, but through his relationship with God. A man who values good deeds is considered as someone who values his skills and attributes. As a result, there is a feeling of pride (*takabbur*) in his actions, thus creating egotistical intrinsic values. In Islam, there is the concept of reward and punishment received after an action, which acts as a motivation and warning for a person to behave appropriately and continue his worship of God. However, Ibn ‘Aṭā Allāh mentioned that an enlightened servant of God does not value this concept. Instead, he continues to improve his relationship with God through active practices of worship and by improving his inner qualities that lead to good moral characteristics.

In the discussion of moral theories, the concept of trust in God creates a person with unchanging moral characteristics and values. This is because he has fulfilled the requirements of this spiritual station by placing his utmost trust in God; his actions will only reflect the authentic inner qualities that he has worked on to improve. A person who relies on a situation or any external motivation for his action might change his decision or action based on the external stimuli. For example, a desperate person might resort to violence and corruption to achieve his goals when under intense pressure from his problems. This might harm others, which is a negative quality that is frowned upon, even in other moral theories. The trust a person has in God’s fate will cause him to stay true to his moral values, despite the situation that he is in. A person with these qualities is undoubtedly better than a person with changing values based on a given situation.

Based on the analysis done of each short story, this paper has identified a few key points. Rūmī stands as a proponent of Sufi morality, and he uses his writings as a method to educate readers about morality. In Sufi morality, moral decisions are made based on the commands of God (Piazza & Landy, 2013). In Islam, God’s commands are passed down through the Quran and Hadith, relaying His teachings to believers of Islam. Furthermore, with the Quran and Hadith as guides, the mystical nature of Sufi morality promotes Sufis to find a connection between them and God as guidance for their behaviour. This section compiles and elaborates on the moral messages as arguments for the

superiority of the Sufi moral theory in governing moral values. These arguments are shown through the characteristics of Sufi morality and the outcome for its followers.

Rūmī presents a few characteristics of the moral theory, which are Divine origin, lack of error and consistency of morality. To elaborate on the first point, Sufis believe that every single one of our actions is under the supervision of God. As demonstrated in “Spitting at Imam Ali”, the title character believes that his intentions are being viewed by God and, therefore, he refrains from performing any action that deviates from God’s will. One of the common moral questions involves the origin of morality. When an action is performed, who is the most qualified to determine the morality of that action, and where do the guidelines for morality originate? Human beings are not capable of knowing the intentions behind an action. So, judging an action solely based on the action itself might result in misinterpretation. In Sufi morality, God is the ultimate judge of human behaviour. Therefore, the mistake of misjudging a person’s action cannot occur as God knows the intention behind every action. Furthermore, God’s presence is constant in any circumstance. If the motivation behind an action is based on witnesses or a human judge of action, there is room for immoral actions. In an area where another human being is absent, a person who relies on human witnesses might commit immoral actions, such as torturing an animal or stealing. However, since God’s presence is constant, there is no opportunity for a person to commit immoral actions as every action is witnessed by God.

Next, Rūmī believes that human knowledge and reasoning are prone to error (Chittick, 2005). Although human reasoning is essential for the progression of humankind, we are still prone to committing a lot of errors. Similarly, in a situation where an action has to be judged on its morality, some moral theories rely on science and human reasoning to judge the said action based on the outcome. One such moral theory is classical utilitarianism, which determines the morality of an action based on the outcome that is most favourable for the majority (Choo, 2021). However, this type of morality relies on the limited cognitive ability and knowledge of human beings. Through his writings, Rūmī argues against the use of human reasoning to determine morality for this reason. Rūmī preached that morality is based on rules of conduct that are determined by religion. Thus, actions are judged based on the

guidelines provided in the Quran and Hadith, and not on flawed human reasoning. For instance, the title characters in “The Shaykh and the Tray of Sweets” and “Spitting at Imam Ali” display the characteristic of relying on religious guidelines on behaviour. The Shaykh’s ignorance of the creditor’s reasonings to pay up the boy before receiving the tray of sweets indicate that instead of relying on human reason, he relies on religious guidelines to act morally. Similarly, Imam Ali relies on God’s command to perform every action with a sincere heart in the story. These two characters act merely as agents of morality, while the Divine commands remain as the origin of morality.

Finally, Sufi morality is consistent throughout any circumstance or time. This morality produces an individual with consistent moral standards and behaviours. Rūmī exemplifies this through the various characters in his short stories. When an individual relies on certain standards of values prescribed to him, all his actions will be consistent throughout his life, regardless of the situation. The opposite of this behaviour would be to rely on external circumstances to determine his actions to benefit himself or his people. This produces an individual who is inconsistent with his actions. As illustrated in “Shaykh and the Tray of Sweets”, the title character’s physical as well as financial situation do not affect his actions. He stays true to his beliefs and continues to be generous in his wealth. A consequentialist might act differently in a similar situation as his reasoning might tell him to not be as generous with his wealth in a situation where he has very little to none left.

Conclusion

Rūmī tacitly explores the outcomes of Sufi morality in his short stories, thereby creating a person with authentic moral characteristics. In addition, the internalisation of Sufi morality ensures that every action is met with sincere intentions. Therefore, morality through this theory produces authentic moral characteristics due to the alignment of actions and intentions and the production of a selfless human being. Concerning the intentions and actions of a human being, Sufi morality governs both aspects of controlling human behaviour. Rūmī illustrates these through the various characters and symbols in his short stories, among them being the donkey in “The Fly Who Thought She Was a Sailor” and Imam Ali in “Spitting at Imam Ali”. The characters

illustrate the tendency for the Sufi moral theory to govern both the actions and intentions of an individual. Consequently, Sufi morality can be viewed as a comprehensive moral theory. This is supported by Heck, who mentioned that Sufi morality concerns the outer (*ẓāhir*) and inner (*bāṭin*) dimensions. The outer dimensions include primarily the laws and legislation (*shariah*) that were clearly outlined in the Quran and Hadith, while the inner dimensions involve the mystical experience and journey of a Sufi. Only a Sufi who successfully practises both aspects can be considered as a true moral Sufi.

Next, Sufi morality produces individuals with the tendency of being selfless. In the journey, a Sufi who has successfully achieved mystical and moral perfection will become a perfect human being, essentially realising the truth (*haqīqah*). One of the characteristics of such a person is the lack of concern for himself. This makes him more caring for others and also perform every action for the sake of God. This eliminates his tendency to be egotistical. This concept is discussed extensively in Heck, who mentioned practices in Sufism that ultimately create a selfless individual. In addition, selflessness as a universal virtue cannot be argued against. Heck further elaborated that this creates a person who is humble, generous and attentive to others. Rūmī explains these qualities in the short stories “The Fly Who Thought She Was a Sailor” and “Shaykh and the Tray of Sweets”. Although Sufism primarily focuses on the refinement of characteristics in individuals, this could ultimately benefit others as well. This is displayed throughout Rūmī’s short stories. A Sufi who cares for others could benefit the whole society as it creates a more serene society. Furthermore, a Sufi’s kindness could inspire others to act in the same manner. Although not everyone could subscribe to the Sufi moral theory, or be a Muslim, the universality of the moral characteristics practised by a Sufi through the internal refinement of such actions could ultimately influence others to act in the same manner.

Elaborating on the point of selflessness, Sufi morality discards any pursuit of worldly pleasures that might lead a person astray. In this manner, this theory is in opposition to Hedonism as a moral theory. Hedonism focuses on the concept of pleasure. It dictates that the only thing that brings value in one’s life is acts that bring the most pleasure. From a moral standpoint, Hedonism is a self-centred moral theory, bringing benefits only to oneself. However, it could also bring harm

to an individual who practises it because excessive pleasure could bring harm to him, such as alcohol and drugs. On the other hand, Sufi morality opposes such acts that bring pleasure, at least in this temporary world. Instead, it promotes its believers to seek the pleasure that comes from serving God, which it teaches to be permanent as there is belief in the hereafter. The pleasure felt by believers who seek God is spiritual pleasure, which is different from the physical pleasures that one feels in the world. The temporary pleasure offered in this world could negatively impact an individual. Conversely, there is no harm in being drowned in the pleasure that comes from being closer to God. In a world where everyone only cares about their own pleasure, a highly egotistical society that is driven by lust and greed is inevitable. This would create a chaotic society with an absence of balance and well-being. A Sufi's refusal to indulge in worldly pleasures is displayed by the Greeks in "Chinese and Greek Painters", while "Angel of Death" highlights the consequence of being too attached to it. Therefore, it can be concluded that Rūmī's view of worldly pleasures is negative.

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The Phenomenology of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's Community Engagement: A Theoretical Model for Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) Sustainability

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Abstract: Government and non-government agencies are concerned in recent times about the sustainability of socio-economic and environmental resources because the continuous survival of humanity relies strongly on the extent of ensuring a sustainable economy, society and environment. Sustainability studies have suggested the dire need to promote the implementation of environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) to enhance and guarantee the interests of stakeholders, such as customers, employees, investors and the entire ecosystem. However, a community engagement programme is distinct from community service as the former empowers the society for sustainability, similar to what Dhu'l-Qarnayn did to enhance socio-economic and environmental protection for the people of a territory. Through a phenomenology approach to the exegeses of textual sources of Dhu'l-Qarnayn, this article explicates how the implication of community engagement sustains the people of that time and its relevance to contemporary society. This article uses qualitative method based on a doctrinal approach to explore the historical implication of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's community engagement approach and its application to modern ESG sustainability. This study found that the community engagement approach by Dhu'l-Qarnayn is a sustainable

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empowerment model, rather than mere services to the people for free or in exchange for socio-economic and environmental benefits. The article identifies knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, engagement and empowerment as the fundamental principles used by Dhu'l-Qarnayn towards sustainable ESG in modern society. This study suggests the need to further conduct an empirical study on the understanding and application of sustainable ESG by religious institutions.

Keywords: Dhu'l-Qarnayn, Community Engagement, Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) Sustainability, Phenomenology.

Introduction

The primary role of the government is to provide and promote the implementation of policy development and facilitate the implementation of a sustainable society through its executive, legislative and judiciary arms of authority and other agencies. The role of a sustainable society is not limited to the government in the modern context. Instead, non-government agencies have also been concerned in recent times about sustainable socio-economic and environmental resources (van der Waldt, n.d.). Extant studies have shown that a sustainable society guarantees the survival of humanity as everyone depends on continuous human and natural resources. Although the concept of community services might be used interchangeably with community engagement, the former is limited to socio-economic assistance rendered to the community, while the latter focuses on empowerment. Services to the community are convergent between them, while empowerment for continuous sustainability is divergent between community service and community engagement (Bruce, 2008).

Dhu'l-Qarnayn is a character mentioned in the Quran with a unique community engagement strategy based on certain principles that are demonstrated in this study. His socio-economic and environment assistant to the people from the territory of Turk is a service to the people on one hand and community engagement on the other. Some historian argued that Dhu'l-Qarnayn's is originally from the Himyar tribe in old Yemen who explores a landmark socio-economic and environmental assistance to the people of Babylon from the territory of Turk (Ibn Kathir, 2000). The people who invited Dhu'l-Qarnayn

for assistance offered to compensate for the social services, though he preferred to do the service by teaching them how to do it together. Dhu'l-Qarnayn's engagement programme is distinct from community service as it empowers the society for sustainability, similar to what he did to enhance socio-economic and environmental protection for the people.

Environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) focuses on the impact of organisational activities on the social fabric, economic empowerment and environmental protection of a society. However, little academic research has been done on the study and application of ESG in modern society. Therefore, this paper has four sections, the first of which is a review of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's historical, socio-economic and environmental community engagement and the concept of ESG. The second section is the phenomenology methodology of the study, followed by the application of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's principles of community engagement to contemporary ESG. The third section includes a discussion of the study, while the final section provides a conclusion as well as recommendation for policy and practical approach to current gaps in the application of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's community engagement model in addressing ESG initiatives in modern society.

Literature Review

History of Dhu'l-Qarnayn

Some historical evidence indicate that Iskandar Dhu'l-Qarnayn mentioned in the Quran is in reality the figure Alexander the Great in Western history and not just a spiritual reflection. This is the person who ruled the East and West of the European territories. Apart from his power of authority within the region, he was recorded as being knowledgeable with sound wisdom, as exemplified in the intervention of the community that sought his assistance. The study by Nur Asma AB Aziz and Muhd Norzam Jamian (2016) identifies four main principles that embody the leadership of Dhu'l-Qarnayn, namely knowledge, wisdom, justice and virtuous deeds. Intellectual capacity is a guide towards the establishment of *hablum-mina Allah* (covenant from Allah) as spiritual guidance and *habulumina-nnas* (covenant from men), indicating the relationship with people, society and the environment.

These four principles are the golden characteristics of Dhu'l-Qarnayn, which earned him the success and achievement to rule and conquer the said territory for the protection of humanity in seeking the pleasure of Allah (Nur Asma Ab Aziz & Muhd Norzam Jamian, 2016). The story of Dhu'l-Qarnayn is important, as evident in Verse 83 of Surah Al-Kahf in the Quran: "And they ask you about Dhu'l-Qarnayn. Say, I will recite to you a record of him". The Quran also explicates how he helped the oppressed and established justice. According to the exegeses of At-Tabari (2001, no 5/433), four kings on the earth toured and extended authority between the East and West, but two of them were righteous (Suleiman bin Dawood and Dhu'l Qarnayn), while the other two were infidels (Bakhtnasir and Nimrod bin Kanaan). Historical evidence suggests that Dhu'l-Qarnayn accepted Islam through Ibrahim Al-Khalil and his son, Ishmael (PBUH), and he did the circumambulation with them at the Holy Kaabah. However, other historians have argued that Dhu'l-Qarnayn was an Egyptian philosopher named after Alexandria city which he established (Ibn Kathīr, 1990). Moreover, the story of Dhu'l-Qarnayn in the Quran is centred around a monotheistic, powerful and knowledgeable person who built the dam of Gog and Magog, and this is where it differs from Alexander of Macedonia, who was reported to have reached the dam. In sum, there are different historical reports on the figure of Dhu'l-Qarnayn, which can be traced back to Christian and Jewish records, but Islamic records confirm that he was monotheistic, knowledgeable and powerful (Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, 1432).

Community Engagement

A community entails a group of people sharing common social, economic or environmental characteristics. A community of people has a sense of belonging that is bound together with similar geographical features, common interests, shared values, experiences or culture. Considering the purpose of common interests in the community, sustainability experts have argued that community engagement is a fundamental lifeline of the community in modern society. Although there is no specific definition of community engagement, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) describes community engagement as the process of collaboration and cooperation between a group of people in a close geographical location with similar interests for the benefit of

humanity and environment (Christens & Zeldin, 2016; Schlake, 2015). The socio-economic and environmental challenges of every society can collectively be identified and forestalled by a group of people having geographical proximity, similar interests and mutual collaboration and cooperation to achieve set objectives. According to the CDC (2011), effective engagement towards achieving a common interest to protect a society's socio-economic and environmental needs requires three main principles, which are items to consider before the commencement of operation, identification of items that necessitate engagement and essential items needed for successful engagement (Schlake, 2015) (Schlake, 2015).

Active community engagement projects have identified the significance of youths and adolescents as effective agents for achieving constructive and effective community progress and development. Community engagement helps organisations identify and empower youths on the importance and process of protecting the socio-economic and environmental interests of society. Community engagement with youths enhances sustainable social justice and youth-adult partnership in policy, governance and organisation. A youth community engagement programme is a modern socialisation dimension of getting youths involved in the constructive development of their socio-economic and environmental surroundings. Youth community engagement usually occurs in three models – volunteerism, youth in governance and community organising, which involves young people (Christens & Zeldin, 2016).

Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) Sustainability

ESG is a concept that measures the sustainability and ethical impact of business activities. It is mainly concerned with the environmental consequences of investment activities on climate change and the effect of nuclear energy on social sustainability in general (Busari & Sitiris, 2021). It also addresses diversity concerns, human rights, consumer protection as well as animal rights and welfare. Modern companies are assessed based on their ESG compliance in the management structure, labour relations, compensation of workers and responsible investments. There are increasing ESG concerns in government and company policies,

leading to financial rating factors in the company's overall corporate responsibilities (Kiehne, 2019). Empirical evidence from Friede et al. (2015) suggests that 200 studies have been conducted on the relationship between ESG and the financial performance of corporate companies. It is found that there is a significant positive relationship between ESG and corporate financial performance (CFP). It is important to note that despite the significance of ESG integration in corporate services and investment, the perception of corporate policymakers differs from one geographical location to another, such as USA and Europe, which somewhat influences global results and ratings (Friede et al., 2015). Researchers have argued that the benefits of understanding ESG and its implementation are multidimensional because investors are conscious of identifying and avoiding companies that violate socio-economic and environmental benefits to the entire ecosystem. Companies that are ESG compliant by reducing risk are more likely to increase profit, especially in the ESG intelligence compliance environment (Henisz et al., 2019).

Phenomenological Interpretation of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's Community Engagement

The phenomenological approach of qualitative inquiry explores the experience and lived interpretation of concepts and events. Phenomenology interpretation shows the second- or third-level perception of a particular construct (Alhazmi & Kaufmann, 2022; Davidsen, 2013). It can be traced to the pioneer contribution of Ibn Haytham, a Persian psychologist who lived between Basra and Cairo (Saudi et al., 2007).

There are 15 verses in Surah al-Kahf that encapsulate the historical significance of Dhu'l-Qarnayn. The sociological background of these specific verses is explained in the exegeses of the Quran as a result of how the Christians and Jews questioned and interrogated Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) concerning information in their scriptures. These questioners were the Quraysh infidels who were indoctrinated by the Jews,

These Jews said to the Quraysh delegation:

“Ask him; the Prophet (PBUH) about three commandments; first, ask him about a matter of boys who left the city, second,

the case of a man that traveled, conquer, and established authority between the east and the west of the earth, and ask him about the soul” (Ibn Kathīr, bin Umar, 1997; Majmau Al-Buhus al-Islamiyyah Al-Azhar, 1992).

The first of the 15 verses states, “They will ask thee of Dhu'l-Qarnayn. Say: I shall recite unto you a remembrance of him” (Al-Kahf: 83). Allah wanted to establish the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) and commanded him to respond to the inquiry based on revelation.

Surely We established him in the land, and gave him the means to all things. (Al-Kahf: 84)

According to Al-Bagwī (1997), there are comments that Dhu'l-Qarnayn was a prophet or a king or both, but the established source suggests that he was a righteous person, with knowledge and wisdom, who loved Allah and whom Allah loved in return. Also, according to Verse 85 of Surah Al-Kahf (“So he travelled a course”), Dhu'l-Qarnayn traveled across the globe and reached the main landmarks between the East and the West (Al-Qurtubī, 2006; At-Tabari, 2001).

...until he reached the setting 'point' of the sun, which appeared to him to be setting in a spring of murky water, where he found some people. We said, “O Dhu'l-Qarnayn! Either punish them or treat them kindly.” (Al-Kahf: 86)

The verse above describes Dhu'l-Qarnayn's sojourn, during which he encountered the people of the community whose houses were short and without covers. Whenever it was sunny, they would go into the river for cover and when the sun set, they would troop out in relief (Ibn Kathīr, bin Umar, 1997). Since Dhu'l-Qarnayn's task was to conquer the territory for the pleasure of Allah, he was given the command to either choose between punishing the people of the community or protecting and teaching them sustainability and survival (Al-Qurtubī, 2006).

He responded, “Whoever does wrong will be punished by us, then will be returned to their Lord, Who will punish them with a horrible torment” - As for those who believe and do good, they will have the finest reward, and we will assign them easy commands. (Al-Kahf: 87-88)

This message does not necessarily mean that Dhu'l-Qarnayn was a prophet who received revelation. Rather, it could have been an inspiration because he also responded that justice will be served – those who observed instruction will get mercy, while the mischievous will be punished in this world before the punishment in the hereafter. The wrongdoers would be those who went against Dhu'l-Qarnayn's conquer mission.

Then he travelled a 'third' course- until he reached 'a pass' between two mountains. He found in front of them a people who could hardly understand 'his' language. (Al-Kahf: 92-93)

Sadda and *sudda* are two words that refer to dam, but the former refers to the human dam, while the latter refers to one made by God. Dhu'l-Qarnayn found a dam between the two mountains that barricaded against the Gog and Magog incursion. He found a people without differences in culture and language living in front of the two dams, and no one else understood a word (Al-Bagwī, 1997). There were two mountains alternating between them, a gap through which Gog and Magog emerged from the land of the Turks in order to intrude and cause havoc upon the people, destroying the land and the offspring in the process (Ibn Kathīr, bin Umar, 1997).

They pleaded, "O Dhu'l-Qarnayn! Surely Gog and Magog are spreading corruption throughout the land. Should we pay you tribute, provided that you build a wall between us and them?" (Al-Kahf: 94)

The exegeses of Al-Bagwī (1997) put forth that since the Quran mentions that the people of the community between the two mountains could hardly understand the language of Dhu'l Qarnayn, how were they able to plead to him for assistance? Here, there is an indication that there was an interpreter who could understand the language of Dhu'l-Qarnayn and was able to enhance the communication between them.

He responded, "What my Lord has provided for me is far better. But assist me with resources, and I will build a barrier between you and them." (Al-Kahf: 95)

“Bring me blocks of iron!” Then, when he had filled up ‘the gap’ between the two mountains, he ordered, “Blow!” When the iron became red hot, he said, “Bring me molten copper to pour over it.” (Al-Kahf: 96)

Although the people of the community proposed to compensate Dhu'l-Qarnayn for helping them to prevent the incursion of the Gog and Magog, Dhu'l Qarnayn responded that the favour of Allah on him in terms of power and authority is bigger than their compensation. Instead, they should assist him with their labours and human capital in establishing the task (Al-Qurṭubī, 2006).

“And so the enemies could neither scale nor tunnel through it.” (Al-Kahf: 97)

The assistance that Dhu'l Qarnayn offered was sustainable such that Gog and Magog were not be able to penetrate the people of the community. According to the exegeses of At-Tabari (2001), the wall was thick and strong enough to deter enemy incursion.

He declared, “This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will level it to the ground. And my Lord’s promise is ever true.” (Al-Kahf: 98)

Dhu'l-Qarnayn affirmed that the construction and completion of the iron wall was mercy by the permission of Allah and its sustainability depended on His decree. The durability of the iron wall depended on the will of Allah. Dhu'l-Qarnayn asserted the significance of spirituality in socio-economic and environmental sustainability (Ibn Kathir, 1997).

Application of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's Community Engagement Model to ESG

As mentioned previously, ESG is a holistic perspective to sustainability, investment and business activities beyond mere environmental protection. The ESG framework demonstrates how organisations manage the impact of risk-related activities on the environment, society and economy. ESG stakeholders are not limited to investors, but also include concerned customers, suppliers and employees who should collaborate to enhance sustainable socio-economic and environmental protection (Kong,

2022). ESG focuses on health and safety issues, pollution reduction and corporate philanthropic assistance. It is also concerned with the impact of organisation activities on greenhouse gas emissions, the exploration and use of natural resources as well as complete resilience against environmental risks, such as flooding and fires. It also encompasses the impact of an organisation on the social structure and fabric of society, such as fair wages, employee engagement and supply chain partners. Moreover, it refers to the governance structure and component in the management and running of an organisation (Boffo & Patalano, 2020). Although the story and discussion of Dhu'l-Qarnayn are doctrinally based, it extends to how sustainability empowers a community in contemporary society. Furthermore, there are lessons to be learned from the empowerment approach and methodology of Dhu'l-Qarnayn with the people of the community. Dhu'l-Qarnayn's empowerment was sustainable enough to protect the incursion of the Gog and Magog because it was based on knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, engagement and empowerment (Busari, 2022). He was a knowledgeable warrior who understood what needed to be done and how it should be done. Evidence shows that he never lived in that particular community before the encounter and it is interesting to note how he knew what needed to be done to prevent the incursion of unwanted enemies. The Quran states, "Surely We established him in the land, and gave him the means to all things" (Al-Kahf: 84). It seems that knowledge is one of the fundamental traits that Allah bestowed upon Dhu'l Qarnayn on this earth. The experimentation on the construction of the iron wall is high-level engineering and environmental science work. The Quran states:

"Bring me blocks of iron!" Then, when he had filled up 'the gap' between the two mountains, he ordered, "Blow!" When the iron became red hot, he said, "Bring me molten copper to pour over it." (Al-Kahf: 96)

Secondly, the level of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's wisdom is demonstrated in the priority given to cooperative service and collaborative efforts over community services in exchange for compensation. Such wisdom shows that the knowledge, power and authority that Allah endowed on him is better than their compensation in exchange for the request for assistance. This wisdom made him choose to extend the mercy of Allah to those who accepted his mission and became submissive to Allah, though there would be punishment for wrongdoers.

Thirdly, Dhu'l-Qarnayn's spiritual intelligence is demonstrated in his reliance on Allah as the source of knowledge, power and strength to sustain any project and endowment. Despite the effort made in the construction of the iron wall, Dhu'l Qarnayn believed that its durability and continued protection against the incursion depends on the will of Allah. The lesson demonstrated is that spiritual intelligence starts from complete reliance on Allah and submission to His will.

He declared, "This is a mercy from my Lord. But when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will level it to the ground. And my Lord's promise is ever true." (Al-Kahf: 98)

The engagement of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's methodology entails the exploration and conquering of territory for the pleasure of Allah. He represents a righteous person with power and authority who never relaxes in his comfort zone, but rather continues to travel in order to explore nature and expand the mission of *da'wah*.

Finally, the exploration and engagement of Dhu'l-Qarnayn in this context are based on the empowerment of the people of the community as a result of sharing knowledge, wisdom and technical skills without charging for compensation, except for their cooperation and collaboration. This is one of the reasons why community service is different from community engagement because the former aids others, while the latter teaches them how to aid others. This is in line with the popular adage, "Give a man a fish, he eats one day but teach a man how to fish, he eats every day".

Therefore, it seems to the researchers that the efforts and approach of Dhu'l-Qarnayn can be further transposed in a community engagement model in collaboration and cooperation for the socio-economic and environmental protection of all interests. This model can be represented as follows:

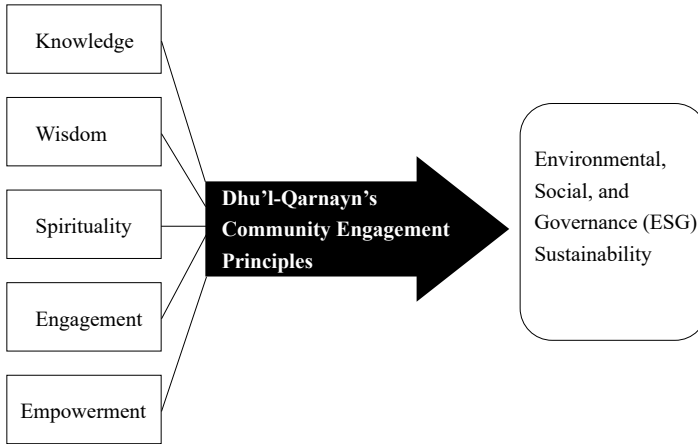


Figure 1.0: Proposed Dhu'l Qarnayn Community Engagement Model

Discussion

The purpose of ESG is to build a sustainable and responsible business that will maintain a balance in the ecosystem. ESG-based business activities protect the entire market structure, including the interests of investors, employees and the environment, in a responsible and balanced approach. The discussion of ESG in contemporary times is ongoing and creates a valuable impact on the community and the planet without jeopardising economic interest. This study identifies Dhu'l-Qarnayn's engagement as a case study that is relevant to contemporary society.

There are five identifiable main principles of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's engagement methodology that are described and discussed in this study. However, spirituality is a unique concept introduced in this study as a golden fundamental principle that guides sustainable socio-economic and environmental projects. The 15 verses in Surah Al-Kahf also demonstrate the significance of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's submission to the will of Allah and commitment to community engagement and empowerment. The spiritual intelligence explicated here made him reject financial compensation and, rather, insist on collaboration and cooperation to establish and construct the iron wall so as to prevent the incursion of the Gog and Magog.

There are many governmental and non-government organisations today that are open to the idea of ESG. As such, the lessons learned from Dhu'l-Qarnayn can be useful to them, especially the use of spiritual intelligence and engagement over community service. Community engagement programmes are also becoming attractive in educational institutions with the intent of creating a synergy between the town and gown. These institutions can leverage the principles of Dhu'l-Qarnayn to enhance responsible and sustainable community engagement. Institutions of higher learning that teach sustainability as a course can also borrow from these principles in order to develop a more comprehensive and sustainable curriculum for sustainability science in the socio-economic and environmental field of work.

Community engagement seems more sustainable rather than mere services to the people, as demonstrated by Dhu'l-Qarnayn who viewed that socio-economic and environmental empowerment is better achieved through collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders.

Conclusion

The concept of ESG is gaining attention in modern times due to the benefits of organisation compliance to the entire ecosystem. This study explores the story of Dhu'l-Qarnayn and its implication for the socio-economic and environmental activities of government and non-governmental organisations. This story is doctrinal evidence in the Quran that has a significant underpinning concept of community engagement approach based on the principles of knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, engagement and empowerment for the benefit of all stakeholders in the community. This study found that the community engagement approach of Dhu'l-Qarnayn is derived from doctrinal evidence and should be useful to contemporary community engagement projects towards sustainable ESG. This approach also promotes community empowerment through the collaboration and cooperation of human capital, rather than mere services in exchange for a socio-economic and environmental benefit that is not sustainable. Further study needs to explore the viability and implication of Dhu'l-Qarnayn's fundamental principles – namely knowledge, wisdom, spirituality, engagement and empowerment – towards sustainable ESG in modern society.

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***Tawhīd* as a Fundamental Element of the Islamic Worldview and Its Implications for Moral Thoughts and Values**

Akeem Olayinka Kazeem¹

Abstract: This is an analysis of the *Tawhīdī* worldview from the standpoints of moral epistemology and moral psychology. The aim is to explore some of the implications that the names and attributes of Allah could have on the Muslims' moral thoughts and behaviours. In recent times, the names and attributes of Allah have attracted little academic focus, despite their potential to be employed as frameworks to discuss and address many issues. This paper, therefore, seeks to demonstrate that the names and attributes of Allah are veritable reservoirs that could be explored for moral knowledge and paradigms. It indicates how they could serve as guides to moral reasoning, bases for moral consciousness and also sources of moral motivation. This is attempted through a qualitative method of an inductive approach, and it entails a conceptual analysis of selected names and attributes of Allah based on the Quranic contextual usage. The paper, therefore, holds the view that each of the names or attributes of Allah has moral-related concepts that could inform Muslims' moral thoughts and values, and they could also serve as bases for moral conduct and character (re)formation.

Keywords: *Tawhīdī* worldview, *Tawhīd al-Asma wa al-Sifat*, Moral Values, Moral Consciousness, Moral Reasoning, Character Reformation.

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Introduction

The word *Tawhīdī* – a term derived from *al-Tawhīd* (the Oneness of Allah) – began to be formulated, employed and popularised as an epistemological and sociopolitical concept in the last four decades or thereabout (Choudhury, 2019). This was attempted by many of the front-liners who were concerned about the exclusion of the Islamic worldview from educational pursuits in the Muslim world, particularly mundane studies in the fields of humanities, physical, biological and applied sciences. Knowledge in modern times has lost its divine values due to secularisation. The term has, therefore, continued to be used to capture any conscious intellectual efforts that are geared toward a resurgence of Islamic fundamental perspectives and values in various parts of the world (Choudhury, 2019).

The main idea of these efforts is to consciously enroot our thoughts and values in the fundamental principles of *Tawhīd* – the doctrine of the Oneness of God – as the core and most central aspect of the Islamic worldview. This is because human thought and behaviour are largely influenced by their worldview. The aim is to transcend the paradigms, approaches and methodology of knowledge and practice that are based on pure rationalism (the primacy of reason), pure idealism (the primacy of the human mind and consciousness) and pure empiricism (the primacy of the senses). This is proposed to be done through the (re)introduction of the scriptural orientation and revelation that is not “allowed” to inform the processes of knowledge production and transmission, and the practical utilities of the generated knowledge (Malkawi, 2014).

The idea also entails the intellectual and practical steps to overcome naturalism (the view that “laws of nature” without revelation suffices to understand the world), materialism (the theory that holds the view that only “matter” exists), secularism (the agenda to remove religion from public issues) and agnosticism (the perspective that Man does have sufficient knowledge to (dis)prove the existence of God) (Malkawi, 2014).

To achieve this, many efforts are continued to be made through various programmes in order to extend the understanding and practicality of this worthy intellectual agenda across the Muslim world. Institutions and individuals, through books, research studies, seminars and the like, have embarked on academic projects to address the conceptual aspects

and practical dimensions of the agenda. Further, various issues and topics are continued to be raised and discussed respectively.

Against this background, this paper is an attempt to contribute its quota to the *Tawhīdī* agenda with a focus on enrooting our moral thoughts and values in the names and attributes of Allah. It is an analysis of the concept of *Tawhīd* as a major element of the Islamic worldview from the standpoints of moral epistemology (theory of knowledge about the sources and basis of morality) and moral psychology (the study of various mental and behavioural aspects of morality, such as moral will, motivation, conscience, character reformation, etc.). The aim is to explore some of the implications that the names and attributes of Allah could have on Muslims' moral thoughts, value orientation and ethical behaviours. This paper seeks to demonstrate that the names and attributes of Allah are veritable reservoirs for moral knowledge and paradigm (e.g., guides to moral reasoning, bases for moral consciousness and sources of moral motivation). This is attempted through a conceptual analysis of certain names and attributes of Allah based on Quranic contextual usage.

This study's main objective is to demonstrate how Muslims' moral consciousness in both thoughts and actions could be (re)awakened through a moral orientation that is based on an exploration of the imports of *Tawhīd al-Asma wa al-Sifat*. In the final analysis, the paper holds the view that each name and attribute of Allah have moral-related concepts that could inform more about the Muslims' moral paradigms and serve as a basis for their moral conduct and character (re)formation. In other words, the purpose of this study is to generally consider some of the correlations that exist among *Tawhīd*, worldview, moral thoughts and ethical values and behaviours.

However, this study is not an exhaustive discussion on *Tawhīd al-Asma' wa al-Sifat*. It only focuses on an analysis of selected names and attributes of Allah to highlight some of their respective implications for moral thoughts, values and behaviours in order to illustrate its viewpoints vis-à-vis the objective of the paper.

The Concept of *Tawhīd* and Its Implications: A Background Analysis

The word *tawhīd* is an Arabic term that is syntactically derived from the verb *wahḥada*, which literally means “to assert or establish the oneness of something” (Dastagir & Ramzy, 2018). It has since been technically employed in Islamic thought to denote specifically the concept of and faith in “the Divine Unicity of Allah”, an affirmation of Allah’s Oneness in divinity, absoluteness, transcendence and more (al-Faruqi, 1982). It is sometimes generally used to connote discourse on the doctrinal or creedal aspects of Islam (*al-aqīdah al-Islāmiyah*).

However, in this study, the usage of *Tawhīd* shall be more focused on its denotation as “faith in and the concept of Allah’s Oneness”. This is concisely defined as an understanding that is based on the belief in the Oneness and Supremacy of Allah without rival in His divinity and right to be solely worshipped, His total dominion and sustainability of all that exist, and His divine essence and attributes without similitude and comparison to anyone and anything.

Many great scholars of Islam are known to have extensively discussed *Tawhīd* as the fundamental concept, given its profoundness to the Islamic worldview. It constitutes the central theme of discussion among the classical scholars of Islam, particularly Muslim theologians (Asharites, Mutazilites and Matrudites), Sufi scholars and even several Muslim philosophers.

For example, one of the most influential philosophers, theologians, jurists and mystics of Sunni Islam, Imam al-Ghazālī (d. 1111), through his analysis, has demonstrated the profoundness of the concept of *Tawhīd*. He has provided us with a certain insight about the dynamic dimensions of the concept, particularly regarding a profession of faith and actual belief in the concept vis-à-vis its effects on Muslims’ dispositions.

In his magnum opus, *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Imam al-Ghazālī (1993) identifies four manifestations of *Tawhīd* with their corresponding categories based on how people proclaim *Tawhīd* and exhibit the essence of the concept. An exploration of these categories seems to reflect throughout the whole book (four volumes in total). Without going into details, which is not possible within the confines of this study, the four identified categories are as follows: (a) *Tawhīd munāfiq*: this a hypocritical proclamation of *Tawhīd* by some people who do not

in reality have belief in meaning and essence of the concept; (b) *Tawḥīd awwam*: this relates to a kind of proclamation of the concept of Tawḥīd with a level of sincerity, but its impact on the thought and behaviour of this set of people is not at a profound level, if not a superficial one. It is the most common type of *Tawḥīd* and lacks real commitment to its essence; (c) *Tawḥīd Siddiqīn*: this entails a deeper level of understanding and commitment with certain profound consciousness about the meaning, essence and implications of *Tawḥīd* on everything, and lastly; (d) *Tawḥīd Muqarrabūn*: this is the highest level of consciousness about the concept of *Tawḥīd*. It involves a deep immersion in the understanding of the essence and implications of Allah's Oneness as the only reality that permeates every existence. The people in this category are almost rare as this dimension of *Tawḥīd* requires a display of many extraordinary characters, not only in terms of belief and thought, but also attitude and behaviour.

Another great scholar who has also extensively examined the concept of *Tawḥīd* is Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328). As a renowned Islamic jurist, theologian, judge and philosopher, he is known to have discussed *Tawḥīd* from various standpoints, which capture an overview of human reality regarding religious and mundane issues. One of his most popular books on the concept of *Tawḥīd* is *Kitab al-Īmān*, though further detailed attempts were made in his other great books, such as *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, among others.

Since a detailed discussion of Ibn Taymiyyah's view on *Tawḥīd* is primarily not within the objective of this paper, it is sufficed to say that *Tawḥīd*, according to him, is the most fundamental concept in Islam. It is at the core of Muslims' understanding and practices. It defines the nature of their life and the essence of their religious commitment and practices (*Kitab al-Īmān*).

Besides Imam al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah, there are many other renowned Islamic scholars who have provided us with a deep understanding and implication of *Tawḥīd*. However, the last to be referenced in this paper is Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 1350), whose analysis of *Tawḥīd* is an encompassing and profound concept. As the most popular student of Ibn Taymiyyah, he has ingeniously expanded and built on many of what his teacher has espoused.

For example, Ibn Qayyim has written extensively on *Tawhīd*, with focus on its practical dimensions. In one of his well-known writings titled *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, he does not only discuss the great dimensions of *Tawhīd*, but also provides some ways to inculcate its direct effects on our ways of life. He painstakingly identifies and examines the steps and stages that could be adopted to attain the level of *Tawhīd* that is very similar to the fourth stage (*Tawhīd muqarrabin*) identified by Imam al-Ghazālī above.

Given the comprehensiveness of the doctrinal categories, theological issues, religious understanding, practical implications and the like that the term *Tawhīd* is used to capture, it has become a tradition to explain and interpret it from three broad interconnected dimensions. This dimensional approach is a later development as it was not known in the early formative periods of Islam (Philips, 2005). Nonetheless, obviously, these are embedded in the general basic understanding of the Islamic belief system. This approach shall therefore be adopted in this paper. It must, however, be noted that each dimension could not be validly and distinctively discussed without implying the others. Thus, in the view of this paper, this three-dimensional approach is only an epistemological or intellectual approach to the whole concept of Islamic doctrinal and theological thought.

Having briefly provided a background analysis on the concept of *al-Tawhīd*, with selected references from renowned scholars of Islam, an attempt is next made to consider some of its dimensions, as now commonly discussed.

The Three Dimensions of Tawhīd as Faith in Allah

Tawhīd al-Uluhiyyah. *Tawhīd al-Uluhiyyah* is used by Islamic scholars to capture the reality that all divinity belongs solely to Allah, and He is the only One who deserves our worship. Various Islamic scriptural references are alluded to by scholars in the articulation of this dimension of *Tawhīd*. In one instance, Allah says, "... do you worship instead of Allah that which does not benefit you at all or harm you?" (Quran,

21:66).² Rational and practical illustrations have been put forth in the books of *al-tawhīd* to demonstrate manifestations of this dimension of *al-Tawhīd*.

Tawhīd al-Rububiyyah. *Tawhīd al-Rububiyyah* implies that everything that exists not only owes its existence and sustainability to Allah, but also entails that the total dominion and control of all things lie ultimately with Him: “Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is, over all things, Disposer of affairs” (Quran, 39:62). Like other dimensions, some justifications based on human rationality and existential experiences are articulated to demonstrate the Lordship of Allah. This dimension of *Tawhīd* is used to address Man’s attempt to falsely attribute dominion of anything or all that exists to other creatures besides Allah, and to also counter Man’s outright denial of Allah’s transcendental control of the realities.

Tawhīd al-Asma wa al-Sifat. *Tawhīd al-Asma wa al-Sifat* is the dimension that has been employed to discuss the realities of the essence and attributes of Allah. It is aimed to capture some of the basic understanding of the nature and dispositions of Allah in order to have better insight into His standard and mode of operation (*af’āl-Allāh* and *sunnatu*). It entails the belief in and acknowledgement of the divine names and attributes of Allah, which are only for Him without similitude and comparison (Quran, 42:11). As subsequently discussed in this study, these names and attributes, in the view of this paper, are the basic conceptual frames that provide an overview about Allah and related divine issues, though they have not attracted much academic exploration in recent time.

Among the scriptural references on this dimension of *Tawhīd* is the following Quranic verse: “Allah - there is no deity except Him. To Him belong the best names” (Quran, 20: 8). Similarly, Prophet Muhammad is also reported to have said “... to Allah belong (some) ninety-nine names...” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, 2736). This hadith is further clarified later in the study as it has many implications. Nevertheless, it is currently sufficed to state that Allah’s names and attributes are uncountable,

² Unless otherwise stated, all the English translations of Quranic verses in this study are from *The Qur'an - Saheeh International Translation*, Emily Assami, 2020.

and that the hadith is only referencing 99 of them for reasons that are discussed in the later part of this paper.

What are the existential and conceptual implications of *Tawhīd* as a whole? How does it inform Muslims' worldview? The responses to these questions are succinctly addressed next.

General Implications of al-Tawhīd: A Brief Overview

The impact of believing in and affirming Allah's Oneness based on the concept of *Tawhīd* could be concisely discussed through the following four implications that seem to capture the concept of *Tawhīd* as an integrated worldview.

In general, worldview implies a system of thought that is adopted by individuals or a group as a way to understand, interpret and approach their existential realities. It basically consists of a certain orientation regarding a belief and value system and their corresponding influence on attitudes and behaviours (Davies, 2022). Although there is no unified articulation on the analysis of the term "worldview" in Islamic academia, there are extensive analyses on many similar or related concepts or ideas, particularly concerning Islamic perspectives and approaches to religious views and mundane issues. At the core of these various views stands the concept of *Tawhīd* as the bedrock from which thoughts and ideas are extrapolated (Berghout, 2010).

Below are a few considerations on the implications of how the concept of *Tawhīd* plays out as a basis of the Islamic perspective and what could be called the Islamic worldview in as much as it forms a system of thought and approach that does not only inform, but also capture Muslims' dispositions to existential realities and issues.

One of these implications is the ritual implication, which involves an engagement in physically observable rites that are clearly defined by the basic sources of Islamic thought. Allah says, "O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous" (Quran, 2:21). These rituals are principally represented in the pillars of *salāt*, *zakāt*, *siyām* and *hajj*, and they are primary indicators of Muslims' affirmation of Allah's divine right to be revered.

Another existential significance is the spiritual implication. This implies the subtle and non-physically observable impacts of *Tawhīd*. These are natively felt and personally perceived by individuals, particularly sincere believers and true adherents to the cannon and intent of *Tawhīd*. This is based on the following hadith of Prophet Muhammad:

There are three *qualities* whoever has them, will *taste* the sweetness of Iman: To love Allah and His Messenger more than anyone else; to love a slave (of Allah) only for (the sake of) Allah, and to abhor returning to infidelity after Allah has saved him from it as he would abhor being thrown into the fire (of Hell). (*Riyadh as-Salihin*; In-book reference Hadith 375)

These are just a few of the spiritual implications, and the Quran also makes a broad allusion to these implications when characterising true believers.

The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord, they rely. (Quran, 8:2)

Hope, tranquility, optimism and other related qualities fall in this category.

In addition to these two implications, *Tawhīd* also has epistemological import as it concerns the paradigmatic implications. It involves the impacts of *Tawhīd* on issues concerning the nature, sources, boundaries, production, transmission and methodology of knowledge. As a typical illustration, in the Quran, Allah raises a rhetorical question on certain astrophysical, paleontological and biological knowledge and issues when He says,

“Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and then We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?” (Quran, 30:21)

In the view of this paper, apart from the issues of faith that are obviously emphasised, this verse implies some axiomatic position (i.e., issues that must be taken for granted) that must inform our

epistemological paradigms and methodology of investigating those related issues in the concerned fields of study. This verse, for instance, plainly debunks theories that attribute the beginning of the world to chances and identifies dynamics and matters that were involved the whole process. This is only an example of how all fields of study could be informed by (or proceed from) the *Tawhīdī* paradigm.

Another particularly important existential impact of *Tawhīd* is its axiological implications. This is to define our value paradigms based on the *Tawhīdī* concept (Zein, 2014). Muslims' values as well as criteria and standards must be informed and determined by Islamic parameters. The discourse on values in general manifests in two ways: as an aesthetical discourse, it deals with the value of physical objects, and; the outward parts of creatures termed as beauty. Basically, Allah's creatures are inbuilt with value (beauty), such as perfect proportion and many others (Quran, 32:7).

Meanwhile, the ethical discourse involves an examination of values that are related to character, actions or behaviours. This seems to have more important implications, which generally means that our definitions of moral concepts, moral standards, moral basis and sources of moral knowledge must be informed by the *Tawhīdī* value paradigm. Prophet Muhammad (SAW), underscoring the importance of morality, is reported to have said, "I have been sent to perfect good character" (*Muwatta'*, Imam Malik, book 47, hadith 8). In order not to digress too far here, an elaborated emphasis on the importance of morality and *Tawhīd* is discussed below.

Tawhīd al-Asma' wa al-Sifat: Its Implications for Moral Thoughts and Values

The forgoing is a general overview of the concept of *Tawhīd* and its general implications in the Islamic worldview. With focus on the third dimension of *Tawhīd*, the attention shall now be directed on how the names and attributes of Allah could be impactful on our moral thoughts and values.

Names and Attributes of Allah: A General Overview

Before attempting to discuss some of the moral implications of the third dimension of *Tawhīd*, there are certain doctrinal perspectives that have been articulated by great scholars of Islam (e.g., Imam al-Bayhaqī, Imam al-Ghazālī, Imam Ibn al-Qayyim, etc.) on the discourse concerning the names and attributes of Allah. Due to the limited scope of the study, the major ones are summarised as follows: although Allah is One, the Supreme Being, and has numerous peculiar names and attributes that all beautiful, these names and attributes are to be principally based on scriptural references (al-Faruqi, 1982; Philips, 2005).

Commenting on a popular hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim* (mentioned above) stating that Allah has 99 names, according to Imam al-Nawawī, scholars have generally interpreted it to mean that Prophet Muhammad was only being particular about the reward on the attached action (memorisation and mindfulness). In his *Sharh Sahīh Muslim* (hadith 2677), Imam Nawawī states that the hadith does not imply that Allah's names and attributes are limited to a total count of 99. The view that Allah's name and attributes are uncountable is the more correct opinion. This is because there are other hadith (e.g., hadith 3583 in the *Musnad* of Imam Aḥmad) in which the Prophet alluded to the fact that the names and attributes of Allah are limitless. This is also the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah (n.d.), among many other great scholars.

Allah's names and attributes serve numerous purposes and have many implications. Various scholars have attempted to capture some of their significances and implications. As an extrapolation and synthesis of the different scholarly views, three broad categories could be identified: Descriptive Models, Spiritual Means to Contact and Connect to Allah, and Moral Resources (i.e., moral concepts, source of moral values, bases for moral justification and standard, etc.). Each of these categories shall be briefly discussed. However, it must be noted that this classification is not watertight as each of the names and attributes could not in reality be exclusively placed in one of these categories of purpose (without qualifying for the other categories) due to the unlimited implications and essence of each name and attribute.

To begin with, on Descriptive Models, when Allah's names and attributes are generally examined, they basically serve as conceptual models that provide certain vital information about Allah. Many in-

depth details about Allah could be known, as emphasised in Verse 225 of Surah al-Baqarah. However, the ones that are needed for our existential purposes and relationship with Allah are necessarily provided. For instance, Allah says, “Say, ‘Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful [ar-Raḥmān]. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names...’” (Quran, 17:110). On Spiritual Means to Contact and Connect to Allah, these names and attributes are a means to relate and connect to our Creator Allah. This is to make Allah readily accessible to all His creatures (Quran, 17:44), irrespective of the time and place (Quran, 55:29). That means that in spite of the fact that Allah – in Whose Hands lie the dominions of all that exist – could not be legitimately and validly summoned nor queried (Quran, 21:23), He still provides us with many veritable channels through which His Majesty could be reached. This is very instructive. In fact, Allah does not only instruct us to call Him (Quran, 40:60), but also explicitly give details and assurance of His response (Quran, 2:186).

Connecting to Allah through His names and attributes normally comes as *adhkār* (glorification and remembrance of His names and attributes) (Quran, 87:1), and as *dua*’ (supplication or requesting assistance from Allah) as we have in the following hadith: “...I seek your help with all the name that You have...” (*Musnad Imam Aḥmad* 1/391).

The last purpose of Allah’s names and attributes to be discussed (in this paper and which will also serve as the main point of departure for the objective of this study) is that they serve as Moral Resources. An excellent instructive reference to this moral implication is highlighted by Prophet Muhammad in one of his sayings (which is even *al-ḥadīth al-Qudsī*). Allah directly spoke to him on the nexus that exists between “ties of Kinship” and “one of Allah’s names and attributes”. The Prophet said,

“The word *al-Raḥm* (womb) derives its name from al-Raḥmān (i.e., one of the names of Allah), and Allah said: ‘I will keep a good relationship with the one who will keep a good relationship with you (i.e., *womb through keeping tie with Kith and Kin*) and sever the relationship with him who will sever the relationship with you (i.e., *womb through the severing of the tie with kith and kin*)’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 5988).

This womb is figuratively used to capture the ties that exist between i.e., kith and kin since they do share the womb as the common avenue to their worldly existence.

The above briefly demonstrates how the names and attributes of Allah could actually be examined from a moral perspective, and more similar analysis of this nature is attempted below. This is the central thrust of the paper.

Moral Implications of the Names and Attributes of Allah

As alluded to previously and in order to give a broader overview as backdrop, there are certain necessary connections between *Tawhīd* and morality based on Islamic viewpoints. Morality and belief in Allah, for instance, are like two sides of a coin, though faith is the foundational aspect.

As an incredibly good reference, Prophet Muhammad is claimed to have said that the perfection of morality is his primary prophetic mission (as collected in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* by Imam al-Bukhari), yet he preached *Tawhīd*, according to history, for a good 13 years before any substantive moral prescription and juristic ruling were revealed. This clearly shows that, in the view of this paper, morality is not only important, but must also be rooted in *Tawhīd*. However, it must also be noted that “a claim to faith” tends to lose its value so easily if faith itself is not corroborated with corresponding good moral expressions and dispositions.

To sum it up, the Quran always conjoins “faith and morality” (see Quran, 18:107, 103:3, 98:7, 4:124, etc.). Sometimes, Allah defines “faith” through moral paradigms, as best illustrated in Chapter 107 of the Quran. The Prophet is also known to have always emphasised connections between faith and morality. As Anas bin Malik has strongly pointed out, God’s messenger seldom addressed us without saying, “He who is not trustworthy has no faith, and he who does not keep his covenant has no religion” (*Mishkat al-Masabih* 35; In-book reference: Book 1, Hadith 31). Another popular hadith (hadith 10 of *40 Hadith of Imam An-Nawawi*) about “a morally bankrupt man that was supplicating to Allah” also proved to be highly instructive on this matter. Therefore,

morality could be validly considered as a logical implication of *Tawhīd* and one of its most important outward indicators.

Among the good questions that could be raised from the foregoing is: How can morality be inculcated and developed? What is the relationship between *Tawhīd al-Asma' wa al-Sifat* and morality? In response to these questions, this study presents an epistemological approach that is based on a psycho-spiritual analysis of the meanings of Allah's names and attributes vis-à-vis their moral implications (based on Quranic contexts). This could be well integrated with other approaches to attain morality since such issues or problems are best addressed in a holistic way. The proposed approach of this study only focuses on how our ethical thoughts and actions could be positively influenced through knowledge, or understanding about and belief in the names and attributes of Allah.

A Conceptual Exploration of the Selected Name and Attributes of Allah

Given the fact that all the known names and attributes of Allah could not be discussed within the limited scope of this study, the following selected ones shall be explored to demonstrate their implications for moral thoughts and values: (a) The Ever-Provider (*al-Razzāq*); (b) The Oft-Hearing (*al-Samī'*); (c) The Oft-Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*) and; (d) The One Who is Swift at Reckoning (*Sarī' al-Ḥisāb*) (al-Ghazali, 1995).

The Absolute Provider. In the Quran, Verse 48 of Surah al-Dhāriyat is one of the many verses where the divine name of Allah appears. It generally connotes the totality of Allah's control of provisions for his creatures. The understanding and acknowledgement of Allah as the sole provider, when examined from a moral perspective, should instill in a believer some level of humility. This is because a deeper and expansive meaning of His name would imply that not all those who strive eventually succeed, and wealth is not a function of human efforts simpliciter. This is clearly illustrated by Allah with a moral story "on the parable of the two friends" in the Quran, in which one of the men was arrogantly boastful because of his riches. However, when he refused to heed the advice of his poverty-stricken friend to desist from being arrogant, Allah made him lose all his wealth. This was to make

him acknowledge that his success was only a blessing from Allah (not because he was hardworking) (Quran, 18:34-44).

Other moral dispositions that could be cultivated through this name of Allah are hope, optimism, motivation and being positive. A true believer who understands this should never lose hope as Allah, as the bounty of heaven and earth, lies perpetually within His full control. For example, Allah says that there is no creature except that its provision necessarily lies with Him (Quran, 10:6).

Besides the above, contentedness is another possible moral character that could be cultivated from a deeper moral analysis of this divine name. One is expected to handle his/her envy if he/she genuinely believes and understands that it is only Allah that provides for all. For instance, Allah asks a deep rhetorical question from people who do not seem to be content with what they have and become envious of other people's success and achievement: "...do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty?" (Quran, 4:54).

The highlighted attitudes are just a few of what could be discussed through a conceptual-moral analysis of the Name of Allah, the Absolute Provider. Next is another divine attribute of Allah and a few of its moral implications.

The Swiftest in Reckoning. In various places in the Quran, Allah discusses the fast processes that would be involved in the accountability of the Last Day, and how every human action would be accurately documented without any (un)imaginable error: "...Allah will reward every soul for what it has committed. Surely Allah is swift in reckoning" (Quran, 14:51). With a thoughtful engagement of this divine attribute, a believer should/could be (more) wary of his/her actions, and this would actually indicate his/her belief in and understanding of Allah's accurate accountability process. For instance, in Verse 9 of Surah al-Nisa, Allah calls the attention of those who are likely to be instituted to manage the affairs of any orphan to be careful and fearful about their own posterity. According to Allah, their iniquities could affect their own children as well. This would certainly make someone who knows the implication of this attribute to be cautioned. This also implies that there is nothing that could be hidden from Allah since everything would be accurately captured. Although Man forgets easily, Allah will not forget (Quran, 58:6).

This attribute would also induce and elicit diligence from someone who has this understanding and deeply ruminates on its moral implications. This is because both good and evil are going to be accounted for and both will be rewarded accordingly, as Allah clearly states that all human beings shall be rightly placed and rewarded based on their good or bad actions (Quran, 6:132, 99:7-8).

The Often-Seeing. This is another important divine name of Allah. In various verses of the Quran, Allah exhorts everyone to be pious as nothing is hidden from Him. For instance, He says, "...fear Allah (i.e., *Be mindful of Allah*) and know that Allah is (*All-*)Seeing of what you do" (Quran, 2:233). The divine name basically means that nothing could keep us out of Allah's sight – even the darkness or brightness of the day has nothing whatsoever to do with Allah's unlimited capacity to see. This understanding could make a true believer not only be mindful of Allah, but also exhibit sincerity and consistency. These two spiritual and moral concepts are important and could only be more entrenched in our psyche if we understand that this divine attribute entails Allah's direct access to our heart and what we harbor within. Next is the last name of Allah to be considered in this paper.

The Often-Hearing. Similar to the attribute of sight, Allah's power to hear is without any hindrance or limitation (Quran, 31:28). The "volume" of our discussion is not relevant as Allah states in the Quran (58:7):

...There are not three in a private conversation but that He is the fourth of them, nor are there five but that He is the sixth of them - and no less than that and no more except that He is with them [in knowledge] wherever they are. Then He will inform them of what they did, on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, Allah is, of all things, Knowing.

Similarly, in Surah al-Ra'd, Allah says, "It is the same [to Him] concerning you whether one conceals [his] speech or publicises it and whether one is hidden by night or conspicuous [among others] by day" (Quran, 13:10).

An understanding and sincere acknowledgment of this reality, as encapsulated in this name of Allah, would elicit some level of transparency in the believer's dealing with Allah and his fellow human

beings. It would make people be wary of animosity as it also would foster altruism. Each of these is an exceedingly rare moral disposition that is important for our ethical dealings and relationships.

The forgoing is just a brief demonstration of the moral implications of Allah's names and attributes through an epistemological exploration and moral psychological standpoint; it is in no way an exhaustive consideration.

Conclusion

The concept of *Tawhīd* is the foundational principle of Islamic thought and practice. As such, *Tawhīd* is the main element of Islamic morality in that the Islamic worldview is sourced from *Tawhīd* and the concept of morality is one of the elements of this worldview. One of the major dimensions of *al-Tawhīd* is *al-Asma wa al-Sifat* (Names and Attributes of Allah). Unfortunately, this dimension, in recent times, seems to attract little academic attention. It is rarely explored or articulated as a framework even though it could be variously employed as an integral part of the Islamic worldview as a way to discuss and address certain issues affecting Muslims.

For instance, the concept of morals in Islam (known as *akhlāq*) has fixed, established and unchanging characteristics due to the fact that it comes from revelation, which captures the concept of *Tawhīd* and the manifestation of its values and implications.

Considering this, the paper concisely demonstrates several ways on how an exploration of *Tawhīd al-Asma wa al-Sifat* could necessarily inform the moral views of Muslims and shape their moral dispositions and behaviours. This is attempted through a conceptual analysis of selected names and attributes of Allah based on their contextual usage in the Quran. The analysis highlights that these divine names and attributes transcend symbolism or chanting (*dhikr*) alone. It also indicates that believing in them, with a thoughtful understanding, has moral implications that should reflect in our ethical paradigm and impact our behaviour.

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Civil Society in Iraqi Kurdistan: A Historical Perspective

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Abstract: This article analyses the history of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Iraqi Kurdistan, which has passed through several stages due to the attitudes of the political systems that have ruled Iraq. In this regard, under the rule of several Iraqi governments, CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan were banned and repressed from their inception until 1991 because they were a living part of the Kurdish society, which was in the process of liberation. However, since the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), they have been given some freedom to work, which has led to their growth. Nevertheless, CSOs have faced many internal and external obstacles in recent years. This study is based on a scientific method and uses historical and political analysis to show the historical reality of CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan. Despite having a long history of difficult periods, since 1991, with the establishment of the first cabinet of the KRG, CSOs' activities have increased. Nevertheless, in recent years, CSOs have faced many internal and external obstacles, though they continue to grow and remain agile.

Keywords: Civil Society, Iraqi Kurdistan, Iraqi Government, Political Situation, Kurdistan Regional Government.

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Introduction

The concept of civil society is a recent concept that is on the political and social scene, especially in European countries, as it arose at the beginning of the early 1980s. The idea is that democratic rules should govern the relationship between the state and society based on respect, tolerance, and cooperation (Ayman, 2014). This means that violence, exclusion, and social and political marginalisation should be avoided in order to create a peaceful society. Contemporary democratic governments seek this peace through several civilised means, including the civil society thesis. In the Middle East, the situation is different in terms of the activities of civil society organisations (henceforth CSOs). Most countries do not entertain their presence in society as a democratic environment is absent. Although the situation is gradually changing in Islamic countries, it is still challenging for CSOs to run their activities smoothly (Norton, 1995).

With regards to Iraq, some level of freedom for work and civil society activities existed during the royal era. The monarchy system was abolished in 1958, leading to a change in Iraq (NCCI, 2011). The country saw the emergence of a republican system and, from then on, civil society activities decreased compared to the royal era (Jabbar, 2006). During the Ba'ath regime from 1968 to 2003, all civil society activities were banned because the regime considered civil society a threat to its power (Bakhtiar, 2001). Under the rule of Iraqi republic government, CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan were banned and repressed from their inception until 1991 because they were a living part of the Kurdish society that was in the process of liberation (N. Omer, personal communication, January 6, 2022).

CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan have had a long history of difficult periods. Since 1991, with the establishment of the first cabinet of the Kurdistan Regional Government (henceforth KRG), CSOs' activities have increased. After 2003, the number of CSOs and their activities increased. However, they faced many internal and external obstacles in 2014. In this regard, Iraqi Kurdistan has seen growth in the development of civil society (A. Medeni, personal communication, February 2, 2022).

The significance of this study lies in the fact that: it highlights the historical phases of CSOs, which were political in nature; it analyses the mystery of the reasons for the vitality of civil society, and it also

explains the role of social organisations in the Iraqi Kurdish society. This study also contributes to contemporary knowledge on the impact of civil society in the de facto state of Iraqi Kurdistan.

This article discusses the history and establishment of CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan and also examines and mentions the Iraqi government's efforts to control CSOs during the republic era in 1958 and later years, which are divided into several stages, including the Monarchy period (1921-1958), the Iraqi Republic from 1958 to 1963, and from 1963 to 1991, during the establishment of KRG and, lastly, civil society after 2003.

Historical Background of Civil Society

The idea of civil society as a separate realm that exists between the state and the family was initially put forth by Hegel, who equated it with the sphere of the economy (Salih, 2005, p. 7; Hegel, 1996 & 1820). Later, Gramsci looked at how the state and civil society (i.e., the private sector) interacted and how this interplay benefited particular social strata, institutions, and groups. Gramsci abandoned the idea that the economy sector corresponded to civil society and began to view it as the field of hegemony (Buttigieg, 1995, pp. 6-7; Kaldor, 2003, p. 8).

Regarding the concept of civil society, experts have differing viewpoints. In this regard, Larry Diamond (1994) states that civil society is the force that opposes and restrains the state. Civil society is the arena for policymaking whereby self-organising and autonomous groups, movements and people try to express their ideals, form alliances and solidarities and also pursue their interests (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p. 17). Civil society refers to a variety of independent organisations that have a legal connection to the state and represent civic behaviour in the particular society in which they operate. These topics are all connected to democratic maturity and the full division between the state and civil society (Shils, 1991, p. 4).

Tomlinson (2013) claims that in addition to these organisations and people, civil society also comprises common people who do not belong to any particular group, journalists, attorneys, business groups and trade unions. CSOs have a variety of governance forms, but they are all, by definition, outside of the direct direction and control of the government.

Moreover, Keane (2009) believes that civil society promotes freedom of expression for individuals and groups within a broad framework, while safeguarding people from repression, disorder, and violence. It seeks to strengthen civic involvement, bridge social, political, and economic disparities as well as empower citizens. The functioning of clubs, organisations, and groups as a barrier between the state's authority and citizens' daily lives is referred to as "civil society". Therefore, in the absence of such an organisation, the state takes control of economic and personal matters, strengthening its tendency towards authoritarianism (Gellner, 1991; Musleh & Norton, 1991). Another name for the realm outside the family, market and state is "civil society" (Aguado, 2007; Arko-Cobbah, 2006; Fukuyama, 2001; Lewis, 2001; World Economic Forum, 2013). A "network of groups that institutionalises problem-solving discourses on topics of public concern within the context of organised public spaces" is the foundation of civil society (Habermas, 1996, p. 367).

Historical Analysis of Civil Society in Iraqi Kurdistan

The Monarchy period guaranteed the right to form CSOs (Halper, 2003). In this regard, the Monarchy is considered to initiate the beginning of the formation of CSOs, but it forbade some of their activities as they were considered a threat to its power. When the Monarchy collapsed in 1958, major changes occurred in Iraq, which saw the emergence of a republican system. Nevertheless, the political situation was not stable and civil society activities declined (NCCI, 2011). During the period of the Ba'ath regime, CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan suffered and were forbidden altogether as the regime exercised a dictatorship and did not believe in democracy. This government did not provide freedom to the CSOs of Kurdistan and, instead, attempted to control them. At the same time, CSOs were accused of being affiliated with Kurdish political parties in opposition from 1970 to 1991.

However, following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 688 on April 5, 1991, in order to protect the Kurdish civilians from the Ba'ath regime and the establishment of the first cabinet of the KRG in 1992, CSOs' activities increased (N. Omer, personal communication, January 6, 2022) and they enjoyed more freedom compared to previous governments. Further, a large number of international organisations

came to Iraqi Kurdistan, mostly working in the fields of services, development, and charity. They played a role in raising awareness and supported the establishment of CSOs, both materially as a way to assist them in implementing their projects. After 2003, the Kurdistan Parliament passed Law No. 1 in 2011 to establish the Office of NGOs as a way to register social organisations instead of obtaining a licence from the Ministry of Interior – this increased the freedom of CSOs and led to their further development.

The analysis of the history of CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan can be divided into several stages, including the Monarchy (1921-1958), the Iraqi Republic from 1958 to 1963, and from 1963 to 1991, during the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the civil society organisations after 2003, as follows:

The Monarchy Period (1921-1958)

The Monarchy period is considered to be the beginning of the establishment of CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan since the right to do so was guaranteed by this regime. According to the Iraqi Constitution, Article 12 of the Royal Constitution of 1925 protects the Iraqi people's freedom of opinion and expression as well as the establishment of political parties, trade unions and associations without conditions (Halper, 2003). The Monarchy encouraged CSOs that promoted social services and tolerated those with moderate political demands, as long as they did not pose a threat to the authorities. Concerning this point, they formed various CSOs, such as the Women's Revival Club (1923), the Iraqi Red Society (IRCS) (1932), the Al-Bayt Schooling Association (1950) and the Women's Rights League (1952) (NCCI, 2011). These organisations ran regular campaigns in support of the poor, democracy, education, and social solidarity. The Monarchy also backed organisations that provided social assistance to the public and made moderate political claims that were not seen as a threat to them.

The first Kurdish association was the Kurdistan Independence Society, which was established in July 1922 and led by the former Ottoman officer and writer, Mustafa Pasha Yamolki (Taheri, 2007). After the Lausanne Agreement of 1923, this organisation mixed their civil work with political work and helped Kurdish political organisations

because the Kurdish nation was in the process of national liberation (Gardawani, 1999). During this time, the Kurdish society was alive with CSOs. Many intellectuals from the city of Sulaymaniyah gathered around the group with the intent to support the Kurd revolution led by Sheikh Mahmoud, who was a clergyman and clan elder before he became a Kurdish revolution leader against the British occupiers in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In addition, in 1926, the Kurdistan Scientific Society was founded as a CSO to promote education and awareness. The head and members of the group were influenced by the idea of national independence and demanded the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan. The head of the association was Mustafa Pasha, and his successor was Jamal Bagi Baban. In 1926, when the Wilayat of Mosul was annexed to the Iraqi state and the demands of the Kurds were not met, the Kurdish people resorted to protests, which erupted again in Sulaymaniyah Sarai Square on September 6, 1930. At the local level, Hakeem (2017) indicates that the 1930s marked the emergence of the reality of civil society in the Kurdistan Region, which lasted until the mid-1940s, with several organisations and institutions emerging that can be considered as civil society institutions.

According to Talabani (1971), civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan was established in the early 1930s. According to al-Shamzini (1960), in 1937, a group of enlightened Kurdish youths formed The Brotherhood Association in Sulaymaniyah under the leadership of Sheikh Latif, the son of Sheikh Mahmoud al-Barzinji, whose aim was to establish the independent state of Kurdistan. It is worth noting that the Kurdistan Independence Society issued a newspaper called *Call of Kurdistan*. Many artistic associations were also established at that time, which was political, but they could not continue their activities due to the political instability in Iraqi Kurdistan. It was one of the most important youth groups that engaged in education and included Kurdish students and youths, and it published a magazine called *Youth Gifts*.

In 1938, a group of students and young people who had completed their studies in Baghdad formed the Kurdish Freedom Organisation. Also, as Gardawani (1999) points out, in 1937, students and youths made a significant contribution to the formation of the Darker Organisation, an educational and political organisation that advocated for Kurdish rights.

Kurd intellectuals, writers and nationalists also formed the Hope Party in 1939, which played a significant role in establishing and reaching the societies and organisations that existed at the time (Auni, 2021). To emphasise, when we say that students and youths participated, we mean that all genders participated in establishing societies and organisations without discrimination.

It turned out that students and youths played a key role in establishing the organisations that we talked about, and those organisations and societies were not specific to one layer of society. Since the basic goal of these organisations was the same goal and demand of the Kurdish people, in one way, these organisations and political societies, both popular and artistic, carried the concept of national rights. In another way, the situation and persecution of the Kurdish people and the division of their lands was a common sorrow for all classes of Kurdish society.

For the first time, the Iraqi Students Union was established in 1948, which included Kurdish, Arab and other ethnic minorities. However, due to ethnic differences and the imposition of the will of Arab nationalism on Kurdish nationalism, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (henceforth KDP) decided to establish the organisation of Kurdistan Union students in Iraqi Kurdistan in the name of the Kurdistan Students Union on February 18, 1953, which then separated from the Iraqi Student Union. Due to the Kurds' nationalism and the fact that the Arabs are different, and each of them has its own goals, this was felt in all classes of society. At that time, Kurdish nationalism differed from Arab nationalism in terms of national goals and interests. All Arab nationalists in Iraq considered Iraq to be a part of the Arab nations and had worked to strengthen pan-Arabism, especially under the Ba'ath Party. Kurdish nationalism, on the other hand, upheld that Iraqi Kurdistan is a part of Kurdistan that had been forcibly annexed by Iraq. In this regard, Iraq is a Kurdish and Arab country, and both must be equal in rights and duties, as stated in the 1958 Constitution (Wishyar, 2012).

The nature of profession in any organisation's work does not exclude it from political and social activities. At the same time, the work of youth and women's organisations was limited to professional and political matters. It is natural for CSOs to participate in political party activities, and we see that societies and organisations in Iraqi Kurdistan reflected the historical needs of the Kurdish community

to secure the legitimate rights of this stage of the Kurdish liberation movement to achieve their goals. Regarding the women's movement, the first women's organisation was the Kurdistan Democratic Sisters' Union, which was established in 1947 by Nahida Sheikh Salam and Mina Khan (Shirin, 1998). Next, according to Auni (2021), was the Kurdistan Students Union established on February 18, 1953.

Politically, after Britain seized the city of Sulaymaniyah and crushed the Kurdish resistance under Sheikh Mahmoud Sheikh Saeed Sheikh Mohammed Barzanji's leadership, the UK restored him to power in 1922. He was a clergyman, clan elder and Kurd leader in the last decade of Iraqi Kurdistan. The British believed that he would use the Kurds as a buffer against the Turks, who claimed Mosul as their own. Instead, Shaikh Mahmoud declared himself as the king of the Kurdistan kingdom, though he accepted some autonomy within the nascent Iraqi state. Klieman (1970) as well as Farouk-Sluglett, Marion and Peter (2001) state that Mustafa Barzani built up the Kurdistan majority's ruling KDP in 1946 (Gunter, 1996). It also supported the establishment of several CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan, including the Kurdistan Women's Union in 1952, the Kurdistan Students Union in 1953 and the Kurdistan Youth Union in 1953 (Auni, 2021).

The Iraqi Republic from 1958 to 1963

During the period of the Iraqi Republic (1958-1963), a conducive environment was created for the activities of CSOs due to the drafting of the new Iraqi Constitution, which referred to the composition of Iraq consisting of two nations: Kurds and Arabs (Rubin, 2007). This opened the door for the development of CSOs in Iraq.

A new group of CSOs were formed in Iraqi Kurdistan, including professional organisations, such as the Kurdish Writers Union in 1960, to demand the Kurds' rights and democracy for all of Iraq as well as equality, justice, freedom of expression and professional organisations' rights (Auni, 2021). The Kurdistan Women's Union was founded on December 11, 1952 (Shirin, 1998) and it played an important role in ensuring women's rights and eliminating gender inequality. It was also officially licenced to operate following Law No. (1), 1960 (Saleh, 2002).

Teachers, employees, students, and women all took an active part in the creation of political parties and groups after the revolution of July 14, 1958. Such events disregarded the customs of a liberal civil society and the cultural diversity that prevailed before the Ba'athist party's ascension to power in 1968. Under General Qassim's rule, progressive initiatives, including land reforms, legal changes in family law as well as ideological politics, significantly undermined the influence of tribes, clans, and communities in 1958 (Rubin, 2007). At that time, the Communist Party initiated a broad-based mobilisation of several strata of the populace. This in turn sparked responses from the opposition, mostly different types of Arab nationalism (Woshyar, 2012). This movement expanded beyond politics and strengthened the already well-established forms of literature, theatre, visual arts as well as the vibrant journalism community that accompanied them. Wider segments of the population's citizens were integrated into civil society by the citizens (NCCI, 2011).

Poutros (2013) believes that the period between 1958 and 1963 was of utmost importance in the history of Iraq because it was the first time the Constitution became a source of authority for the people, conferring equal rights and duties on all citizens, which paved the way for the emergence of organisations, unions, associations, political parties, and civil society institutions. However, Jabbar (2006) considers the 1958 Revolution as the beginning of the demise of civil society. This revolution increased the activities of CSOs with Iraqi women and student organisations, for example, by participating in raising awareness of the Iraqi community's rights to freedom of expression, democracy, and gender equality. There was a mix of trade unions and democratic organisations across Iraq, including Kurdish unions and organisations. It reflected the differences of opinion between Iraq and Kurdish political parties, which sparked widespread disagreements among students, youths and women across Iraq and Kurdistan.

Based on the circumstances, Kurdish democratic organisations, such as the Kurdistan Women's Union and the Kurdistan Student's Union, withdrew from the Iraqi democratic organisations and their interests in Iraqi Kurdistan were protected. Concerning the political situation, Marion, and Peters (2001) explain that "Barzani supported the 1958 military overthrow driven by 'The Free Officers' that built up a dynamic republic beneath the rule of Abd al-Karim Qassim" (p.

81). Even though the Iraqi Constitution of 1958 stated that Arabs and Kurds were partners in Iraq, Qassim went against the principles of the 1958 Revolution and broke a deal with the leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party that would have given the Kurds the political rights guaranteed by the Constitution. As a result of severe conflicts in an unstable Iraqi society, the traditional forces came forth in ideological grabs, mostly as Arab nationalists. It was these events that eventually overthrew Qassim in 1963 and instituted a clan-based military rule, which was to metamorphose into the subsequent regime, the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, which seized power in 1963.

From 1963 until 1991

In 1963, a coup d'état occurred, where Qassim was executed and the Ba'ath Party, which had a socialist Pan-Arab patriot belief system, took control of the authorities, and started the oppression of CSOs (Woshyar, 2012). In the 1960s, all the opposition political forces in Iraq, Kurdistan and the democratic organisations in Iraq were engaged in a clandestine struggle. Since the main task of the struggle against the dictators and occupiers of Kurdistan fell on the shoulders of the Kurdish revolution, this led to a decline in the mentality of democratic organisations throughout Iraq (Auni, 2021). From 1970 to 1974, the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan became stable due to a peace agreement between the Iraqi government and the leadership of the September Revolution on March 11, 1970 (N. Omer, personal communication, January 6, 2022). Some CSOs were formed, such as the Kurdish Artists Union in 1972 in Sulaymaniyah and the Kurdistan Muslim Scholars Union in 1971 (Auni, 2021). They played a role in the development of the Kurdish community at that time.

However, after the Ba'ath regime withdrew from the agreement in 1974, the situation of CSOs deteriorated and all their activities were banned until the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the liberation of Iraqi Kurdistan from the regime (Auni, 2021). The same Ba'ath regime then established its control over civil society institutions legislatively through Article 26 of the Iraqi Constitution issued in 1990, which stipulated that the exercise of freedom of opinion, publication, assembly, and demonstration as well as the establishment of political parties, trade unions and associations should be consistent with the national and

progressive line of the revolution. The Ba'athist regime systematically destroyed Iraqi civil society, while intellectuals and political activists were persecuted, arrested, tortured, executed, or expelled from the country (Poutros, 2013). From the beginning of the Ba'ath regime in power in 1968 to its fall in 2003, CSOs in Iraq were, in general, subjected to harassment – their activities were in most cases forbidden and officials were persecuted by the ruling authorities, particularly Kurds demanding national rights (Bakhtiar, 2001). The Ba'athist regime did not leave any room for civil society to work and put Iraqi civil society under the control of the security and intelligence services, as they considered CSOs to be threatening to their authority (Bakhtiar, 2001). The rise of the Ba'ath Party to power in the 1960s resulted in the state's dominance over civil society (Zubaida, 2006). According to Rishmawi and Morris (2007), before the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, civil society was severely restricted. Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi president at the time, labelled the few international organisations working in Iraq as spies, while individuals in contact with them faced grave danger.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, several members of these societies were killed or detained by the Ba'ath regime because they supported Kurdish nationalism or opposed the regime. For example, Laila Qassim, a Kurdish student at Baghdad University, was the first woman who was executed in Iraq on May 12, 1974, for participating in the Kurdish student movement (Caliskan, 2014, p. 8). McDowall (2021) claims that in 1974, the Ba'athist government launched an attack on Kurds, pushing them closer to the Iranian border.

At the opening of the OPEC summit in Algeria in March 1975, at the request of President Houari Boumediene, Saddam Hussein, the deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council at that time, and the Iranian King Mohammed Reza Pahlavi signed an agreement in Algeria to resolve the border issue and water rights in Shat al-Arab. According to the agreement, Iraq ceded part of Shat al-Arab to Iran in exchange for the Iranian King withdrawing Iranian support for the Kurdish revolution, which thereupon collapsed (Kadivar, 2009). Also, the 1975 Algiers Agreement led to the Kurdish aid from the US being withdrawn because they did not have their own state, causing the Iraqi Kurds to suffer greatly.

The situation of CSOs remained bad and the Iraqi regime not only decided to suppress them but also decided to commit genocide and chemical attacks on Kurdistan. According to Galbraith (2005), Iraqi Kurds were the victims of crimes against humanity and genocide under Saddam Hussein's regime. As Leezenberg (2017) points out, the Iraqi regime could only maintain control of Iraqi Kurdistan through the systematic use of terror and distractive, large-scale violence, which reached genocidal proportions during the 1988 Anfal Campaign. According to Human Rights Watch, the regime automatically stripped civilians living in these areas of their right to Iraqi citizenship and life. In general, the establishment of quasi-urban resettlement camps, or compulsory housing complexes, in the 1980s saw a radical restructuring of rural space.

In the early 1990s, a new spatial, if not territorial, entity started to form in Iraqi Kurdistan. Zubaida (2006) refers to the Ba'athists' crackdown of political and cultural networks and identities, which led to ethnic and religious divisions within the country. Concerning the development of CSOs, after the Kurdish people's uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991, a respectable number of humanitarian and charitable organisations turned to Kurdistan to show solidarity and rebuild the infrastructure of Iraqi Kurdistan. Appropriate steps for the civil world and democratic system to show an appropriate image of the Kurdish self-governing authorities were quickly attempted in order to create an appropriate environment for civil work.

After the liberation process, the relationship between local and international organisations improved and expanded, positively increasing their growth. Since 1991, there has been civil society-related development in Iraqi Kurdistan in terms of various media channels, political pluralism, and public participation in the political process. After the formation of the KRG in 1992, the CSOs participated in social and media activities and monitored the government's agendas in various fields. After the uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991, when civil society started to play a role, they had some problems, which are explained below.

After the establishment of the KRG in 1992, the KDP and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (henceforth PUK) monopolised civil society in Iraqi Kurdistan, which is worth mentioning. The KDP, the PUK and the

Islamist parties enjoyed a monopoly on state and civil society control in their respective territories. Only one of the CSOs received government money, whereas international donors funded the other 54 CSOs and peacebuilding organisations in Iraqi Kurdistan. Additionally, CSOs must obtain permission from the government to carry out projects. Following the uprising in 1991, these advancements began. However, there has been too short of a period for civil society to emerge in a region with limited potential due to various ongoing conflicts and foreign interference. Hakeem (2017) notes that the region was not ready for the emergence of civil society and was in a state of anarchy after 1991.

Medeni (2017) also puts forth that civil society developed in Iraqi Kurdistan during the 1990s, following liberation from the clutches of the Ba'athists and the establishment of local government. Previously, civil society was limited to establishing unions and syndicates (e.g., for students, youths, and women) directly under the auspices and control of the Iraqi Government (IG). After 1991, there were two types of organisations: one was neutral and not affiliated with the parties, while the other was majority-controlled and dependent on the parties. There were also three types of assistance to CSOs: some provided by political parties, others provided by foreign consulates and organisations, and several supported by the KRG. Regarding this point, Medeni (2017) explains that there are two main types of CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan. The most well-resourced are those associated with major political parties, such as the Students' Union, Teachers' Union, Women's Union as well as syndicates of lawyers, engineers, doctors and the like that include representatives of such parties that receive funding from them in return for supporting their agenda, within the Kurdistan community. These constitute the majority of CSOs. The second are independent CSOs that are not directly supported by political parties and factions, such as charitable organisations, Stop Organisations for the observation of the Government Agenda, Organisations Authority of Monitoring in the Halabja Governorate, Kurdistan Platform Organisation, Mitro Centre to defend the Rights of Journalists and Opposition "Teachers" Organisations.

It is worth noting that some CSOs – for example, Kurdistan Women's Union and Kurdistan Artists' Union – were suppressed and subjected to violent repression during the civil conflicts of 1993 and 1998 among the major Kurdish political factions. At that time, CSOs

were slowly expanding to raise awareness for various causes, such as women's rights and child protection. Medeni (2017) focuses on the concepts of democracy and political participation, which were not on the agenda of most organisations until the collapse of the Ba'ath regime in April 2003. Soon after, Iraq and the Kurdistan Region experienced a boom in registered CSOs and, at the same time, civil society began educating voters, monitoring elections, actively participating in drafting the new constitution and the like. As CSOs started to look for ways to make it easier for people to talk to their elected representatives in local and national councils, they started to fight for the rights of women, children, and young people.

The Establishment of Kurdistan as a De Facto State

The Kurdish uprising on March 7, 1991, happened against the Ba'athist regime and led to opening the door to freedom of work for CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan (A. Medeni, personal communication, February 2, 2022). The displacement of hundreds of thousands of Kurdish families as a result of the failure of this uprising and the return of the Ba'ath regime to the major cities of Iraqi Kurdistan at the request of Turkey and France resulted in UN Resolution No. 688 on April 5, 1991, which established an anti-flight zone to protect the Kurdish people. Hundreds of charities came to Iraqi Kurdistan through Turkey to help resettle the displaced people, to show solidarity and to rebuild the infrastructure of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Appropriate steps for the civil world and democratic system to show an appropriate image of the Kurdish self-governing authorities were quickly attempted to create a conducive environment for civil work. The link between local and international organisations developed and expanded after the invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003, which helped to favourably accelerate their development. When the Iraqi regime withdrew its administration and created an administrative vacuum in Iraqi Kurdistan (IK) at the request of Masoud Barzani, the head of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front, on March 22, 1991, the IK Front (IKF) organised a regional election in 1992 to fill the administrative vacuum. The parliamentary elections were held on May 19, 1992, in Kurdistan, Iraq, with the help of the Allied countries, the United Nations and international observers. Considering the election results or based on

an agreement between the two main Kurdish parties that won the most votes equally, a real parliament was established. As a result, a coalition government was formed with the participation of the main Kurdish parties, the KDP, the PUK and other secondary parties (Othman, 2013). This development, according to the majority of scholars, resulted in Iraqi Kurdistan becoming a de facto state in 1992.

Since then, Kurdistan has been in de facto existence as an autonomous administrative unit – Gunter (1993, p. 295) refers to it as a “de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq”. A de facto state is a country that is a state in all but name but is not recognised by other countries or the UN despite having authority over the territory, people, and government institutions. Iraqi Kurdistan is in northern and eastern Iraq. It consists of five provinces, namely Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Kirkuk, Duhok and Halabja (McDowall, 1996). It has a population of about seven million across an area of 83,634 square kilometres. There are four ethnic and religious groups that live in the five provinces, consisting of mostly Kurds and a minority of Turkmen and Assyrians and Chaldeans. The Kurds play a significant role in social, economic, political, and cultural discourses. Despite this, most of the inhabitants of Iraqi Kurdistan are Muslims. Other religions, such as Christianity and Yazidis, coexist alongside Islam. All religions have the same freedom of equality in rights. The language of Iraqi Kurdistan is the Kurdish language, which has been known as the formal language of Iraq alongside the Arabic language in the new Constitution in 2005. Assyrian, Chaldean, and Armenian languages, as well as Turkman and Arabic languages, are also spoken by their respective community.

Following the uprising in 1991, these advancements began. However, there has been too short of a period for civil society to emerge in a region with limited potential due to various ongoing conflicts and foreign interference. Hakeem (2017) notes that the region was not ready for the emergence of civil society and was in a state of anarchy. After two years of the first KRG cabinet being in place, CSOs such as the Kurdistan Women’s Union and the Kurdistan Artists’ Union had their activities shut down due to fighting between political parties. After the formation of the KRG in 1992, the CSOs participated in social and media activities. They monitored the government’s agendas in various fields.

Still, they had some weaknesses, as explained here. In their respective territories, the KDP, the PUK and the Islamist parties enjoyed a monopoly on state and civil society control. The pressure between the two essential political parties played out in a four-year war, undermining this development. The PUK central station is in Sulaymaniyah, while the KDP central command is in Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan (Gunter, 1993). This situation continued until the Washington Agreement was signed in 1998 between Jalal Talabani, Secretary of the PUK, and Masoud Barzani, President of the KDP, under the supervision of the then-US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright (Voller, 2014). The end of the civil war was a good start for the reactivation of CSOs. Despite this, CSOs needed to obtain permission from the government to conduct projects.

From 1991 to 1993, in Iraqi Kurdistan, authorities significantly broadened the scope of civil society. During the civil war, civil society faced difficult situations because all their activities were controlled by the KDP and the PUK. However, after the civil war ended between 1998 and 2003, in an environment of freedom and democracy, professional unions, labour unions, women's organisations and employers' organisations were founded. For the first time in their history, Iraqi Kurds were able to express themselves fully in terms of their culture and politics, thanks to the burgeoning of a variety of ideological radio and television networks. Due to tendencies that many saw as extreme authoritarianism on the part of the Kurdish political leadership, this freedom included criticism of that leadership. The advancement of women's roles in Kurdish society via better education and other possibilities was accompanied by the construction of new schools and hospitals.

The increase in the number of NGOs in the post-Saddam Hussein era is evidence of the amount of freedom the Kurds enjoyed after 1991 (Davis, 2005). CSOs were gradually growing at the time to promote matters such as women's rights and child welfare. Their work concentrated on the ideas of democracy and political engagement, which most organisations had not prioritised until the fall of the Ba'ath government in April 2003. Soon after, the number of officially recognised CSOs grew rapidly in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Moreover, civil society started raising awareness of voters, overseeing elections, and starting to fight for the rights of marginalised groups, including women, youths, and children, as they started to think about

how to create communication channels between the populace and their elected local and national council members.

Civil Society After 2003

According to the National Endowment for Democracy (2017), after 2003, due to the improvement in the political situation and the liberation process in Iraq, the number of CSOs increased, along with their activities. In this regard, the Iraqi Kurdistan region has seen growth in the development of civil society, though the functions and roles of the groups have remained unstable. At the regional level, the Kurdistan Region has provided a favourable environment for organisations to ensure human rights and the importance of upholding the foundations of democracy.

CSOs have played a significant role in the development of democracy and the formation of several independent institutions and bodies in the region. For example, the platform Dabran holds conferences every year, from which their suggestions are sent to several ministries for reform, including the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (K. Majeed, personal communication, December 7, 2021). Several other CSOs are working in Iraqi Kurdistan, such as Metro for the Defense of Journalists' Rights and the Pay Centre for Parliamentary Monitoring (A. R. Sarwar, personal communication, January 24, 2022), and the Kurdistan Organization for Human Rights, Watches for Human Rights (M. Hoshyar, personal communication, February 2, 2022). Halwest and Stop organisations are also monitoring the KRG (C. Hogr, personal communication, January 7, 2022). Furthermore, other CSOs, such as Peace and Freedom Organization and PAO, have helped the refugees in the camp. They have also influenced the enactment of several advanced laws for Kurdish society, such as the Demonstration Law and the Access to Information Law. In terms of building the institutions of the Kurdistan Regional Government, they have proposed the establishment of several new offices, including the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Human Rights Commission, the Environment Commission, and the Office for Combating Violence against Women.

On the contrary, some CSOs have had a weak influence on democracy and rebuilding institutions due to internal and external challenges. There is no distinction between the executive, legislative and judicial powers. Also, it is doubtful that civil society contributes effectively to the democratic process, whether at the group level as a social need or as an individual psychological need. If we look at the democracies of developed countries, we see that under civil society groups, areas such as sociology, individualism and psychology have become the real beneficiaries. So, the problems of setting up civil society hurt the democratic process. Giving people the chance to vote is a form of real democracy.

In 2011, the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Law facilitated the operation of CSOs by improving and simplifying the process for registration and funding, while establishing the conditions for NGO financial sustainability. Since 2013, there has been a positive change in the works of CSOs, including impacts on political parties and participation in political decision-making. They were able to lobby Parliament for the passing of several new laws and amendments, such as the law to reduce the proportion of the budget of political parties from the state budget (July 1, 2014), which was an important and positive development. CSOs actively participated in the Kurdish referendum on September 25, 2017, in which 92.73% of the inhabitants of Kurdistan overwhelmingly voted “Yes” to national self-determination (i.e., independence from Iraq) (Cockburn, 2017). However, there was no consensus among the political parties to hold a referendum; the Kurds did not have a strong unified army and were not economically and financially prepared to face the reactions of the Iraqi government and neighbouring countries. However, the referendum was held on September 25, 2017, against the protests of the major powers, the international community, neighbouring countries, and the Iraqi government. It occupied the disputed areas with direct Iranian assistance and Turkish logistical support and isolated the Kurdistan Regional Government. By most people’s standards, this referendum showed that the Iraqi Kurdish people have the right to an independent state. However, since it was not in the interests of the superpower and neighbouring countries, it failed.

The Future of CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan

CSOs are essential in the development of democracy, freedom of expression and oversight of the executive and legislative institutions in Iraqi Kurdistan. Nevertheless, in recent years, they have faced many internal and external obstacles and threats that prevent them from further developing and progressing their activities. For example, politically, most CSOs are under the influence of political parties and are divided between the ruling and opposition parties, which has hurt them. These parties have a lot of influence on CSOs and try to control them by using the labour force and money for their active members. Concerning that point, Hassan (2015) indicates that the ruling factions are trying to consolidate an undemocratic sultanate system, while members of society (and CSOs themselves) would prefer a more democratic system based on the rule of law, merit, transparency, and accountability. Nonetheless, the government, through the security forces, monitors working CSOs. Concerning this point, there is no greater freedom for CSOs to work in Baghdad. In Iraqi Kurdistan, CSOs are under strict surveillance of the KRG in some cities and towns. Social culture, tribal customs and Islamic extremism are other threats to the development of CSOs. In addition to the government and political parties, CSOs have also been affected by corruption in those groups. The lack of financial assistance from the KRG and international organisations is another obstacle they face.

The biggest challenge for the KRG and CSOs is the military intervention threats from the Iraqi government and its allies, Turkey, and Iran. In this regard, these two countries have repeatedly violated the sovereignty of the Kurdistan Region in the name of fighting their rival Kurdish armed parties. Both countries have established military bases in many parts of Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran's military threat to CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan is increasing in this regard. Challenged internally by a wave of anti-regime demonstrations, Iran is projecting the crisis and violence beyond its territory. regarding that point on September 26, 2022, Iran launched a series of cross-border attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan against the offices and bases of Iranian Kurdish parties based in Iraqi Kurdistan. This is a threat to the situation in the Kurdistan Region and civil society organizations. However, these threats do not have much impact on civil society organizations, and they continue their activities. As the Kurdistan Regional Government improves relations with the

Iraqi Government, these internal problems and external threats will likely diminish. This will make it easier for the international community to support the growth of democracy in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

Conclusion

The concept of civil society is one of the more recent concepts to have emerged. The beginning of the 1980s is the most important modern mechanism on the political and social scene, especially in European countries. If we look at society as a mechanism or a practical formula that guarantees a citizen's right to express his opinion freely and defend his interests within an organised institutional framework, that is civil society. During the royal era of Iraqi Kurdistan, there was some freedom for work and civil society activities. However, after the monarchy system was destroyed in 1958, which led to Iraq changing into a republic system, the activities of civil society decreased. Under the Ba'ath regime, CSOs in Iraqi Kurdistan suffered and were banned as the dictatorship did not believe in democracy. Conversely, the Kurdish political party, which was in opposition from 1970 to 1991, supported CSOs. After the UN passed Resolution 688 to protect Kurdish civilians from genocide by the Ba'ath regime – and after the first cabinet of the KRG was set up in 1992 and Iraqi Kurdistan became a de facto state – CSOs became more active. However, they have since not developed properly due to internal and external obstacles. Also, the KRG did not follow the laws of the Ba'ath Party until the new Iraqi Constitution was written in 2005, in which Kurdish representatives also participated.

However, the Kurdistan Region has its own parliament and has passed 405 laws in various fields. After 2003, with the issue of Resolution No. 1 in 2011, the activities of CSOs have continually progressed. The CSOs of Iraqi Kurdistan participated in the progressing democratic process because they perceived that the government believed in the freedom of the CSOs, as the government introduced and organised CSOs' activities by law. Iraqi Kurdistan is also in a unique situation as it is not an independent country, but a de facto country; it has an independent parliament, government, and courts, but they have not been recognised by the UN or another country. Also, under Iraqi Kurdistan, Law No. 1 of 2011, which enables CSOs' operations, is in line with

Iraqi Civil Organisations Authorization Law No. 12 of 2010. It is worth mentioning that in Iraqi Kurdistan, CSOs had a more conducive environment for their activities than CSOs in Baghdad because the democratic process was progressive.

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The Importance of Alhambra as a Fortress and Palaces during the Nasrid Dynasty: The Case of the Alcazaba, the Palace of Comares, and the Palace of the Lions

Nurul Shahirah binti Majlan¹ and Alwi Alatas²

Abstract: The Nasrid dynasty was the key player during the final episode of al-Andalus in Spain. It was fortified by the gallant fortress of Alcazaba, and adorned by the grand Sultans' palaces, most significantly the Palace of Comares and the Palace of the Lions, which were built to serve royal affairs. Since the monument was among the most cherished relics of Islamic heritage, discussions regarding the contribution of the Nasrids in refining the architecture of Alhambra during their reign are vital in understanding its architectural history. Hence, this article intends to explore the role of Alhambra during the Nasrid dynasty with a focus on its fortress, the Alcazaba, and two of its prominent palaces, the Palace of Comares and the Palace of the Lions. It will also focus on the water management inside the palatine city, since water source was an important element for the survival of the city and as an expression of Muslims' lifestyle.

Keywords: Alhambra, Nasrid Dynasty, Palace of Comares, Palace of the Lions, al-Andalus.

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Introduction

The Muslim conquest of al-Andalus by Tariq ibn Ziyad in 711 C.E. marked the start of Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula. The region was gradually put under the rule of Muslim leaders through a series of subsequent conquests and negotiations. Their reign lasted for a long duration of almost five centuries before it was shaken by the continuous threats of the Christians. They eventually lost major parts of their Iberian territories during the Reconquista, which started with the fall of the city of Toledo in the last quarter of the eleventh century. Despite the Christians' aggressive efforts to seize al-Andalus part by part from the Muslims, the Nasrid dynasty managed to survive those forces from Aragon and Castille and became the only remnants of al-Andalus in the midst of the Reconquista.

As the five hundred years of Muslim domination of al-Andalus was cornered by the increasing threats of the Christian kingdoms, namely Castile from the north and Aragon from the west, the vast Muslim region gradually shrank to its south. During that process, the first ruler of the then newly emerging Nasrid Dynasty, Muhammad I (r. 1238-1273), also known as Ibn al-Ahmar, planted the seed of his kingdom in Granada. In his search to find a suitable place for the new capital or citadel of his domain, he stumbled upon the Alhambra which would serve as the new *qasba*, or citadel for the emirate of Granada for as long as the last splendor of al-Andalus stood on its might.

Interestingly, although it is often referred to as a single monument, Alhambra does not consist of only one building. It is an assembly of palaces with supporting towers and buildings set up over the course of the Nasrid dynasty and is headed by the fortress of Alcazaba in the west of Alhambra. The early erection of the Nasrid Alhambra started immediately after Muhammad I moved his capital from Jaén to Granada and with the construction of the Alcazaba. The strategic location of Granada had become the reason why the shifting of the capital city was made. The location was far from Castile's border, and it had a direct coastal exit in case of emergency (Gallardo, 2021). Furthermore, most of the cities surrounding Jaén had already been conquered by the army of Ferdinand III of Castile and when the Christian army reached Jaén, Muhammad I had to negotiate the surrender of Jaén with Ferdinand III. In 1246, Muhammad I and Ferdinand III signed the Treaty of Jaén, which

was referred to by the Arabic text as the Great Peace (Gallardo, 2021). The agreement demanded the immediate surrender of Jaén to Castile and required the Nasrid to pay an annual tribute of one hundred and fifty thousand maravedís. They were also required to provide military assistance whenever Castile needed them (Gallardo, 2020). Aside from the disadvantageous situation in Jaén, Muhammad I also had to take Nasrid's inferior state of military and defense into consideration and the treaty was signed to buy time for the fortification of Alhambra.

Just like Muhammad I, the early Nasrid emirs focused more on perfecting the Alcazaba and completing the perimeter wall surrounding the Alhambra because it was vital to ensure the impenetrability of the fortress and its capability to guard the Nasrid leaders against the Christian threats surrounding Granada. The erection of the palace site only started almost a century later by the fifth Nasrid ruler, Ismail I (r. 1314–1325), with his construction of a sizable complex which was eventually developed into the Comares Palace (Palatio de Comares) by his successors (Fernández-Puertas, 1997). Although the palatial buildings were constantly constructed and renovated until the late mid-fifteenth century, the most significant and interesting buildings were built in the mid-fourteenth century, prominently by Yusuf I (r. 1333–1354) and Muhammad V (r. 1354–1359/1362–1391).

This paper attempts to analyse the importance of Alhambra, particularly during the Nasrid dynasty, and how its architecture helped the monument to serve its purpose as a fortress and palaces for the Nasrid rulers. Information is collected and analysed using library research. Contents from various secondary sources related to the topic are collected and discussed. It is important to note, however, that the Spanish names for the monuments were most likely given after the Nasrid dynasty's demise, and those names are what we, as modern people, popularly refer to. Due to the Islamic nature of the Nasrid dynasty, the actual names of the monuments may be mostly in Arabic. To avoid confusion, English, Arabic, and Spanish names for the monuments are included in parts of this article, though most of the Arabic names are neglected in academic discussions revolving around Alhambra.

The limitation of this study lies in the difficulties faced by archaeologists and historians to determine the actual architecture of Nasrid's Alhambra and the year they were built and inscribed. This is

due to many subsequent alterations over the years, especially by the Christian monarchs after it was captured in 1492. The language barrier also limits this study in terms of understanding and comprehending Spanish and Arabic texts, hence this research solely relies on the available English texts and sources.

Alhambra's Origin

Little is known about the definite origin of the construction of Alhambra. However, its strategic location on the Sierra Nevada on the top of Sabika Hill, which overlooks the whole city of Granada, provides an advantage that would allow the holders to easily detect the incoming threats of their enemies. Hence, it is not surprising if the site was a hotspot during military expeditions. It is said that during the rebellion of 'Umar Ibn Ḥafṣūn in the 9th century, the Arab troops in Granada were held out in a red fort that is besieged by a group of *muwallad* rebels. The fort used by the Arabs might have already been built by the governor of the province in 767 (Calvert, 1908; Foret, 2009).

During the reign of the Zirid dynasty³ in Granada, the Zirids built a citadel and palace on Albaicín hill which was known as the *al-Qasaba al-Qadīma* ("Old Citadel" or "Old Palace") and called as "the big one" by al-Zuhri, an Andalusian geographer who wrote *Kitāb al-Jughrafiya* (Uzal, 2013). Two other fortresses were built on the Sabika and Mauror hills, opposite the main one on the Albaicín hill and separated by the Darro River, to the south of Granada. The fortress on the Sabika hill was known as the *al-Qasaba al-Jadida* ("New Citadel" or "New Palace") or the *Alcazaba*. The New Citadel was merely used as a fortress until Zirid's influential Jewish vizier, Yusuf ibn Naghrella (993-1056), built his personal residence there. Frederick Bargebuhr (1956) mentioned that Yusuf's decision to construct his palace on the Alhambra site was driven by the rift in the relationship between the Jews and the Muslim

³ Zirid dynasty of Granada was the root of the Taifa states and was a predecessor of the Nasrid dynasty in Granada. It was founded in 1013 by Zawi bin Ziri (r. 1013 to 1019) when people of Zirid dynasty from Ifriqiya fled to Granada and built their city there. The dynasty was short-lived in Granada and was decisively defeated and conquered by the Al-Moravids in 1090 eighty years after they were established.

Zirids particularly his personal relationship with Emir Abd Allah (r 1073–1090), the last emir of the Zirid dynasty. Yusuf's palace also greatly displeased the emir when some said it was better than the emir's palace. The Zirid's *Alcazaba* might have been the initial foundation of the Alhambra structure before its major constructions and modifications by the first ruler of the Nasrids, Muhammad I, and his successors as a site of not only the main fortress but also the royal residences of the emirs for two and a half centuries.

As for the origin of its name, it is commonly believed that Alhambra got its famous name from the Arabic word *al-Ḥamrā'* which means "The Red One" in English. It was also referred to as *al-Qal'a al-Ḥamrā'* which means "The Red Fortress". The reddish colour of Alhambra was pigmented by the rammed earth material, roughly sand, clay, and stones, which were primarily used for the outer wall of Alhambra in the early construction of this monument (Gil-Crespo, 2016). Historians believed that the earliest mention of the name was found in the record of Ibn Hayyan (d. 1075) in the 9th century when he talked about the battles between the Arabs and the Muwallads, as previously mentioned, during the rule of the Emir Abd Allah. The name *al-Qal'a al-Ḥamrā'* was mentioned in a poetry attached to an arrow and shot over the wall of the red fortress. The gist of the poetry was as below:

"Deserted and roofless are the houses of our enemies;

Invaded by the autumnal rains, traversed by impetuous winds;

Let them within the red castle (*al-Qal'a al-Ḥamrā'*) hold their mischievous councils;

Perdition and woe surround them on every side" (Calvert, 1908, p. 6)

As of now, all the subjects concerning the naming of Alhambra were associated with the colour red. Because the first monarch of the Alhambra who elevated it was dubbed Ibn al-Ahmar, which means "the descendant of the red one," some individuals, such as al-Qalqashandī, a historian and Shāfi'ī jurist, attributed the origin of the Alhambra's name to Ibn al-Ahmar. His name was derived from the name of his tribe, Banu al-Ahmar (Castro, 2021). Another possibility is that the great red castle was located in Granada, a city that acquired its name from the pomegranate fruit, which is commonly recognised for its alluring red colour (Russo et al., 20120, and this adds to the romantic undertone

of its name with all the connections with the reddish elements of its settings.

Alhambra as a Fortress

The *Alcazaba* is the military zone of the Alhambra complex. Prior to the erection of the Alhambra complex, this stronghold served as the main residence of Muhammad I and the Nasrid soldiers that guarded him. With the fall of Jaén in 1426 and Seville in 1428, most of the lands around Granada were now under the control of Christian kingdoms, posing a danger to the emirate. This scenario compelled Muhammad Ibn al-Ahmar to concentrate on fortifying Granada, particularly Alhambra, the seat of the reigning administration, with towers and defensive walls. The perimeter wall guarding the palatial residence was designed with several gates for entrance, among them were the gate of Justice or *Bab al-Sharia* (*Puerta de la Justicia*), the gate of Seven Floors or *Bab al-Ghudūr* (*Torre de los Siete Suelos*), the gate of Elvira or *Bab-Ilbira* (*Puerta de la Elvira*), the False Gate, or *Bab al-Faray* (*Puerto del Arrabal*) (Mas Sánchez, 2020). It was not until his son, Muhammad II, took over the reign that the construction of the palatine city he envisioned was started.

The Alcazaba also features a miniature complex (*Plaza de las Armas*) to lodge and supply basic requirements for the Nasrid military personnel guarding the Alhambra and the emirs. The north of the Plaza housed the military quarters (*Barrio Castrense*) which were made of seventeen small houses, most of which were joined together and separated by narrow alleyways that led to the homes' interiors, owned probably by the high-ranking military officials (Lopez, 1992). Meanwhile, on the southern part of the plaza were rooms laid out with several compartments that served as either a dormitory for junior guards or probably just a mere storage facility. Due to the limited space in the internal military complex of the fortress, the rest of the normal army units presumably camped outside the Alcazaba, yet still within the range of the stronghold. Jesus Lopez pointed out the absence of distinct grounds which may operate as a prayer place in the Alcazaba and assumed the likelihood that they conducted their daily prayers in an open-air worship space either inside or outside the stronghold (Lopez, 1992).

The irregular triangular fortress was anchored by the main and oldest towers: the Watch Tower (*Torre de la Vela*) on the western pit, the Tower of Homage (*Torre del Homenaje*), the Broken Tower (*Torre Quebrada*), and the Shieldmaker's Tower (*Torre del Adarguero*)⁴ that made up the defensive line on the Alcazaba eastern wall. The main entrance to the fortress was initially through the Gate of Arms, or *Bab al-Silah* (*Puerta de las Armas*) while the remainder of the Alhambra palatial grounds was accessible by the Gate of Tahona (*Puerta de la Tahona*), under the Tower of Homage, in the back wall of Alcazaba.

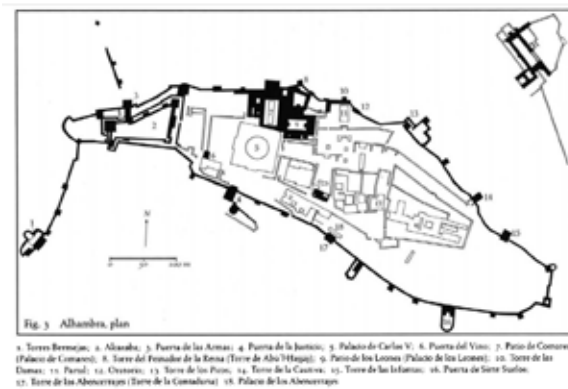


Figure 1: The Plan Of Alhambra. Adapted From *The Alhambra: An Introduction* (Rodriguez, 1992, P. 130).

Alhambra's principal tower is the main Watch Tower (*Torre de la Vela*), which was built on the western tip of Sabika Hill, surrounded by steep slopes on its front, left, and right sides, leaving no room for enemies to ambush the tower unannounced. The square ground plan of the Watch Tower measures 16 meters by 16 meters and its elevation is 26.80 meters in height. It is built on a solid foundation and features a four-story interior with arches supported by pillars and a subterranean dungeon. The tower overlooks the Sierra Nevada mountainous plain and open farmland, making it ideal for forming a network intelligence series. Muhammad I installed a network of signal towers/watchtowers,

⁴ There were only fragments remained in the site of Torre del Adarguero today, just like some other parts of the palace city caused by the explosion during the Peninsula War (1807-1814) by the French, hence it was sometimes called The Hollow Tower (*Torre Hueca*).

or the *Atalayas*, designed to warn him of the enemy's movements within his territory.

These mostly cylindrical masonry towers of *atalayas* were commonly built far from accessible areas from the extreme border of the Nasrid-Castile kingdoms with a distance between 5 to 7 kilometres from each other and served for visual observation and communication of movements within the kingdom (Ruiz-Jaramillo & Garcia-Pulido, 2018). They would gather information, especially on Christian advances given by the people who passed the area, and the warnings would be impended on top of the towers through various signalling methods such as using special mirror plates, smoke, or fire. The top of *Torre de la Vela* was equipped with arrow slits, used by the guards to keep an eye on the open air and communicate with those on the *atalayas* and *chemin de ronde* of the palatial towers (Puerta-Vilchez, 2022). This signal was passed from tower to tower towards the *Torre de la Vela* of Alhambra and warned the Emirs of an incoming attack.

The Tower of Homage (*Torre de Homenaje*) had a more rectangular base measuring 12.12 metres by 10.46 metres and was raised to a height of 26 metres, consisting of six floors, with a dungeon on the lowest floor. The top four floors feature central cruciform piling and clusters of four pillars. The *Torre del Homenaje*'s uppermost floor was constructed as a small residence, a novel type of construction centred on a central hypaethral courtyard said to be Muhammad I's dwelling (Puerta-Vilchez, 2022). The tower has an upright crenelated teeth-shaped feature along the top of the tower, which provided protection for the Nasrid soldiers and its separations enabled them to fire arrows at intruders within their sights.

As mentioned above, the lowest floors of the towers, including other towers across Alhambra, were usually reserved as dungeons and prison cells for captives. Aside from that, conically bell-shaped underground dungeons (EFE, 2018), with a central gap on their tip and only accessible by a rope ladder, were utilised to detain high-profile prisoners under the towers. A rope was used to lower the prisoners into the prison chambers from the central gap. This was done as a safety measure to prevent inmates from being able to flee once they entered the prison. When the trap door was closed, the dungeon would be dark, and the prisoners

would not have access to sanitation, food, nor water without permission from the Nasrid emirs and prison guards (Irwin, 2004).

Alhambra as Royal Palaces

Beyond Alcazaba, Muhammad I swiftly envisioned the palatine city, although he had limited contribution in realising the construction of the palatine area, which would eventually house his successors and their royal family, along with gardens and mini township to accommodate them. This led Alhambra to be known as the City of Alhambra, or *Madinat al-Hambra*. He probably got inspired by the *Madinat al-Zahra* of the former Caliphate of Cordoba (Rodriguez, 1992). This mission was then passed through generations of emirs and multiple palaces and installations were built within the area. To leave a lasting impression on Alhambra, the emirs often constructed new palaces or refurbished older ones. Robert Irwin (2004) argued that these buildings may not have been interconnected when the palatine city was still in use by the Nasrids, despite the fact that they appear to be connected now. The familiarity of this area as the residence and centre of the Nasrid government was reflected when the area was known as the Nasrid Palace (*Palacio de los Nazaries*). Although seven discrete palaces were able to be identified by modern archaeologists and historians in Alhambra, as highlighted by Jesus Lopez (1992), there were only two almost fully existing main palaces that we managed to retrieve today within its premises: the Palace of Comares (*Palacio de Comares*) and the Palace of the Lions, or *al-Riyāḍ al-Saʿīd* (*Patio de los Leones*).

Palace of Comares (Palacio de Comares)

Ismail I (r. 1314- 1325) initiated the construction of the Comares Palace which was continued by his son, Yusuf I (r.1333-1354). The name of the Palace was commonly believed to originate from the Arabic word, *qumarriya*, which describes the multicolored stain glass edifices used to ornament the palace, while James Dickie (1992) mentioned a unique take where he believed it was named as such to honour the artisans from Qumarish who constructed its many buildings. While most palaces are constructed to impress people, the Palace of Comares was installed with a gigantic intimidating tower whose purposes were both to guard and

to intimidate those who laid their eyes on it. The Tower of Comares was designed to overwhelm its visitors with its massive size. Those who observed it from afar were also expected to be intimidated by its enormous proportion. In the heat of his rivalry with Alfonso XI, Yusuf built the mighty 45-meter-tall tower, the tallest in Alhambra, in the north of the palatine precinct as a statement of his authority and invulnerability in the eyes of his subjects and Christian adversaries. The throne space of the Hall of the Ambassador (*Salón de Embajadores*) in the tower was said to be the most accurate depiction of the Great Iwan,⁵ of the Mamluks in Cairo (Guichard, 2021). Despite its massive size, Yusuf's Comares Tower lacked military power, thus he had to rely on political and diplomatic discussions, particularly with Christian ambassadors. Therefore, he erected the Hall of the Ambassadors starting in 1310 inside the Comares Tower, which was primarily used for discussions with foreign diplomats, receiving envoys, and ambassadors. However, much of today's Comares Palace was rebuilt by Muhammad V in 1365 (Petersen, 1996).

The hall was meticulously designed utilising geometrical mathematics equations in order to overwhelm the visitors with the Sultan's presence and power in the room by concentrating the emphasis on the space to the Sultan's throne. The hall formed a cubical space, with measurements of 11.30 meters by 11.30 meters and 18.20 meters high, with three deep vaulted nooks on each side, formed by synthetic solid walls. The recesses open into arcuate windows with the panorama of Granada (Petersen, 1996). The *artesonado* ceilings of the hall were aesthetically accessorized with geometric patterns, thus converting the ceiling's design into a cosmic vision of large superimposed geometric panels of the "wooden strap-work cupola" (Bush, 2020). This formed a star-patterned vault, which was inscribed with poetic and Quranic verses of cosmological themes based on the description of the seven Islamic heavens above withstanding the throne of God in the chapter of the Kingdom, *Surah al-Mulk* (Gonzales, 2003).

Opposite the apex of the *artesonado* ceiling, the flooring in the hall's centre was inscribed with the name of God on its tiles through the

⁵ The Great Iwan was a stunning monumental throne hall of the Mamluk Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad built in the 14th century. Unfortunately, it was demolished in 1825 and was replaced with the Muhammad Ali Mosque.

famous Nasrid dynasty motto, “There is no conqueror, except Allah” (*wa la Ghalib illallah*) and made up the hall’s distinctive flooring design (Dickie, 1992). The hall’s interior walls were fully engraved and reiterated in faience and plasterworks with repeated words of praises for Allah, especially by its motto which indirectly sends the message of the superiority of the Islamic emirate over the Christian kingdoms. It should be noted, however, that these plasterworks were not exclusive to the hall; rather, plasterworks and engravings of the motto can be found in almost every Alhambra official space.

The descriptions of Alhambra in historical records all emphasised the beautiful gardens and courtyards embellishing the palatine courtyards and the Palace of Comares was no exception. Before holding an audience with the emirs, the ambassadors will pass through the exquisite Courtyard of the Myrtles (*Patio de los Arrayanes*) situated in front of the entrance to the Hall of Ambassadors. It was called the court of the myrtles due to the two long myrtle hedges in its interior that grow on the longer sides of the pond. The heart of the courtyard holds a rectangular pool measuring 34 meters in length and 7.10 meters in width with a fountain at either end.

The courtyard held the chambers of the emir’s wives on both sides with the emir’s private parlour, the House of Blessings, *Sala de la Barca*, on the northeast side which was connected to the Hall of Ambassador. This elongated pool apparently had two main purposes. First, to aestheticize the atmosphere of the palace with its captivating mirror effect in which the grandeur of the tower of Comares was amplified by the reflections of the vast expanse of water in the pool. Second, the pool acts as a cooling mechanism for the monarchs’ dwellings surrounding it (Dickie, 1992), particularly in summer. The babbling sounds of the small fountains at the end of the pool soothe the onlookers while the beautiful floral aromas exuded by the blossoms of the myrtle hedges enchanted their sense of smell.

Palace of the Lions, or Palatio al-Riyad/al-Riyāḍ al-Sa‘īd (Patio de los Leones)

When Peter I the Cruel of Seville helped Muhammad V to reascend to his throne, the two of them formed a very good relationship and the

everlasting Muslim-Christian rivalry turned into an artistic competition between Muhammad V and Peter I as they both shared the same interest in architecture. When Muhammad V knew the existence of the Alcazar of Seville⁶ which was built by Peter in a Mudejar architecture style, he was determined to create something that can challenge Peter's castle. In this quest, he managed to build the Court of the Lions which encapsulated the mixture of Christian and Islamic influences and was viewed by many as the most sophisticated part of Alhambra. On the north and south sides of the palace, two halls, known as the Hall of Two Sisters and the Hall of the Abencerrajes, respectively, were fringed by sideways apartments on their east and west. To the opposite side of the entrance to the Palace of the Lions lies the Hall of the King (*Sala de los Reyes*).

The structure of the courtyard was to be greatly influenced by the Sevillian *Patio de las Doncellas*, the main courtyard of Peter's Alcazar, but in its architecture remained the distinctive Islamic elements. The court was built on the ground which used to be a garden, hence the reason it was initially named the Palace of the Delightful Garden, *Qasr al-Riyāḍ al-Sa'īd* (Arnold, 2017). It was only after the installation of the fountain of lions that the palace's name was associated with its centrepiece and was widely called the Palace of the Lions (*Palatio de los Leones*). Its courtyard was split into four quadrants from which water falls into the enormous polygonal marble basin of a fountain borne on the backs of twelve lions' sculptures in the middle. The four quadrants were once a sunken flower garden encircling the fountain of the lions (al-Majali, 2017).

The fountain of the lions was the centerpiece of the palace and its stunning, yet unusual design sparked debate among scholars. Frederick Bargeburr (1968) discussed its origin extensively in his writing, *The Alhambra: A cycle of studies on the eleventh century in Moorish Spain*. He claimed that the sculptures of the twelve lions originated from an earlier Jewish palace of Yusuf Ibn Naghrella during the Zirid dynasty as described in the poems of Ibn Gabirol, a Jewish philosopher and the grand vizier to the father of Yusuf ibn Naghrella. This unleashed heated debates among scholars, because if his claims are true then that means

⁶ Muhammad resided in Alcazar of Seville with Pedro from 1359 until he reclaimed his throne in 1362.

that the sculptures date from the 11th century when Yusuf inhabited the Alhambra site and not the 14th century. Although some scholars like Oleg Grabar accepted his claims to some extent (Schirg, 2017), most of them refuted that idea (Arnold, 2017) due to the lack of archaeological evidence. The architect, Torre Balbas (Irwin, 2004), established that the sculptures were dated to the 14th century and sculpted with Macael marble (Arnold, 2017) with Nasrids architectural style.

Like the Comares palace, the Nasrid's architects still heavily utilised their knowledge of geometry to design its interior ornaments including the making of the *mucarabe* that were used to decorate the *muqarnas* (stalactites or a honeycomb-looking three-dimensional design) domes, which covered the ceilings of the main rooms of the Court of the Lions. These *muqarnas* were believed to be an architectural manifestation of the atoms according to the Ash'arite atomic theory that Allah had the highest sovereignty over all matters (the smallest form of a particle), space, and time (Guichard, 2021). The reflection of sunlight and moonlight on the *mucarabe* that formed the *muqarnas* was intended to illusion a movement symbolising the "rotating dome of heaven" mentioned by Ibn Zmarak in his poem inscribed in the Hall of the Two Sisters and the Hall of Abencerrajes (Tabbaa, 1985). The Hall of the Two Sisters (*Sala de Dos Hermanasa*) used to be called *al-Qubba al-Kubrā* and the Hall of Abencerrajes (*Sala de los Abencerrajes*) was referred to *al-Qubba al-Gharbiyya* and they contained the finest preserved looking *muqarnas* domes.

Water Management in the Alhambra

One of the prior disadvantages of building the palatine city on top of Sabika Hill was the absence of a flowing fresh water supply. The closest water source was the river Darro, located near the northern side of the Alhambra and even then, it was still too far to act as a direct source for Alhambra's water supply. Be that as it may, Muhammad I managed to overcome this problem by constructing an *acequia* (an aqueduct) located at a higher spot that would be used to redirect the water from the Darro River to the Generalife, or the *Jinnatul A'rif*. The *acequia* was then branched out into two distinguished channels: the *Acequia de Tercio* and the Royal Canal, *al-Saqiya al-Sultāniyya (Acequia Real)*. The first hydraulic canal mainly functioned to irrigate the vast gardens

of Generalife, while the *Acequia Real* on the other hand channelled water throughout the *Madinat* region, the palatial areas, and then the Alcazaba as well as the *Torres Bermejas* and the *Antequeruela* near the foothill (Najjaj, 2014). With the extensive water delivery system plan in Alhambra, Glick and Kirchner (2000) argued that the later constructions and alterations of Alhambra were guided by the hydraulic system as their main concern.

On the other hand, the residents of Alhambra did not solely rely on the flowing water from their irrigation system, but they also stored water in various mediums for storage purposes. Multiple cisterns and *albercas* (large reservoirs or tanks used to store water) can be found between the royal spaces, the *Medina* area, and the gardens within the vicinity of Alhambra. In addition, two other *albercas* were found in the underground of the Alcazaba around the dungeons and bath areas (Malpica, 2002).

As Muslims, the Nasrids needed to have a continuous water supply for ablution before performing their five daily prayers. In line with this demand, water royalties were used to store water for the rite of ablution, while luxurious sculpted marble basins can be found across the palatial areas for the use of the royalties. To a greater extent, the ablution house, or *mida'*, was erected to ease the people to do ablution before entering the mosque (Reklaityte, 2022). Arched aqueducts or shallow pools were designed to slow the running water and to make sure the water keeps constantly running and is not static in a pool. The fountains and water dispensers that can be found throughout Alhambra served the same purpose.

Aside from needing the water source for obvious hygienic purposes and religious observances, water management was also the backbone of the agricultural activities of Alhambra. Najjaj (2014) discussed the recent discoveries that suggested a space between the walls of Alhambra and the Generalife that was probably used to cultivate agricultural productions such as vegetable gardens, and other agricultural holdings. The irrigation for this area might come from the *Acequia de Tercio* which channelled the water source to Generalife.

Conclusion

Despite their limitations in governing a small territory in contrast to its predecessors' vast political grandeur, the Nasrid did build the Alhambra, which many consider to be the sole existing magnum opus of al-Andalus legacy. The Alhambra had served its purposes, providing its Nasrid masters with stunning shelters and intimidating their Christian enemies for two and a half centuries. The palatine city, which was renowned for its hydraulic system for a kingdom with a harsh climate, acted as a key indicator of the emir's competence and prestige. The beautiful palaces adorned by their impressive architecture and planning made Alhambra the talks of the Islamic world and its capture in 1492 was greatly mourned.

Although many belittled the Nasrids and mocked their palatine city, saying it was built with cheap materials, the Alhambra managed to last for nearly ten centuries from the date it was built and withstand the harsh climates, multiple occupations, and changes of various rulers. The Alhambra, which began as a simple fortress, evolved into a palatine city, and now acts as a monumental museum that stands steadfast in the territory of modern Granada, displaying memories of the past. The fact that the Alhambra enchanted the Christian monarchs and persuaded them to not demolish it like other Islamic architectural sites speak volumes of its fascination.

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Countering Islamophobia through Webcomics on Instagram

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Abstract: The widespread use of social media is directly proportional to the widespread practice of spreading Islamophobia in the digital realm, especially in Western societies whose understanding of Islam or Muslims is primarily based on negative media stereotypes. Various efforts were made, including from Muslim groups to counter against these negative stereotypes through social media and form a counter-narrative. One of them is the Instagram account @yesimhotinthis, which conveys a message countering Islamophobia from an Egyptian-American Muslim's perspective through the format of autobiographical webcomics. The approach taken is different from mainstream comics, which are mostly superhero themed. This study analyzes how countering Islamophobia is represented and how Instagram is used to counter Islamophobia. A qualitative analysis of seven webcomics of @yesimhotinthis was conducted. Results indicated that representation of countering Islamophobia emphasized more on the aspect of equality and highlighting similarities between Muslims and non-Muslims in social aspects. In addition, Instagram is utilized by adjusting the relations between webcomics

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and its captions, giving the impression that although Islamophobia is countered in a casual way, it is still a serious problem.

Keywords: Instagram, Islamophobia, Multimodal Analysis, Representation Theory, Webcomics

Introduction

The negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims in various mainstream media tends to dominate Western media, especially after September 11, 2001 when a terrorist attack occurred in the United States. Even after more than two decades of the incident, this trend still exists. Hussam Ayloush, the Executive Director of the Los Angeles chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-LA) asserts that the Muslim community must still strive to amplify accurate narratives through various mediums about Muslims, in order to counter misinformation that is overly entrenched in the minds of the American people, and has the potential to settle in school curriculum to government policies regarding these negative stereotypes of Muslims (Lyn, 2022). Even though the post-Trump administration has accommodated the Muslim community more in its policies, such as opening travel bans for the Muslim community to enter America, according to Ali Aqeel, the Imam of the Muslim American Cultural Center in Nashville, Tennessee, there is a stereotype at the grassroots that Muslims are a uniform entity, namely terrorists, which has become a residue that is difficult to overcome especially in this digital era (Fam, Hajela & Henao, 2021).

The rapid development of digital culture, as well as the widespread use of social media, is in direct proportion to the massive increase of Islamophobia (Oboler, 2016). This is especially apparent in the form of popular culture products, such as memes and comics, which are often used due to their characteristics of being massively produced and easy to consume in general (Heryanto, 2012). By utilizing knowledge and understanding that has been widely believed by many people through continuous news references and framing on the certain phenomenon, the use of popular cultural products including comics can provide different touches that influence or further convince the public of an issue raised (Zaytoon, 2017). Due to that reason, there is an increase in attempts

among Muslim groups to counter issues such as Islamophobia using those mediums or format.

Such efforts appear in artistic works illustrated by a comic artist named Huda Fahmy, an Egyptian-American woman who portrays her life as a Muslim minority in America through her comics as a counter-narrative, uploaded via Instagram platform - @yesimhotinthis. By using an autobiographical theme approach, @yesimhotinthis gives a different impression by representing the resistance of Muslims against Islamophobia which considers them to be an oppressed group; a contrast from comics who depict Muslim characters as superheroes in the context of countering islamophobia and tend to have an adage - the hero will always win (Leitch, 2004).

Counter-narrative by Muslims themselves is important in the effort to reduce phobia of Islam through the media, because it has factually been shown that content about Islam and Muslims are influenced by an important factor, namely representative groups or simply Muslim content creators in a broad sense who participate in constructing the content (Sutkuté, 2019).

The role of content creators has also resulted in, over a long period of time, the image of Islam and Muslims, especially through a Western perspective, being shifted even though it remains identical to Arabic. For example, the narrative has changed from the depiction of 'Angry Arab' to 'Arab Spring'. The exotic depiction of Islam, its angry nature due to the influence of hot desert geographical conditions, has shifted to the depiction of Arab countries full of conflict, and matters related to terrorism and narratives of insecurity (Winch, 2014). Thus, the counter-narrative produced by Muslim community groups who are also part of the representative groups of Western society, in this context Huda Fahmy with her webcomics, @yesimhotinthis, is adding new perspectives in viewing Islam and Muslims in the midst of a shifting image in media.

Although studies that specifically address the theme of countering Islamophobia in the format of webcomics through the medium of Instagram are widely used, most are dominated by studies that focus more on forms of Islamophobia in cyberspace, rather than forms of its resistance or struggle against, such as studies conducted by Rajan and Venkatraman (2021) or Civila, Romero-Rodríguez, and Civila (2020).

In addition, Instagram, as a popular social media that prioritizes the visual aspect, requires a study that also focuses on analyzing visual content, considering that the visual aspect in cyberspace is the main currency nowadays (Hu, Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014). Moreover, the caption feature is a tool that allows the relationship between visual and textual aspects represented by captions, and thus can produce more complex messages (Kruk et al., 2019). In sum, the countering Islamophobia form through the Instagram instruments, both visual, textual in images and the relationship between the two functions within the framework of countering Islamophobia strategy, are much needed. Therefore, this research attempts to accommodate those needs by highlighting the relationship between visual and textual aspects of captions in producing messages that counter Islamophobia.

Literature Review

Representation of Muslims in Comics

Islamophobia is indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims (Bleich, 2011). This attitude is perpetuated through the negative portrayal of Muslims in American popular culture products, such as Hollywood films and American superhero comics. Even the supposed superhero characters that are meant to bring the values of truth and justice, become trapped with the same disease (Dar, 2010).

A mistake often repeated about the representation of Muslims in comics is the blending of definitions of Muslim and Arab due to the depiction based on stereotypes, so that Arabs are no longer seen as an ethnicity but a representation of Muslim identity. After the 9/11 tragedy, stereotypes that Muslims are violent and engage in terrorist activities are increasing in intensity. Through comics depiction based on the haphazard imagination that Arabs are conservative people, easily angered by hot desert atmosphere, there is an interconnection that the Arab community equals Muslim equals Terrorist (Dar, 2010; Strömberg, 2011).

Those who try to portray a more moderate portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in the comics, especially in the American comics, often depict Arabs as royal figures (i.e., king) and seems to be an attempt to improve the portrayal of Arabs and Muslims. However, the role of the Arab king

is minimal and reduced as a figurehead aristocrat forced to place the fate of the kingdom on the knights, who are depicted as white people who dominate the story (Woodal, 2010). This can also be seen as a form of claim to the Western superiority over the Eastern.

The Efforts to Counter Islamophobia in Comics

Historically, webcomics do have a closeness to the narratives of resistance to various forms of discrimination. The early tradition of webcomics departed from comic artists whose works raised such themes and were rejected by the mainstream industries because they were not in accordance with market interests. Therefore, the Internet, at that time when access was still limited, was the only means to publish their comic works, so that the term underground appeared for themes that did not surface and escaped from public views (Fenty et al., 2004).

Along the journey, there has been a paradigm shift within the industries. The idea of equality began to be embedded in comic stories that were dominated by superhero stories. For example, in countering Islamophobia, there are names like Sooraya Qadir or Dust, a member of X-Men, one of the superhero characters in comics made by Marvel. Her depiction is illustrated as a female figure using all black hijab and veil and she possesses a power to transform into a cloud of dust. However, instead of reducing negative stereotypes about Islam, they strengthened them. There are some deviations concerning the depiction of the figure of Dust, starting from the initial story that she was rescued by X-Men from slavery in Afghanistan because of the potential strength she had. Also, her illustrations are depicted by wearing clothes completely covering her, even veiled, but with a size that fits perfectly on her body until it seems to show off the body shape. Even when she transforms, she is illustrated as turning into a form of sand with no clothes. It could be said that there is a problem in portraying the character of Dust by objectifying her through the point of view of the male gaze, and it reinforces the negative view of Muslim women (Hosein, 2020).

Webcomics, in this case, are a medium that have the opportunity to reduce misconceptions and biases regarding the views of oppressed people made by mainstream industries. For example, there is an effort made by Deena Mohammed, an Egyptian-based indie comic artist who publishes her comics via platforms on the internet. She created

a character named Qahera, a figure of a superhero Muslim woman in Egypt with unique powers, and the ability to listen to conversations that are misogynistic from a great distance. Visually, Qahera is also illustrated as a woman wearing a veil, but her description does not objectify the common traits commonly exploited in the characters of women (Hosein, 2020).

Nevertheless, the efforts made by Marvel and other mainstream industries that seek to reduce these issues should be appreciated regardless of their various shortcomings, especially if the discussion shifts slightly to the economic sphere, by seeing this effort as one of the techniques of market expansion to the Muslim community. As for webcomics, this is an opportunity to use the medium as a resistance or counter-narrative to the mainstream industries, which are often trapped in misconceptions and biases.

@yesimhotinthis Webcomics

As a webcomic with an autobiographical genre, there is a significant difference with Qahera in comparison to other comics. Deena Mohammed, as the creator of Qahera, emphasizes that the character does not represent herself; Deena and Qahera are different personalities. Overall, her comic stories are inspired and derived from the misogynistic phenomenon she observed in her environment generally, but wrapped hyperbolically using heroic approaches (Landis, 2019). Whereas Huda Fahmy converted herself into a digital comic form, and most of her comic stories resulted from her personal experiences in dealing with Islamophobia. Therefore, there is an opportunity for the reader to interpret @yesimhotinthis webcomics differently, as compared to interpreting superhero comics which are based on fantasy and heroic action. Even though the illustrations from @yesimhotinthis are sometimes hyperbolic, she has taken the initial discretion about her personal experience as the basis of the comic stories, and that seems more real, and more representative of the minorities' feelings (Quds, 2020).

To accommodate the idea, the use of the medium is also something to consider. One of the reasons Huda Fahmy decided to choose Instagram as a medium to publish her comic works was due to the popularity of the platform (Sobh, 2017). However, Instagram has its uniqueness when it is

read from the webcomics perspective. One of the unique characteristics of webcomics compared to conventional comics is the existence of what is called alternative text (alt text) that is represented through Instagram captions. Initially, alt text is a function that allows an image to be given an additional description by the authors. Alt text usually appears when the cursor is directed over the image for approximately one to two seconds. Alt text is unique because it is usually filled with explanations or other jokes, which are sometimes intended to break the statements illustrated in the comics, even changing the story (Kogel, 2013).

Methodology

The aim of this research is to explore webcomics on Instagram visual and textual messages by analyzing their representation in countering Islamophobia. Additionally, this study aims to observe the connection between webcomics and their captions in countering Islamophobia; hence qualitative methodology is used in this research.

In order to understand how messages of countering Islamophobia are represented in the webcomics of Instagram, deepening of the message contents through external factors needs to be studied. Some examples are comic artists' background, socio-cultural conditions of community and even the cyberspace atmosphere that fluctuates following the latest issues. Several factors, as mentioned above, would certainly affect how a message is made and delivered (Uyenne & Oti, 2012). Therefore, qualitative methodology is seen as a more suitable approach to this study because the authors could collect data based on its historical and cultural order. Inversely, quantitative methodology is considered limited to quantification analysis, such as effectiveness, frequency, or pattern of messages, and not focused on details (Neuman, 2014).

The research method used is qualitative content analysis, that is subjective interpretation of the content text data through a systematic classification process of coding, as well as identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). However, the authors use the term proposed by Serafini and Reid (2019), that is a multimodal qualitative content analysis referring to the object of this research which has more than one mode. For qualitative content analysis, the function is quite restrictive and focuses too much on the analysis of verbal texts for which its

potential is not fully maximized. Nevertheless, the analytical procedure is the same. The authors looked for the main theme of the message, both textual and visual, on the webcomics @yesimhotinthis.

This multimodal approach in qualitative content analysis methods is essential, considering that almost all forms of communication nowadays are composed of more than just one mode, particularly in digitized content. Thus, embedding the term multimodal in the qualitative content analysis method is deemed necessary in this research.

The data of this research was taken from Huda Fahmy's Instagram account, @yesimhotinthis. The type of posts analyzed are only those related to Islamophobic themes, which are selected by the authors based on the content compiled. The authors choose webcomics that present the depictions of Muslim characters countering Islamophobia, so that webcomics contain at least two interacting characters; the characters who commit Islamophobic acts, and the Muslim characters who counter them. Accordingly, this research analyzed seven webcomics of @yesimhotinthis according to the characteristics described, including supporting elements, as well as each of its captions.

This research applied multimodal analysis by utilizing Kress and van Leeuwen's visual analysis on the visual or image aspects of webcomics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), Halliday's systematic functional linguistics (SFL) analysis on the textual aspects of conversation between characters in webcomics (Halliday, 1994), and van Leeuwen's inter-mode analysis, which perceives the relationship between webcomics and captions (van Leeuwen, 2005). Instagram captions are placed to support or re-explain the message conveyed in the webcomics. The basis of this thought refers to Barthes in Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, p. 18), "The meaning of an image will always be related even dependent on verbal text (or textual) because the image has a polysemous character that opens too many possibilities for meaning. Therefore, the function of writing is a guide so that both can walk hand in hand and arrive at the intended meaning". Nevertheless, it should be noted that the concept that underlies Kress and van Leeuwen's thinking in compiling an analysis of visual grammar is based on Halliday's SFL.

The three concepts mentioned above are used as data analysis tools that have more than one mode. Because each mode has different characteristics, different analysis tools are needed. The results of the

analysis are interpreted by the authors through the main theoretical approach of this research, Stuart Hall's representation theory.

Analysis and Findings

Visual Mode Analysis

Almost all images in @yesimhotinthis' webcomics are narrative processes; that is, there are at least two characters (represented participants) in one image panel. So, the message is formed through the interaction between these characters.

The depictions of Muslims in the face of or against Islamophobia do not always end in victory. In several webcomics, Muslims are depicted as more passive when dealing with Islamophobia, or not resisting. In order to reduce confusion in understanding the words non-Muslim and Muslim woman in the analysis part of the comics, the authors abbreviate them with the words NM and MW respectively.

In the Figure 1 below, the first picture panel depicts a person who is categorized as a NM being the master of ceremonies in a fashion show. It also depicts several models wearing clothes with masks as a new fashion model that has emerged since the pandemic. The next picture panel can be categorized as a conceptual process because there is only one character in one picture panel, that is a MW who wears a veil and all-black clothes. In conceptual process analysis, there is what is referred to as symbolic attributive visuals, or briefly referred to as attributes, namely objects other than represented participants in the image. There are several characteristics of the attributes, but in this picture panel, it can be interpreted as a symbolic value (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), such as the veil as one of the symbols of clothing identical to Muslim. In the context of the story in this webcomics, the veiled MW seems happy about the new fashion, covering her face. So, it can be said that the joy is due to the use of face covers or veils, which are almost always identified with restraint against women, and the orthodox symbol of a Muslim woman, which is currently a trend in the fashion world.

In the third panel, it is depicted that the NM shouts to make the MW flinch as a form of disapproval or even anger over the excitement of MW who considers the veil, which is synonymous with a symbol

of Islam, to have been accepted in the fashion world. Therefore, the depiction of MW in the Figure 1 is on the losing side, as a group that is unable to respond to the double standard behavior of NM. This can also be seen through the size of the image of NM which is larger as a form of domination. Besides that, the veil symbol in this webcomic can also be interpreted as applying the principle of freedom through fashion.



Figure 1: @yesimhotinthis webcomics (Posted date: March, 13 2020)

In addition to the representational process analysis above, this study also applies a compositional process in analyzing visual messages, which is salient in exploring striking colors used in webcomics. The most prominent element is the color of the MW character's clothing in webcomic which is almost entirely represented by Huda Fahmy's character. The colors are dark blue for the clothes and light blue for the hijab. The authors interpret that the color element is the thing that is highlighted in this webcomic because the dominant color used in the @yesimhotinthis webcomics is pastel which tends to be soft. So, the color of the clothes worn by Huda Fahmy in her webcomic looks striking in comparison.

In the semiotic perspective, color can also be categorized as a semiotic mode because the use of color can be interpreted differently in specific contexts (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). As for the color blue in general, according to color psychology experts in the early 20th century, Stefanescu-Goanga, it can be interpreted as calming, sad, peaceful, serious, and nostalgic (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002). When associated with a male object, it can be interpreted as sharp and spiritual.

Meanwhile, when associated with a female object, it can be interpreted as attractive and rare in nature (Gage, 1999). Through these various meanings, in the context of the object of this research, the clothes used by MW characters can be judged as the creator's effort to highlight the depiction of Muslim women who are different and unique from the stereotypes of Western media, which always identifies them with all-black clothes, as a sign of orthodoxy or lack of freedom.

Textual Mode Analysis

Through ideational analysis, which looks at how a text represents an event, experience, or awareness of a particular event, most of the stories in the analyzed webcomics show one similar characteristic about negative Muslim stereotypes. This can be seen through the theme of the story conveyed through conversations between represented participants in webcomics.

In the Figure 2, the terminology close to the American culture, the American college party culture, is seen in the textual elements, which also departs from the theme of negative Muslim stereotypes. The textual elements are Muslim-only conversations depicted on a phone call as described in the previous subsection of visual analysis. In the first sentence, the Muslim utters the statement "The party was the BOMB", which was then continued by, "Oh yeah I had a BLAST", as if she was talking to someone whom the writer considers to be her friend over the phone. The next sentence indicates that her phone call was interrupted by a call from her husband, Gehad, "Hang on, Gehad is calling". And in the last sentence, she says to her husband, "Sorry babe. I'll call you back. It happened again," after discovering that a police officer was behind her due to a report from a NM who had been watching her from the start of the webcomic story.

The terminology that indicates the negative stereotype of Muslims as terrorists in the initial sentences of the webcomics, in which even the creator uses capital letters in writing, is the theme used by the creator herself as the basis for countering Islamophobia. The use of capital letters is important in comics, as an indication of shouting, or words that the creator thinks need to be a reader's attention (Bradley, 2014; Plummer, 2019). This can be observed using other terms that are also

used, “party” as one of the American cultures which shows the side, especially liberalism or freedom, embraced by most of its people (Wade, 2017; Walker, 2019). The use of the term “party” in the story describes a different Muslim figure compared to the depiction in the media. A MW is represented as doing activities similar to most Americans, such as partying. So, the use of the term “party” becomes important to describe normal Muslim life in this webcomic as a form of countering Islamophobia.



Figure 2: @yesimhotinthis Webcomics
(Posted date: September, 27 2017)

The results of the textual analysis above show a form of countering Islamophobia through depictions of Muslims that highlight aspects of similarities between Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as characters that are contrary to what has been described by the media, which tends to lead to negative stereotypes.

Inter-Mode Analysis

Using inter-mode analysis on the webcomics studied, it is found that most of the relations between webcomics and their captions use elaboration relations. In other words, six out of seven of the captions that are displayed are used as explanations or story details from webcomics.

In several webcomics, the type of elaboration relation used is the explanation; that is, Instagram captions are used to explain the stories

displayed in webcomics. The messages of webcomics and their captions are displaying the same countering Islamophobia messages, but each uses a different form of delivery. In figure 3, the caption of the webcomics is, “Sing it with me: double staaandaardss”. The authors interpret the caption as if the creator invites viewers or readers to sing using the lyrics in the caption. When connected between the stories displayed in the webcomic and the caption, it was found that the caption re-explains the stories in a different form of the phenomenon and as a resistance to Islamophobic behavior. In addition, the word ‘sing’ can also be insinuated like a choir in a church, so that the caption can be more in line with the idea visualized in the last picture panel, namely the nun’s clothes. The visual and textual blend also stimulates the reader to notice a new perspective on MW who satirize stereotypes about themselves with terminology that is intended to increase tolerance.



Figure 3: @yesimhotinthis Webcomics
(Posted date: March, 2 2018)

In the webcomics, the theme of the story is about countering against negative stereotypes of MW, about clothes that symbolize restraint and are not in accordance with the American culture that upholds freedom (Blakeman, 2014; Clemente, 2015). In the last panel, the picture shows a depiction of MW character wearing nun clothes as a form of resistance using satire, that such a stereotypical statement is a violation of the values of freedom adopted by America. Or in other words, that kind of thinking is a double standard. Through a different delivery, the caption of the webcomic also has the same content, that is, subtly quip

the behavior or thoughts of double standards regarding the concept of freedom in the realm of fashion.

Discussion

Representations of Countering Islamophobia

The findings from the visual and textual analyses of the webcomics @yesimhotinthis show how the concept of resistance to Islamophobia is represented quite similarly, although through different depictions, as well as stories with various themes of the Islamophobia phenomenon.

The first form of resistance is to use the principle of depicting the various realities of Muslim character as a minority. The authors find that one of the depictions is through the attitude shown by MW in dealing with Islamophobic behavior. Several webcomics describe the courageous attitude shown by MW characters in general. Even NM character who initiates the negative behavior becomes the one who is afraid and loses in the face of the courage shown by the Muslim character. Through the depiction of the size of the character, it is made larger, even suggesting the dominance of the MW's side in the story. MW characters on the other hand, are also sometimes depicted as inferior in the webcomics, not always brave, and not always winning.

The second countering Islamophobia message is the inclusive depiction of MW characters. This representation is a counter-narrative that departs from the general rhetoric that claims that Muslims and their religion are an exclusive group. The underlying reason is the claim that their teachings are the most correct, followed by the assumption that outside them are heretics or misfortune (Wijaya, 2019). So, in the end, it seems that such webcomics cannot get out of that assumption.

The @yesimhotinthis webcomics present the exact opposite depiction. As displayed in figure 4, when MW are mocked as “goat-lover”, MW counterattacks by saying that goats are adorable for her. The word adorable in this connotation is a pet close to the American culture, where a good majority of Americans are considered as pet lovers (Herzog, 2015). So, apart from being interpreted as a counter-narrative for MW views, synonymous with violence and cruelty, it

can also be interpreted that Muslims in America are also part of the American society that loves animals.

These findings are in line with the efforts to reduce the stereotype that Muslims are always connoted as Arab, which is difficult to separate because the initiative is dominated by the Muslim community of Arab ethnicity, and the need for a community perspective to produce a non-Western-centric depiction. Therefore, the effort made is to blend together the local values adopted (Dar, 2010; Strömberg, 2011). The @yesimhotinthis webcomics use terminologies and other aspects associated with American values such as America's college party culture and America's common pet-loving culture. Thus, the face of Islam is expected to be seen more diversely.



Figure 4: @yesimhotinthis Webcomics (Posted date: January, 7 2019)

The depiction of Muslims' inclusiveness in @yesimhotinthis, in general, is through the depiction of Muslim characters as normal figures or in contrast to the depiction of Western media in general. Figure 2 is another example of how this depiction of normal Muslims is applied. The Muslim figure (MW) is depicted in a clothing store, on the phone while picking clothes. In simple terms, this description can be interpreted as a description of normal Muslim activities and most people in general. More specifically, the webcomic recounts that MW was calling her friend and talking about a party she attended earlier. The use of the word party is synonymous with the concept of freedom embraced by American society. According to the authors, this is also one of the efforts to portray the inclusiveness of American Muslims

as part of American society as well. At the same time as a counter-narrative which denies that Muslims are synonymous with orthodoxy and restraint (Zaytoon, 2017).

The third representation of countering Islamophobia is through depictions that emphasize the aspect of equality. In general, the concept of equality on @yesimhotinthis is depicted through freedom of dressing. Departing from the stereotype that Muslim women's clothing are a symbol of restraint, @yesimhotinthis presents a different view that Muslim women's clothing are a form of application of the concept of freedom, as depicted in figure 3. Through a depiction that seems to satirize the idea of double standards of fully covered clothes not only synonymous with Muslims but also nuns' clothes, @yesimhotinthis emphasizes highlighting the similarities between Muslims and non-Muslims, not highlighting differences that have the potential to widen the gap of negative prejudice against Muslims as what Said (1978) called, "the Other".

Through visual and textual analyses, the authors conclude that the language used, both visual and textual, the representation of countering Islamophobia in @yesimhotinthis is constructed by depicting the main idea of equality. The depiction is mostly filled as a counter-narrative of what is usually shown by Western media, as well as highlighting aspects of equality at the level of social life. In a research conducted by Mirrlees and Ibaid (2021), the depictions of violence (shown through war games) against Muslims is an attempt to normalize the understanding that violence against Muslims is what they should get, and in the context of this research, depictions of normal Muslims can also be interpreted as an attempt to present a narrative of how Muslims should be seen and treated.

Utilizing Instagram Captions to Counter Islamophobia

The results of the analysis found by the authors are that the relationship between webcomics and Instagram captions, @yesimhotinthis in this study, mostly uses elaboration relations. Thus, Instagram captions are used to re-explain the message to be conveyed in webcomics through a different method or approach. Some webcomics, such as figure 4 and 5, even use the elaboration relation with the type of specification. In these

two webcomics, as explained earlier, each caption in the webcomics is based on personal experiences, which of course are then packaged in hyperbolic depictions or improvised on in a satirical and humorous way in the visual and conversational aspects.



Figure 5: @yesimhotinthis Webcomics (Posted date: July, 12 2019)

However, what is interesting is that the approach is presented in almost all captions on every webcomic, which is the use of a serious approach. The nuances presented contradict with what is shown in the visual and textual aspects or conversations between characters in the story. This includes how the creator explains in greater detail through the captions of webcomics in figure 4 and 5, which is also a form of presenting a more serious atmosphere. In fact, it is explicitly stated in the caption of the webcomic in figure 4, a kind of suggestion for viewers or readers who use serious sentences to explain the phenomenon in webcomics, "... on a more serious note, when horrible people use insults like this, it's a power move. They're trying to control your emotions, hurt you, demean you. Don't let them. Laugh at them". This finding is in accordance with the early tradition of webcomics, namely the use of alt text as a unique characteristic to re-explain, emphasize, or complement the visual and textual messages featured in webcomics (Kogel, 2013).

In addition to the contrast presented in conveying messages between webcomics and Instagram captions, in the webcomics studied, some also use a similar nuance between webcomics and captions that are satirical and humorous nuances. In figure 3, the caption used is as if to invite

viewers or readers to sing along with the creator with the lyrics, “... double standaaaandaardss”, as well as re-explaining the phenomenon depicted in the webcomics. The relationship between webcomics and such captions can be interpreted as highlighting the importance of countering Islamophobia in a casual way because some of those people who seem to hate Islam or Muslims do not really hate them, but do not fully understand Muslims and their religion.

This is in accordance with the basic principle that has been used so far, that is “laughing at one’s own clichés” (Aguilera-Carnerero, 2019). However, at certain times, it is necessary to use a more assertive method in dealing with Islamophobic acts to show that Islamophobia is a serious problem that must be overcome together with showing serious commitment. Through Instagram, @yesimhotinthis manages the relationship between each webcomic and its caption in conveying a general message that counters Islamophobia. On several occasions, a contrasting nuanced approach is used between webcomics and captions, but there are times when these two elements are in harmony. In a multimodal perspective, this can be interpreted as what Barthes called “amplification between one aspect to another” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2002), which in this case is webcomics and Instagram captions.

Conclusion

The representation of countering Islamophobia depicted refers to the concept of equality and emphasizes the similarities rather than differences at the social level. The authors find at least three main depictions, namely the depiction of various Muslim realities as a minority, the depiction of inclusive Muslims, and the depiction that emphasizes equality.

In describing the various realities of Muslims as minorities, Muslims are not always positioned as winners in the face of Islamophobic behavior, because as a minority group who tends to be inferior, it is certainly not easy to face such behavior. There are moments when the minority group is at its lowest point, so support and help from others are needed. Through the depiction of the various realities of Muslims as minorities, @yesimhotinthis seems to convey the message that the fight against Islamophobia must continue while conveying to each Muslim

group, and even to other minority groups, that they are not alone in fighting against oppression and injustice.

As for the depiction of an inclusive Muslim, it is generally depicted through a regular Muslim figure or contrary to the depiction of Muslims in the Western media in general. In addition, sometimes the creator uses terminology or symbols that are close to the American culture as if to imply that American Muslims are also part of American society and even apply similar values, such as freedom in some social aspects.

Another depiction of countering Islamophobia, that is, the depiction that emphasizes equality, is mainly conveyed through the application of the concept of freedom through fashion. This is based on the stereotype that Muslim women's clothing are a form of restraint, an orthodox way of life, and backwardness. Thus, the fashion aspect through cloth colors, symbols, and terminology used in webcomics are used as a counter-narrative for these negative stereotypes.

In addition to the representation of countering Islamophobia, this study also analyzes how Instagram captions by @yesimhotinthis function as a platform for countering Islamophobia. The authors find that the way the creator uses Instagram regulates how the relationship between webcomics, which consists of visual and textual aspects in the form of conversations between characters, is strengthened using Instagram captions. Through a multimodal perspective, it was found that the creator used an approach with different nuances between these aspects. Often, webcomics are delivered through a satirical and humorous approach, but in contrast to what is shown in the caption, which seems to be serious. Although, in general, what is conveyed by both webcomics and captions are similar, but with different nuances, the authors interpret it as a concept and even a strategy used by creators in countering Islamophobia.

However, not all webcomics use a contrasting approach between webcomics and captions. Some of them also found that both webcomics and captions can be satirical and humorous. Thus, while the authors conclude that the concept or strategy is effective, and the best way to deal with this form of Islamophobia is through casual means, it is still necessary to emphasize that the phenomenon of Islamophobia is a serious problem. Or at least, this seriousness is the creator's effort in conveying her commitment to counter Islamophobia.

The findings of this study can broaden the understanding of representation theory, which explains that the most important thing in a representation system is that certain groups who have the same background will be able to produce and exchange meaning well (Hall, 2009). However, in the case of this study, the depiction of Muslims that is different from the general depiction in the media or Western society is bridged by the values held by these different groups of understanding, which in this case is the Western society in general. Thus, the experience of a different meaning still has the potential to be understood by different groups.

The authors also suggest future research, that should not only focus on one webcomic creator but can instead focus on multiple creators and conduct comparative analyses so that the results obtained are more comprehensive. Additionally, future research can implement multiple gender perspectives because this study only analyzes the representation of countering Islamophobia through the depiction of Muslims in general, although the object of the research studied mainly depicts female characters. In addition, the study only analyzed text and visuals, thus, future research can explore more modes in multimodal analysis, using a wider format, such as audio-visual.

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Coping Strategies IIUM Malay Undergraduate Students Adopted to Proceed with Online Learning during COVID-19

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Abstract: This study explores the coping strategies adopted by Malay undergraduate students at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) to proceed with online learning during COVID-19. The study employed a qualitative research approach and implemented face-to-face semi-structured interviews for data collection. Open-ended questions were utilized to enable participants to discuss their experiences freely. Using the purposive sampling technique, ten (10) IIUM undergraduates were selected, 6 females and 4 males, and all the participants were Malay students coming from Malaysia. The results of the study show that Malay undergraduate students could overcome difficulties while studying online by controlling the learning environment, communicating with someone and asking for help, writing a diary, and taking short breaks. This study is significant for showing the coping experiences of IIUM Malay students. It highlights how adopting certain mechanisms allowed them to proceed with online learning for more than two years throughout the challenging time of COVID-19, which negatively impacted a large number of students around the world. Practically, the coping strategies are applicable to students and academic organizations and can support them during challenging times that may threaten students' academic performance.

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Keywords: Environmental Control, Talking to Someone, Writing a Diary, Taking a Short Break, IIUM Undergraduates, COVID-19.

Background of the Study

In 2019, the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) spread all over the world. According to World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 has various symptoms, including a cough, fever, sore throat, and runny nose; 6,508,521 individuals lost their lives during the spread of the pandemic (Hashim et al., 2021). Globally, the new fatal disease has altered human routines and activities. Several countries closed their borders and companies, businesses, and even educational institutions suspended their activities in an effort to control the spread of the disease. Similar to other countries, Malaysians had to deal with the deadly pandemic (Shah et al., 2020). On March 18, 2020, the Malaysian government imposed a Movement Control Order (MCO) and mandated the shutdown of all sectors, including the educational sector (Ramli et al., 2020). Accordingly, all physical activities were suspended, and students stayed at home and shifted to online learning, where the entire teaching and learning process was delivered online (Gewin, 2020; Sia & Adamu, 2020). The new learning mode negatively affected students and governments, who struggled to provide adequate funding for universities to support online learning (Simamora, 2020), which strongly relied on technology and online resources (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020). It emerged as the best choice for continuing education throughout the COVID-19 period, allowing students and instructors to deliver course contents (Thanji & Vasantha, 2016).

According to Al-Marouf et al. (2020), the lockdown situation and online learning circumstances affected students' feelings toward academic lives and social relationships. Besides technological devices, online learning requires soft skills that educators, institutions, and organizations must possess (Hrastinski, 2008). However, the literature indicates that the rapid shift to online learning without sufficient preparations or instructions forced students to encounter difficulties that interfered with their learning process (Munir et al., 2021); as a result, they started to lose interest in studying.

Despite its advantages, there are several challenges associated with online learning. Previous research indicates that poor internet connection was one of the major barriers to an effective learning process. A study in Pakistan reported that inadequate internet connection resulted in poor learning experiences (Ullah et al., 2021). Another study highlighted that sluggish internet access made students struggle to listen to the lecture properly, and they lagged behind their classmates who had a good internet connection (Marco Jr & Dela Cruz, 2022; Alhamasees et al., 2021). Literature also showed that students in Malaysian public universities, especially those residing in rural areas, considered limited internet connection as a challenge affecting their regular class attendance (Mustapha et al., 2021). Besides intermittent and weak internet connection, the level of digital literacy or competence to use technology for learning was also a drawback. The unexpected shift to online learning made some students stand helpless, affecting their learning process (Nur Salina et al., 2020). Some students had old or unsupported devices, while others could not access learning materials provided by instructors (Mahyooob, 2020).

The financial strain imposed a real challenge for students to pay for expensive internet data or other essential study resources for effective studying (Amir et al., 2020). Apart from imposing financial burdens, online learning causes health problems. For example, Ullah et al. (2021) found that prolonged exposure to computer screens caused eye discomfort in certain students. Another study found that study load caused stress and anxiety among online learners (Irawan et al., 2020).

The limitation of learning space as experienced by students in the Philippines distracted them due to uncontrolled noise (Barrot et al., 2020). Similarly, a study conducted in Malaysia mentioned that environmental disturbances, like noise, made it difficult for students to have great learning experiences due to limited space at home (Kapasia et al., 2020). The family's financial status may prevent children from enjoying a private, comfortable place and learning environment. According to Nur Salina et al. (2020), the lockdown forced students to be at home and remain physically close to other family members. Nonetheless, research confirms that students had to face rising difficulties and adapt to the new learning style (Chung et al., 2020). Limited social interaction imposed another challenge on students as they had to remain physically separated and to stop enjoying face-

to-face communication (Alhamasees et al., 2021; Amir et al., 2020; Selvanathan et al., 2020). Physical isolation during learning caused misunderstanding and late feedback from students and their instructors and impacted academic assessments (Marco Jr & Dela Cruz, 2022).

Thus, the reviewed literature demonstrates that online learning involved some common challenges. However, students were expected to proceed with this learning mode as an alternative and cope with difficulties. A study found that there were specific strategies students employed depending on specific challenges and the relevance and availability of resources in their surroundings (Barrot et al., 2021). For this reason, the study investigated the coping mechanisms IIUM Malay undergraduates adopted to proceed with learning during COVID-19, highlighting to what extent employing these strategies helped them to deal with the challenges. In the context of this paper, coping strategies refer to the actions the students practised to overcome physical and emotional difficulties developed during online learning. As using effective coping strategies will be more resilient to physical and emotional obstacles, this paper explores the experiences of IIUM Malay students in adopting four coping mechanisms: controlling the learning environment, talking to someone and asking for help, writing a diary, and taking a short break for stress releasing activities.

Environmental Control

Environmental control means adjusting the surrounding physical learning environment. Environmental distractions hinder students' participation in class discussions (Li & Che, 2022). Therefore, a learning environment must be calm and roomy so students can concentrate better and learn in a comfortable setting (Kesor Aschenberger et al., 2022). However, being at home, students can be exposed to environmental noises and disturbances. According to Fransisco (2020), students cope with noises in their surroundings by relocating to another location. A conducive environment can be created by existing in a separate room for study because it can enhance students' concentration and motivation in learning (Kesor Aschenberger et al., 2022). Barrot et al. (2021) found that students tended to exist in a quiet learning environment at home even if they needed to study late at night while all family members were sleeping soundly. Similarly, Realyyasques-

Vargas et al. (2020) pointed out that having a designated room for studying helps to increase the academic performance of students since they can control the noises from disturbing them while studying. Thus, the literature shows that students tend to practice environmental control to secure a comfortable learning environment, which motivates them to continue their studies.

The findings of this study also found that most participants employed environmental control to avoid the noise that disturbed their learning. For example, they tended to wake up early while other family members were still asleep. Izzah, one of the participants, viewed that waking up early provided her with a chance to avoid noise and do her work peacefully.

“I did work related to my study early in the morning to avoid noise. Everyone was still sleeping, and that gave me peaceful moments to finish my work.”

Nat, another participant, also put herself in her bedroom to avoid noise while attending her online classes.

“I usually sat in the living room for most of the classes, but noises coming from the kitchen and my father, who used to have a meeting for his work at the same time, disturbed me. Therefore, I just stayed in my bedroom, which was quieter and helped me avoid being disturbed by noise and loud voices.”

Thus, IIUM Malay students controlled their learning environment to enjoy an effective learning experience, as they were aware that the disturbances that occurred in their surroundings, such as noise, would distract them from concentrating during the online class.

Talking to Someone and Asking for Help

Talking to others is a form of seeking social support, usually from family, friends, and close relatives. According to Chang et al. (2020), receiving social support from family reduces mental stress and, at the same time, works as an effective coping strategy for any stressful situation. It can be in the form of expressing or sharing problems with

others to obtain advice on dealing with burdens or problems rather than keeping them to one's self.

A study on students in Poland showed that the students used problem-focused coping and emotional coping as adaptation mechanisms to encounter challenges they faced (Babicka Wirkus, 2021). In another study, students sought assistance from family and friends via online platforms to feel more connected during COVID-19 (Son et al., 2020). Mai et al. (2021) and Baloran (2020) also showed that interactions with friends through discussions, communication, and sharing issues developed trust and friendship. That is because sharing a problem with someone can express feelings towards a stressful event. A study in India found that getting social support from peers was an effective coping strategy for facing challenges during COVID-19 (Majrashi et al., 2021). Support may extend to providing help with technology-related problems. In Oketch-Oboth's study (2021), the students pointed out that they borrowed a laptop from a friend or relative when needed. The same finding is consistent with another study conducted by Cahapay (2021) that the students who could not complete an online task on their own devices asked their peers to lend them gadgets to use for studying.

Similarly, many students in the present study considered talking with someone as an outlet to ease physiological burdens. They believed that it was not good to keep problems to themselves, so they frequently met their family and friends via video conferences to talk about critical issues related to their academic lives. For example, Qurr, one of the participants, stated:

"I believe it is better to share the problems I have with others instead of bottling them up. I talk to my friends, and sometimes family, about problems I have with my teammates. I'm the kind of person that needs to share my problems with others and receive feedback, and any feedback is good for me."

Fia also shared her problems with her mother. In this regard, she said:

“I talked to my parents, especially my mom, whenever I felt stressed or down. I always share my problems with her, and she always motivates and pushes me.”

The participants also received physical support when they had problems with their devices. Khai mentioned that he asked his neighbor to borrow a laptop.

“My neighbour’s friend lived opposite my house. He is a student. I usually borrowed his laptop for my study when he did not use it during that time.”

Besides that, when the students had weak or interrupted internet connection, they asked their parents to use hotspots from them. Sha, a participant, explained this support in her words, saying:

“I used mobile data for an internet connection, but it was limited. I usually asked for help from my father to connect to the internet via his use hotspot account.”

Thus, asking for social, material, and emotional support was a coping approach that made the students feel that they were never alone. Having a conversation with someone helped them release stress instead of keeping their concerns to themselves.

Writing a Diary

Writing a diary is a kind of expressive writing that some students use as a coping strategy to reduce anxiety, especially when it includes positive wording and insight (Shen et al., 2018). Expressive writing can help students end a stressful day on a positive note, making them feel more relaxed and calmer. According to a study on nursing students, those who wrote a diary during their first clinical trial felt less anxious than those who did not (Goodman & Henry, 2019). Robertson et al. (2021) concluded that by writing about their experiences and emotions, students’ anxiety levels could be reduced. Through expressive writing, they find an outlet to express their feelings about what they have been through, and in the end, this helps them to gain a clear mind. Another study showed that using writing as a coping process by students who

faced challenges related to their study resulted in effective relief (Pennebaker & Evans, 2014) and reduced academic stress, making students more comfortable and relieved (Argudo, 2021).

Similarly, writing a diary proved to be an effective coping strategy in the present study. The participants pointed out that expressive writing allowed them to express their feelings and experiences. They viewed that it created inner peace and helped in comforting their minds. For the Malay IIUM undergraduates, writing a diary was a source of motivation to keep studying online. Min, one of the participants, described writing a diary as his coping mechanism strategy. In this regard, he commented:

“In my diary, I write motivational sentences that maintain my enthusiasm for learning. For example, I will write ‘kau dah buat yang terbaik’ (you have done your best).”

Fia also had the habit of writing a diary to cope with the challenges of online learning, which made her overthink or feel anxious,

“I started the habit of writing a diary whenever I overthought or felt anxious. I wrote in the diary to express my feelings, and I could see that it helped me be less preoccupied with my problems.”

Thus, writing a diary was identified as a technique that assisted the students in coping with the obstacles of online learning. They wrote about daily events, and it was seen that writing allowed them to express themselves and gain motivation and excitement for learning.

Taking a Short Break

Taking a short break means suspending academic work for a short time. It is a self-coping strategy that is proven to release stress (Yasmin et al., 2020). According to Blasche et al. (2018), having a break from academic duties enhanced motivation and enthusiasm among students and made them more relaxed after the break. Having a break also decreases fatigue. Students can engage in relaxing or physical activities (Son et al., 2020). Rotas and Cahapay (2021) found that students dealt with the difficulties of online learning by

refocusing their attention from academic-related activities to leisure pursuits like watching movies or gardening. In another study by Kwaah and Essilfie (2017), it was mentioned that self-distractions like watching movies and listening to music are the second most common coping mechanisms used during online learning after meditation. However, in some cases, students take a break to escape the academic workload and engage in creative activities such as music and painting (Chandra, 2020). They can also watch a movie, listen to music, or play a video game. Therefore, a short escape from academic matters can energize students and improve their performance and well-being when encountering a stressful situation.

Likewise, taking a short break was one of the coping mechanisms used by all IIUM Malay undergraduates in the current study. They tended to suspend studying for a while and rest. However, they differed on the types of entertainment they engaged in. Dam, for example, stopped studying and entertained himself by watching movies and listening to music.

“I used to forget about my study for a while. I spent time sleeping, binge-watching movies, or listening to music.”

Riff preferred to play video games.

“During the online classes, there was also a long period of lockdown, and that created a stressful situation for me as I could not go out. I took a short break from studying to play video games.”

Thus, the students believed that taking a short break would boost their energy. For this reason, they took it as a coping strategy to deal with stressful situations during online learning.

The previous sections presented the coping strategies that IIUM undergraduates consciously adopted to overcome the physical and psychological challenges while experiencing online learning during COVID-19. For most of the students, online learning was described as challenging. It was clear that they were aware of the problems that developed during the new learning mode, so they applied what they felt were appropriate methods of dealing with the problems. The

common strategies they adopted included controlling the learning environment, talking to someone and asking for help, writing a diary, and taking a short break.

Discussion

According to Folksman and Tedlie (2004), as cited in Algorani and Gupta (2021), coping is how an individual manages stressful events occurring internally or externally, either through thoughts or behaviours. This study presented the coping mechanisms that IIUM Malay undergraduates adopted to overcome the challenges they faced during online learning, as shown in Figure1 below.

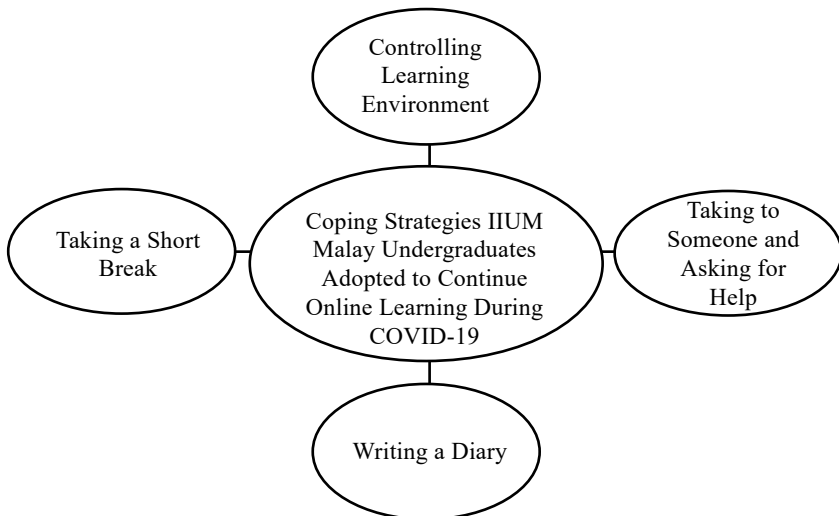


Figure 1: Research Design on Coping Strategies IIUM Malay Undergraduates Adopted to Continue Online Learning During COVID-19

The students controlled their learning environment because they wanted to avoid noise and distractions to secure an optimal place for studying. Some students moved to a separate room, while others woke up early and studied while the rest of the family slept. This finding is consistent with the results of a study conducted by Keser Aschenberger

et al. (2022), who stated that improving students' concentration and motivation for learning can come through environmental control, which is creating a conducive environment; for example, staying in a separated study area.

To understand the coping strategies used by IIUM students, it had become a habit to wake early even before the pandemic, to prepare themselves for morning classes. Hence, they chose to continue with this kind of habit during online learning as they encountered several challenges that distracted them from learning during class. Accordingly, they used a familiar coping strategy to do everything related to their studying that fit their current situation.

Besides, having a conversation and asking for help from close people can make individuals feel better as they express their thoughts and problems (Yasmin et al., 2020). Similar to the participants in the current study, having a conversation with their friends or family concerning their problems is a better option for the participants rather than keeping it to themselves. Seeking help from close friends or people in the surrounding can be helpful in every challenge encountered by the students. Majrashi et al. (2021) agreed that asking for and receiving help from friends was an effective coping strategy that can be used for different challenges during COVID-19. It should be noted that talking with friends and asking for help is a normal practice among IIUM students during their physical learning, and it has become part of the culture at IIUM through exchanging ideas, things, and belongings. Unconsciously, students practiced the same method as their coping strategies during COVID-19 time.

Moreover, expressive writing was also found as an effective coping strategy for reducing stress and anxiety (Shen et al., 2018; Argudo, 2021). Writing a positive sentence and motivational word, for example, helps in reducing the level of anxiety among students. The participants in this study employed coping strategies through journaling their day in a diary and having motivational and spirit sentences to develop their motivation and enhance their enthusiasm for online learning. For IIUM students, expressive writing using motivational expressions was habitual during physical learning. They noticed having notice boards in their rooms to boost their motivation for learning when feeling

gloomy. Hence, expressive writing effectively boosts one's spirit with new motivation to keep on going without looking back to the past.

Other than that, taking a short break through entertainment was found to be one of the coping strategies among the participants, such as enjoying a movie or playing a video game. Referring to Dam and Riff's situation, both used coping strategies in taking a short break through entertainment, such as watching a movie and playing a video game. A study by Yasmin et al. (2020) mentioned that it is encouraged to take a break to release stress due to the workload of academic life. A previous study has found that having a break from academic-related issues enhances the motivation and enthusiasm among students to continue learning (Blasche et al., 2018). It is important to mention that before COVID-19, IIUM students used to cope with stress and escape from academic pressure by hanging out with their friends, going to the park, and engaging in outdoor activities within IIUM. However, to deal with stressful conditions during COVID-19, they adopted new coping activities such as watching a movie, listening to music, or playing computer games to maintain enthusiasm and lessen stress and anxiety, which affected their academic performance.

Conclusion

This study explored the coping strategies adopted by IIUM Malay undergraduates to deal with the challenges they encountered while studying online during COVID-19. They adopted various mechanisms to motivate them to maintain their academic performance, especially during the pandemic, as fear, uncertainty, and anxiety took over one's emotions. The coping strategies included controlling the learning environment, talking to someone close about their problems and asking for help, writing a diary, and taking a short break. Even though the study investigated the significant experience of online learning, it has certain drawbacks. It was based on a small sample size and included IIUM Malay students studying at AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences. Therefore, future research should involve more Malaysian and international students from various faculties to examine different experiences of adopting coping techniques.

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Book Review

March, Andrew. (2019). *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press.

by Makmor Tumin

Any study of modern politics is impertinent without the study of power, and any study of modern political power is incomplete without looking at how it has been used and abused. The question is, “Where did the power come from?”, or “What is the source of the power?” Political theorists use the concept of God’s sovereignty and people’s sovereignty to answer these questions. The former explains that the government is only legitimate if God’s law is the source of power, while the latter points to the idea of democratic government where the people’s consent should be the source of government power; hence the policy must be people-driven. Such exposition implies that any attempt to understand politics requires an understanding of the law and constitution, regardless whether at times of peace or war.

The current civil wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions in some countries in the Middle East and North Africa [MINA], commonly known as the Arab Spring, invites many scholars to provide diagnosis and prognosis on the event, and Andrew March is one of them. In his book, *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought*, March explored the theory of democracy in Islam focusing, in the later part of his work, on Rached Ghannouchi’s works (an intellectual and political leader in Tunisia), where he examined the concept of sovereignty of God versus sovereignty of the people or ummah in Islam.

March attempted to trace the origin and development of the concept of *khalifah* through his reading of the exegetical interpretation of the Quran and how classical Muslim scholars interpreted the concept of sovereignty, pondering on the term *khalifah* and bringing it down to the concept of “the Caliphate of Man” as per the first part of the title of the book.

He made an attempt to imply that first, people are sovereign, hence, the hypothesis of dualistic sovereignty is possible in Islam. He ended his book by foreseeing future Islamic political thought as post-sovereignty and post-state. These phrases require serious unpacking, for the reason that Muslims cannot be detached from the concept of God’s sovereignty although the concept of the establishment of the Islamic State may be debatable. Hence, to review his book, it is important to explain some important aspects of Western political philosophy such as the Rawlsian and Benthamite concept of sovereignty.

Rousseau’s “Take men as they are and laws as they might be” implies that sovereignty is the power of the elective people to decide and follow their will. His Benthamite pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding are the rules that guide human decision. They are the two sovereign masters, and the only law that guides creatures. While the importance of the Rousseauian and Benthamite doctrines in guiding many Western thinkers and analysts cannot be doubted, especially the concept of the people’s sovereignty and to some extent, the two sovereign masters, sovereignty in the Muslim world is sourced from the other World. It is commonly expressed as metaphysics in the West (from the God), in which this world is nothing except a test for mankind. This implies that the general will should be understood as a will to avoid making errors and the pleasure and pain should be understood as seeking the pleasure of the Almighty God and avoiding the pain for failing His tests. Hence, it is dangerously nonsensical for Muslims to succumb to the concept of people’s sovereignty brought by the Rousseauian and Benthamite doctrines, to highlight a few.

Undoubtedly, March had successfully managed to provide details about the invention of what he called popular sovereignty in modern Islamic thought, mostly within the Sunni line, believing that many thinkers were already ascribed to the idea of sovereignty, mindful of

the political, historical, and institutional contexts in which Islamic political thought has developed as he navigated the concept.

But what seems to be puzzling about him is that despite admitting that the idea of popular sovereignty was largely a matter of a kind of power sharing between various elites or experts amongst people or a majority of people, he seems to also try to persuade the readers as if the idea of sovereignty in the West is potentially applied in the Muslim world. His first premise is that if popular sovereignty is an important commitment for modern Islamic thinkers, it requires inventing, which he assumes that Islam at less gradually does support a form of popular sovereignty that is understood in the West. He claims that there are indeed resources, particularly within the Sunni thought such as that espoused by Ghannouchi, that makes certain aspects of popular sovereignty easier to accept or justify.

For the purpose of this review, I shall only give focus on Chapter two and six only for a simple reason; the other chapters which touch on thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb and Abul A'la Maududi have already been discussed by others in separate works in different light or from various perspectives. His book is not only about political theory, but also on constitutional theory, in which in Chapter two, he had made a brave venture into several Qurānic verses that refer to God's appointment of a "Caliph on earth". In my opinion, since in this chapter he developed the framework of his analysis, the reliability and validity of his argument very much depends on the strength of the frame he employed. It is true that he has demonstrated his ability to dive deeper into exegetical debates, arguing the concept of *khalifah*, including bringing to the surface Hassan al-Basri's understanding over the meaning of the concept and attempted to examine how it differs from that of other scholars such as at-Tabari. However, how is March so sure that the concept of *khalifah* which he observed through the lens of analytical philosophy is similar to the ones understood by the Muslim scholars which are mostly at spiritual doctrine and metaphysical levels, let alone conforms to the meaning of metaphysicality itself?

Even within the Western philosophy itself, analytical philosophy's approach towards truth differs from the continental approach. When Kant talked about heteronomy versus autonomy, he had an idea of rationality, in which beyond this world i.e., at the metaphysical level,

there exists an independent rationality, where all human beings are rich to the point of people being the authors of their own law. Such concept is not only alien in Islam but also contradicts the religion for a simple reason; the metaphysical realm in the Islamic concept is a divine space and it is a space for those who are at their best spirituality.

Using such approach with Rousseauian and Kantian taste, he branched his analysis in Chapters three, four, and five, explaining how the concept of the sovereignty of God and popular sovereignty in modern Islamic thought echoed throughout Islamic political history in some countries as well as how the potential concept of popular sovereignty might gradually surface or emerge. Through his discussions, it can be understood that the current idea related to popular sovereignty began to emerge in the 19th century, particularly within what is sometimes referred to as the Arab “Awakening” (*al-Nahḍa*). The Young Ottoman reform movements were clouded or overshadowed by the constitutional theory during this period brought by the Ottoman caliphate. Ideological innovations were to follow this period, particularly the reinterpretation of the Qurānic verses that refer to God’s appointment of a “Caliph on earth”.

It is in Chapter six he discussed about his personal intellectual communication with Rached Ghannouchi, a contemporary Muslim thinker who, according to him, represents the Muslim contemporary political thought as a whole. Ghannouchi’s political idea can probably be best understood by looking at his three ideal types of government: theocratic, Western rule of law and Islamic democracy. In his idea, Islamic democracy is a synthesis of dual sovereignty, in which this world must follow the primary source of law (God’s law). However, it does not mean that the secondary source of law (human law) does not operate.

From his understanding of Ghannouchi’s work, he came to the following conclusion:

Ghannouchi represents the theorization of a distinct form of regime type, Islamic democracy, and reveals assumptions that moral unity and collective virtue makes it possible to theorize a sovereign people governing itself while remaining committed to upholding God’s ultimate sovereignty.

However, I am not certain whether Ghannouchi himself agrees with such a conclusion, knowing that his strong principal of rejecting the immorality of beings that are materialistic pleasure-seekers and pain-avoiders. After all, when the Muslims talk about will, it is a will to avoid making errors to seek the pleasure of the Almighty God. This review is supplemented with another three important points:

1. I must admit that I am impressed with March's efforts and his ability to dive deeper in understanding the concept of *khalifah*, which I myself am only aware of its significance after reading his book. The concept of *khalifah* in the Quran could only be best explained with its supplementary material, which is of course the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) sayings. In fact, Muslims would only understand the meaning of the Quran through the words, actions, and behaviors of the Prophet. To make his work more comprehensive, may be March can consider looking at how the concept of "the Caliphate of Man" is discussed in other sources of Islam as well.
2. It is quite surprising that he did not explain the concept of the divine rights of kings even though he probably does not support the claim of having two sovereign masters of pleasure and pain. At least by promoting such an understanding that in the West, the monarchs can argue on the divine sources if they can claim their lineage to King David, so that they might have a legitimacy of sovereignty to govern. Monarchs or kings are still one of the important political institutions in some Arab countries. March can perhaps expand the genre of obligation or obedience towards the ruler in Islam, which is dominant especially if we were to follow the hadith under the authority and legacy of Abdullah Ibn Umar (r.a.). The revolutions and counter-revolutions in the Muslim world is a huge tidal wave, and it must be understood that there always exist opposing sides among scholars of Islam and this dialectic must be understood.
3. In my opinion, March is Habermasian when he tried to employ a communicative rationality approach so that each claim of truth (between him and Rached Ghannouchi) can be debated and negotiated. Since we do not know what Ghannouchi's claim is, it is very hard to make a judgement on what he exactly tried to

explain when we are not a part of the communicative rationality process. If in his earlier work on the overlapping consensus March employed a Rawlsian approach, in my opinion, in the rest of this book he employed a Habermasian approach while continue to flag the Rawlsian legacy. His work could be regarded exhaustive and encyclopedic, but political Islamists might perceive his liberal visions about the future Islamic political thought as “post-sovereigntist” and “post-statist”, which might carry nonsensicality. This is so partly due to the statement implying that the metaphysical elements of sovereignty, be it divine or popular, must be left out from the equation, stripping the intended idea of Islam in an Islamic democracy and giving signs that the idea of an Islamic state in the post-metaphysical era at best should be suspected.

All in all, it is an excellent book demonstrating March’s knowledge in both the Western and Islamic Political Thought.