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# CONTENTS

# Editorial

This December 2023 issue of IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies consists of various topics among which Islamic philosophy and ideas, Islamic history and civilisation are the main focus. Additionally, other issues of interest include Malay historiography and the political history of Myanmar.

"Major Trends in the Study of Malay Statecraft since 1900" by Mohamad Hazizie bin Sulkafle dwells on the issue of Malay statecraft or *ketatanegaraan Melayu* outlined in the existing Malay literature dated back in the early 20th century until the present day. Taking the approach of a historiographical study, the author assesses the various elements and trends of Malay statecraft illustrated in the so-called "Mirrors for Princes" literature in particular, with *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* paving the way for such a discourse, as well as Malay *hikayat* and legal texts. Amidst the claim by some quarters that the past Malay society and rulers were bound by repressive and regressive feudal traditions to explain the intervention into their state affairs by Western colonialists, this study provides a proof of the developed state of the Malay society and the existence of a systematic and workable political system. That said, as acknowledged by the author, more studies are needed to redefine the scope and frameworks for Malay statecraft as a discipline of knowledge so that it remains relevant to the prevalent political system in Malaysia, which to some extent, is a continuation of the past Malay tradition.

The second article by Muhammad Mumtaz Ali "The Transformation of Islamic Studies: An Ethical and Methodological Analysis" seeks to re-evaluate the scope and methodological aspects of Islamic Studies as a discipline on the basis of the comprehensiveness of Islam as a religion for all, regardless of time and space. Against the common inclination to treat Islamic Studies

as a subject matter that is related to merely Muslim communities and Islam, the author argues that the discipline should encompass world realities touching the lives of people of various backgrounds by presenting Islam within a broader cultural and civilisational context. To affect this, the author proposes Muslim scholars to follow 10 universal principals in accordance with the True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK) concept after which process, they can educate people for a better and balanced development by adopting the true worldview and the right way of life as enjoined by the religion, Islam.

There have been many changes in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic, one being the large number of orphans arising from the COVID-10 deaths. The next article, "Emerging Social *Waqf* Model for the Welfare of Pandemic Orphans" by Saheed Busari tackles the possibility of implementing social *waqf* as a social intervention to care for the pandemic orphans. The author first discusses the concept of *waqf*, followed by some Islamic guidelines for fostering orphans through *kafala* (custody), contributions of *waqf* to social sustainability, and finally a *waqf* model which involves various groups and parties such as social workers, foster care families, etc. Given the growing concern due to numerous socio-economic problems prevalent in the contemporary society, and the endless debate on the relevancy of Islamic ideas and concepts in the present-day issues, it is timely that the idea of social *waqf* be given attention for the benefit of unfortunate members of the society.

"In Awe of the Holy City: Mecca in the Eyes of Five Medieval Travellers" brings readers to the historical past of the holy city of Mecca as perceived by five renowned world travellers among whom include Ibn Battuta and di Varthema. Set against the backdrop of Mecca during the 11th until 16th centuries, the article written by Aditya Pratama Widodo and Alwi Alatas narrates the lasting impacts that Mecca had on the minds of both the Muslim and non-Muslim travelers, as documented in their travelogues, having experienced for themselves the life in the city for a certain period of time. In short, their works describe mainly the socio-religious and economic conditions in Mecca, depicting the land, the people and their way of life. True to its status as a holy city, the authors highlight how

majority of the travelers, despite some untoward challenges and difficulties encountered during their journey or while they were there, found Mecca to be a magnificent city, well above others in the Arabian Peninsula.

"Unveiling Historical Trajectory and Civilisational Evolution: A Comparative Examination through the Lenses of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler" by Zhilwan Tahir and Abdulwahed Jalal Nori compares the views of a 14th century Muslim historian, Ibn Khaldun and those of 20th century German scholar, Oswald Spengler with regards to the rise and fall of civilisations. The findings indicate among others, a few similarities in their views such as the cyclical pattern of history as well as several differences for instance, their interpretations of historical events and the causal factors for the growth of civilisations. This interesting comparison of ideas extracted from *Muqaddimah* and *The Decline of the West* is noteworthy in view of the great influence that both scholars had on the understandings held by the later and contemporary historians. Nonetheless, as rightly pointed out by the authors, the socio-economic and political contexts of the scholars' views need to be taken into consideration to prevent oversimplifying historical past and the evolution of human society.

The next article written by Amirah Syuhada binti Shahruddin and Fauziah Fathil, "The Power Struggle between the Military Junta and Democracy in Myanmar" explores post-independent political history of Myanmar focusing on the continuous struggle between the military junta or Tatmadaw and the democratic people of Myanmar. Starting with the country's political history prior to Western colonial rule, the discussion continues with Myanmar under British and how their policies partly contributed to political problems in the later period which saw the ascendancy of Myanmar's military forces to power by the 1960's. The democratic movement exemplified in the formation of the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi, and their conflict with the military junta formed the center of the discussion with issues like ethnic division of Myanmar and the British legacy of 'divide and rule' deemed as among the primary reasons for conflict. A special discussion on the

ethnic of Rohingyas as part in parcel of the ethnic-related problems in Myanmar is briefly deliberated in the article.

Finally, a book review by Makmor Tumin based on the work of Idris Zakaria, *The Summary of Islamic Political Thought* (*Ikhtisar Pemikiran Politik Islam*) (published in 2019 by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kuala Lumpur) deals with the spread of Western political philosophy especially Greek, in the Muslim world, focusing on mainly the thoughts of two prominent Muslim scholars, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. A former professor of theology and political philosophy, the author of the book, further points out the need for Muslim government and society of today to learn political philosophy expounded by both scholars. Makmor Tumin's take of the work entails a few observations; while it is still necessary to acknowledge the influence of Greek ideas on Muslim scholars, in today's context, more heed needs to be given to the views of Muslim scholars in response to contemporary issues such as liberalism. Moreover, other Western strains of thought that influenced Muslim thinkers and worth looking into are Rawlsian and Habermasian, and that attention should also be given to non-Sunni scholars in the field of political philosophy apart from those belong to the Sunni group.

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 and benefit readers and students 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, Associate Editor Dr. Alwi Alatas, and Assistant Editor Sr. Norliza Saleh, without whose efforts and dedication, the publication of this issue will not become a reality. Thank you.

**Fauziah Fathil**
**Editor-in-Chief**
**December 2023**

# Major Trends in the Study of Malay Statecraft Since 1900

## Mohamad Hazizie bin Sulkafle[1]

**Abstract:** This study aims to make a comprehensive survey on the existing literature related to Malay statecraft (*ketatanegaraan*) and the relevant studies that have been conducted and published in Malaya (then Malaysia) since 1900. Statecraft is related to the legitimacy and the idea and concept of the sovereignty of the ruler as understood and practised within the Malay society. Through this historiographical survey, this study has identified several major trends or approaches adopted by scholars in studying Malay statecraft. Among the trends that have been identified is studying Malay statecraft based on the specific genre of "Mirrors for Princes" literature. This trend was later expanded by studying the elements of statecraft that existed in Malay historical narratives, *hikayat* (folktale) and legal texts. These scholars have significantly contributed to enrich the materials in this field and were able to establish Malay statecraft studies as a distinguished field of study. Regardless, it has been identified that several aspects need to be improved and focused on by scholars to further widen the scopes and strengthen Malay statecraft studies. Hence, this study calls for the redefinition of scopes and frameworks for Malay statecraft studies to ensure its sustainability and relevancy in the contemporary era.

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## Introduction

The study of Malay statecraft, or *ketatanegaraan Melayu*, is one of the important topics in Malay studies. Studies in this field began with specific works on the statecraft genre or "Mirror for Rulers" literature in the corpus of traditional Malay literature, such as *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*. This trend continued for several decades until the discovery of several other works, such as *Adab Raja-Raja*, *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*, *Kitab Nasihat Raja-raja* and *Kitab Kumpulan Lekas Berbetulan Lekas*. The trend later expanded its scope by extending the discussion on works that have certain aspects of statecraft, such as Malay *hikayat* (folktale) and historical narratives. More recently, there have been efforts to further expand the scope by including Malay legal laws as part of the study of Malay statecraft.

Hence, this study aims to have an in-depth discussion on the historiographical development of trends in the study of *ketatanegaraan* or statecraft in Malaya (then Malaysia) since the early 20th century until the present day. In 1900, the earliest known study in this field was published by R. J. Wilkinson (1900). It is also important to note that only published works will be discussed in this study, including books, journal articles and paper presentations published as conference proceedings. M.A dissertations and PhD theses will not be included, except in cases where they have been published as a book. This limitation is important to keep the discussion focused and only highlight the important literature on this subject.

This study also aims to redefine the framework and scope of the study for *ketatanegaraan Melayu* or Malay statecraft. Towards the end of the discussion, this study will answer whether this field can and should be confined to the specific works of *Adab ketatanegaraam* or "Mirrors for Rulers" (such as *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* and *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*) or whether it can be expanded to other traditional Malay literature (such as historical writings and *hikayat*) and important and historical documents from and related to palaces (such as Malay legal texts, letters and *surat kuasa*). This redefinition is important in order to make this field of study continue to be relevant and related to the contemporary society. It also will shed further understanding on the concept of state and government as practiced by the Malay society in the past, and prove that Malay society is not

as regressive and uncivilised as claimed by certain groups of people, especially the colonial officers in the past.

### *Ketatanegaraan* and Statecraft

Before the discussion begins, it is important to understand the definition and framework of *ketatanegaraan* adopted in this study. Jelani Harun's definition of *ketatanegaraan* is adopted and expanded as the framework for this study:

> [It is] a work about the state and statecraft, concentrating on principles for the guidance for rulers in carrying out their duties, a genre which is most identical to that of "Mirrors for Princes" in Islamic literature. (Jelani Harun, 2008, p. 91)

Jelani Harun's framework is further complemented by Mohd Taib Osman's framework, which states that *ketatanegaraan* is related to the legitimacy, idea and concept of the sovereignty of the ruler as understood and practised within the Malay society. It is also related to the willingness of the people in accepting the ruler's legitimacy and sovereignty (Osman, 2015).

What can be summarised here is that *ketatanegaraan* involves two aspects. The first aspect is the ideological and philosophical dimension, which involves: (a) the idea and concept of justice and ruler's legitimacy and sovereignty; (b) the ideal characters and responsibilities of the ruler and state officials and; (c) the advice to the ruler and state officials to govern the people with justice. Meanwhile, the second aspect is on the technical or practical dimension that concerns the structure and hierarchy of power and administration in the government to ensure the smooth running of the state and the well-being of the people. As discussed below, the majority of the studies on Malay statecraft are more concerned about the first aspect, which is the dimension of ideology and philosophy. Hence, it is the aim of this study to suggest a new approach that will cover both dimensions.

Accordingly, the closest term or the equivalent to *ketatanegaraan* is "statecraft", which can be defined as "the art of conducting state affairs" and "the skill of governing a country". (Statecraft, n.d.). Hence, the term "statecraft", which is adopted in this study, only refers

to these two literal definitions and excludes any conceptual, theoretical and philosophical discussion on this term, such as in political theory and international relations.

### The Genesis of the Study of Malay Statecraft: *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*

Written in Aceh in 1603, *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is regarded as the earliest work on statecraft in the Malay world. Also known as *The Crown of Kings*, this book is divided into 24 chapters. Bukhari al-Jauhari wrote it for the Sultan of Aceh, Sultan Alauddin Ri'ayat Shah Sayyid al-Mukammil (1588-1604). It is interesting to note that the Dutch in Netherlands East Indies (modern-day Indonesia) highly regarded this book and even instructed their officials to read it (Bukhari al-Jauhari, 1992: xii). Even Abdullah Munshi (1981) acknowledged its importance and recommended Malay rulers to read it. The first to study *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* was R. O. Winstedt in 1920. Meanwhile, the first complete Malay edition of *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* was edited by Khalid M. Hussein in 1966, and this edition has since been widely used in Malaysia. It is interesting to note that there is a kind of renewed interest in the study of *Taj al-Salatin* in recent years, which has brought new perspectives to its study. Among them are articles written by Wan Zainal Kamaruddin Wan Ali (2016, 2019), Syed Farid Alatas (2018), Azhar Ibrahim (2018), Basian Zulyeno (2018), Khairul Azman Suhaimy et al. (2018) and Awang Sariyan (2019).

Thirty eight years after the writing of *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, another statecraft literature emerged in the Sultanate of Aceh, which is titled *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*, also known as *Garden of Kings*. It was written in 1638 and completed in 1641 by Sheikh Nuruddin al-Raniri, the *Qādi al-Malik al-'Ādil*, or Chief Judge of Aceh Sultanate, during the era of Sultan Iskandar Thani (1637-1641) (Auni Haji Abdullah, 2015). This expansive work consists of seven volumes, combining statecraft, history and other miscellaneous topics, such as wisdom, knowledge and medicine. According to Jelani Harun (2008), these seven volumes or books can be divided into: (a) universal history in Books I-II and; (b) adab writing in Books III-VII.

The first study on *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* in Malaya was done by R. J. Wilkinson in 1900 and followed by R. O. Winstedt in 1920. Later publications on *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* were done by Teuku Iskandar in 1966, which was later revised by Siti Hawa Haji Salleh in 1992, Russel Jones in 1974 and Naseer Sobree in 2017. However, these publications only involved certain books and chapters from *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*. Another interesting study on *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* can also be found in an article written by Hashim Ismail (1999). This article is based on two frameworks: (a) the general conception of the Malay people regarding the sovereignty of the rulers in their philosophical thought, worldview, cultural and socio-political setting and; (b) how their thoughts, conceptions and worldview were understood and interpreted by Nuruddin al-Raniri in *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*. Another article written by Nor Ashikin Md Noor and Salmah Jan Noor Muhammad (2017) provides an interesting discussion on the status of *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* as one of the important works on statecraft in the Malay world.

Additionally, the important contributions of Jelani Harun on the contemporary study of *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* must be acknowledged. He first pursued this study for his PhD thesis, which was completed in 1999 and later published in 2008 as *Bustan al-Salatin: A Malay Mirror for Rulers*. It is not exaggerated to claim that this book is the most comprehensive study on *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* until today. His contributions to the study of *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* was further strengthened through the publication of several other books and articles (Harun, 2004; 2006; 2008; 2019).

## Entering the New Phase: Other Statecraft Literature in the Malay-Indonesian World

The studies in this genre have further diversified since the 1990s, with the emergence of newly discovered literature, such as: (a) *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* (*Nasihat kepada Raja-Raja*) (ca. 1700); (b) *Adab Raja-Raja*, written in the first half of the 19th century; (c) *Muqaddimah fi Intizam Waza'if al-Malik* (1856); (d) *Thamarat al-Muhimmah* (1857) by Raja Ali Haji; (e) *Kitab Nasihat Raja-raja*, written by Syeikh Duyong for Sultan Zainal Abidin III of Terengganu (1881-1918); (f) *Kitab Nasihat Segala Raja-Raja*, also known as *Sahibul Kitab Sultan Zainal Abidin* (1883); (g) *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas* (1910) by Raja

Haji Ali and; (h) *Nasihat Bagi Segala Raja-Raja* (1863) by Tuan Haji Muhammad Tayyib bin Mas'ud al-Banjari.

*Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, also known as *Nasihat kepada Raja-Raja*, which belonged to Imām al-Ghazāli, was written in Farsi between 1105 and 1111 for Sultan Muḥammad ibn Malikshah from the Saljuq Dynasty. Although this work was not originally produced in the Malay world, its Malay translation was available in 1700 when a copy of it was acquired by James Walker from one copyist named Haji Ismail. This copy is currently available at the University of Edinburgh under the code name MS Dc.6.73-74 (Jelani Harun, 2006). This manuscript was the reference material for Jelani Harun's edition of *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*, published in 2006, which is also referred to in this discussion.

Not much study was done on *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* since it was not originally written in Malay or written in the Malay Archipelago. However, its existence in the Malay world is still important since it provides some insight into the intellectual activities during that time It is important to note that since it was translated into Malay in 1700, the arrival of the original work must be much earlier than that, perhaps as early as the 1600s, when interest in the writing of statecraft literature already took place in 1603 (*Tāj al-Salāṭīn*) and 1641 (*Bustan al-Salāṭīn*). It can be postulated that both Bukhari al-Jauhari and Syeikh Nuruddin al-Raniri referred to this work as one of their sources. The Malay translation of this work also signifies the interest of the Malay masses, particularly the rulers and aristocrats, in reading this valuable work. More importantly, this work has attracted one contemporary young scholar, Fazril Salleh (2018), to summarise it and extract its important points for leadership guidance among youth movements in the contemporary world.

The discourse on statecraft was further enriched with the discovery of *Adab Raja-Raja*'s manuscript in Sri Lanka by a team of researchers from the National Library of Malaysia. This manuscript was eventually brought home in 1985. The first one to study this manuscript was Asma Ahmat (1994). According to her analysis, the title of *Adab Raja-Raja* was not the exact title of this manuscript since the manuscript did not have any title. It had been mistakenly labelled as *Adab Raja-Raja* by the National Library of Malaysia because the phrase "*Adab Raja-Raja*" on its first page was referring to one of the sources of reference,

not its title. However, she still accepted the title of *Adab Raja-Raja*, considering the content of this manuscript is on statecraft and ethics. A further comprehensive study on *Adab Raja-Raja* was done in 2006 by Mohd Taib Osman, a renowned scholar on Malay studies.

Other statecraft literature in the list include *Muqaddimah fi Intizam Waza'if al-Malik* and *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*, which were written by Raja Ali Haji in 1856 and 1857 respectively. Among the earliest to study both works were Mahdini for *Thamarat al-Muhimmah* and Elmustian Rahman for *Muqaddimah fi Intizam Waza'if al-Malik*. Mahdini (1999) stated that there are three responsibilities that must be fulfilled by the state or rulers, according to *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*. These three responsibilities are: (a) to uphold justice; (b) to implement the laws and; (c) to ensure peace. Meanwhile, Elmustian Rahman (1999) in his article has provided a brief historical background of the writing of this work. Eventually, the first Malaysian to study both works as statecraft literature was Khalif Muammar A. Harris (2015; 2016; 2019) in several of his works.

Both *Muqaddimah fi Intizam Waza'if al-Malik* and *Thamarat al-Muhimmah* are significant as they were written at the time when the Sultanate of Riau-Lingga was facing numerous threats, particularly from the Dutch. Hence, to strengthen the sultanate and ensure its survival, Raja Ali Haji referred to these two works as guidance and a reminder for both the ruler and the aristocrats (Khalif Muammar, 2016). More interestingly, Khalif Muammar (2016) noted the continuity of tradition in the writing of statecraft literature when some parts of these two works showed some similarities with *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*. However, Raja Ali Haji did not explicitly mention both works among his sources of reference.

The discussion proceeds with two works that belonged to the Sultanate of Terengganu. These two works are *Kitab Nasihat Raja-Raja* and *Kitab Nasihat Segala Raja-Raja*, the latter also known as *Sahibul Kitab Sultan Zainal Abidin*. *Kitab Nasihat Raja-Raja* was written by Haji Wan Abdullah bin Haji Wan Mohd Amin (1802-1889), also known as Sheikh Duyung. He was a prominent *'ulama* (religious scholar) in Terengganu until he was entrusted with the office of the *mufti* (Islamic jurist) and served under three sultans: Sultan Omar (1839-1876), Sultan Ahmad I (1876-1881) and Sultan Zainal Abidin

III (1881-1918). This work only exists in the form of a manuscript, which is kept in the Terengganu Branch of the National Archive of Malaysia. The main content of this work is advice and guidance for the rulers on state governance. The first four pages introduce this work, followed by its main content from pages five to 20. Another interesting aspect of this work is that the main content on advice to the rulers is written in the form of question and answer. Jelani Harun (2003, 2017) contributed to the study of this work in his two respective books.

Regarding *Kitab Nasihat Segala Raja-Raja*, its manuscript is in the keeping of the State Museum of Terengganu. In his earlier study, Jelani Harun (2003) put its title as *Kitab Nasihat Segala Raja-Raja*. However, in his later works, Jelani Harun (2006, 2017) renamed it as *Sahibul Kitab Sultan Zainal Abidin*, based on its title on page two which reads as "*Sahibul Kitab al-Sultan Zainal Abidin ibni Almarhum al-Sultan Ahmad Rahmatullah Taala*".

Both these works serve as an important intellectual heritage for the Terengganu Sultanate and Malay intellectual activities in general. This is because both works are proof that up to the 19th century, the Malay rulers were still concerned about good governance and continued to find an ideal way of governing the state according to the teachings of Islam. Perhaps, this was also a reaction of the Malay rulers, particularly Sultan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu, in facing the growing threats from the British people, who always sought an opportunity to set their foot in Terengganu. Upon witnessing each Malay ruler being forced to accept British interference in their respective state, Sultan Zainal Abidin III realised that it was his utmost responsibility to strengthen the sultanate and prevent British interference in Terengganu. It is unfortunate that these two works have not been published up to this day. However, Jelani Harun contributed significantly in highlighting the existence of both works and put them in their proper place among the corpus of Malay statecraft literature.

Accordingly, the final work under this sub-topic discussion is *Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas*, written by Raja Haji Ali and published by Matbaat al-Imam, Singapore, in 1910. Raja Haji Ali, whose full name was Raja Ali ibn Raja Muhammad Yusuf al-Ahmadi, was also known as Raja Haji Ali Kelana, Raja Ali Bukit and Raja Ali Riau. This work contains both the genealogy of the rulers of Riau

Sultanate and the advice and guidance of governance or statecraft. Jelani Harun (2003) further divided this work into five parts.

Like the above-mentioned *Kitab Nasihat Raja-Raja* and *Kitab Sahibul Sultan Zainal Abidin*, this work was written during the period where the Riau Sultanate was under imminent threats from the Dutch. The Riau Sultanate at that time was on the brink of being dissolved by the Dutch. Hence, Raja Haji Ali hoped to record the history of his sultanate and advice the ruler on the importance of good governance and strengthening the sultanate in facing threats from the Dutch. This work was studied by Jelani Harun in 2001 and 2003 respectively. It is unfortunate that throughout the literature review, it seems that only Jelani Harun studied this literature and put it in its proper place among the corpus of Malay statecraft literature. As stated by Jelani Harun himself, this work was the last work written on statecraft in the Malay world.

Most recently, in 2022, a newly discovered statecraft literature was published. The literature, titled *Nasihat Bagi Segala Raja-Raja*, was written by Tuan Haji Muhammad Tayyib bin Mas'ud al-Banjari in 1863. The author served as a *mufti* for Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin Mukarram Shah of Kedah (1832-1879). This text was studied by Muhammad Mustaqim Mohd Zharif.

Finally, there is another approach in studying statecraft literature, which is important but has not attracted much attention yet. This approach is found in the article by Muhd Norizam Jamian et al. (2017), which used a thematic approach in analysing the statecraft literature. The authors utilised four statecraft literature—*Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*, *Kitab Nasihat Raja-Raja* and *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*—to analyse "the concept of justice in the leadership of the Malay rulers, which became the focus of discussion of traditional Malay state administration works" (p. 63). As reflected in the following section, this type of thematic discussion gained more attention when studying the aspect of statecraft in Malay historical narratives and *hikayat*, compared to the study of statecraft literature.

**Statecraft in Malay Historical Narratives and Hikayat**

In its later development, the trend in studying Malay statecraft included historical narratives and *hikayat* literature as part of the discussion. Throughout the literature review, it can be argued that the earliest known scholar who introduced this trend is Siti Hawa Haji Salleh in 1997, in her book entitled *Malay Literature of the 19th Century*. Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (2010) classified several *hikayat*, such as *Hikayat Isma Yatim* and *Hikayat Wasiat Luqman al-Hakim*, as part of statecraft literature. However, this does not mean that these two *hikayat* should be regarded as purely statecraft literature and need to be excluded from the *hikayat* literature genre. Instead, she argued that since the two *hikayat* have some aspects on statecraft, they should be put under the statecraft literature genre as well. After all, her main point in this book is that, instead of rigidly classifying Malay literature into specific genres and confining its discussion only to a particular genre, it is time for Malay literature to take a step forward by studying one literature under several genres or fields that are appropriate to it. This new approach will enrich the discussion in the study of traditional Malay literature and bring new insight into this field in order to highlight the relevance and sustainability of the study of traditional Malay literature in the contemporary world.

However, before discussing further the statecraft elements in *hikayat* literature, this discussion will look into the elements of statecraft in historical narratives in the Malay world. Throughout the literature review, it can be observed that not all historical narratives were studied in the framework of statecraft. Only certain works in this genre were studied under statecraft frameworks, such as *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, *Sulālat al-Salāṭīn* or popularly known as *Sejarah Melayu*, *Hikayat Misa Melayu* and *Tuḥfat al-Nāfis*.

Examples of studies on statecraft based on *Sulālat al-Salāṭīn* include those done by Zainal Abidin Borhan (2016) and Ramlah Adam (2019). Zainal Abidin Borhan (2016), for example, argued that the main element of statecraft in *Sulālat al-Salāṭīn* could be extracted from the will of the ruler on the brink of his death to his respective successor. This will usually contain advice to the successor regarding their responsibility and the importance of maintaining good governance of the state to ensure peace and tranquillity. Meanwhile, the discussion on

the aspect of statecraft in *Hikayat Misa Melayu* can be seen in articles written by Ramlah Adam (2019) and Jelani Harun (2019). While the former focused on the ruler's roles and responsibilities according to *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, the latter focused on the importance of a good and cordial relationship between the ruler and his people.

Meanwhile, examples of discussion on the elements of statecraft in *Tuḥfat al-Nāfis* can be found in studies done by Arba'iyah Mohd Noor (2014) and Tatiana A. Denisova (2015). Tatiana A. Denisova's article is important because she contributed to the formulation of four concepts on statecraft according to Islam that can be found in the "Mirrors for Princes" literature:

| Concept of Justice | Concept of Governance | Concept of Punishment | Concept of Hereafter |
|---|---|---|---|
| View on the definition of justice: to put things in their right place | Islamic view of government and its administrative aspects | Islamic view of just punishment and punishment from Allah for bad deeds | The pillars of Islam, the concept of death and soul, and life after death |

**Table 1**. Four Concepts in the "Mirrors for Princes" Literature

Apart from studying the elements of statecraft in *Tuḥfat al-Nāfis*, Tatiana A. Denisova (2007, 2012, 2015) also contributed to the emergence of another trend in studying the aspect of statecraft in historical narratives, whereby she selected certain important themes in the discourse of statecraft or good governance and analysed it in several historical narratives, such as *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, *Sulālat al-Salāṭīn*, *Hikayat Acheh*, *Hikayat Siak*, *Hikayat Misa Melayu*, *Peringatan Sejarah Negeri Johor* and even *Tuḥfat al-Nāfis*.

Returning to the discussion on the aspect of statecraft in Malay *hikayat*, although Siti Hawa Haji Salleh ignited the interest as early as 1997, the only known subsequent studies were in 2006 and 2007 respectively, which was done by Mohd Taib Osman and republished in 2015. Mohd Taib Osman highlighted the existence of statecraft elements in *Hikayat Pelanduk Jenaka* in these two articles. *Hikayat Pelanduk Jenaka*, which was written in 1736, perhaps existed in oral

form before committed into writing. This *hikayat*, which is also called *Syah Alam di Rimba*, is about the leadership of a mousedeer named Pelanduk Jenaka.

Other than *Hikayat Pelanduk Jenaka*, another *hikayat* that attracted the interest of the researcher is *Hikayat Isma Yatim*. Already in existence in the form of a manuscript as early as 1676, Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (2010) commented on this *hikayat* as follows:

> The beauty of the story is clearly seen by the story of the king and his queen as well as a magical princess named Princess Nilakandi. The story is very interesting, and it is difficult to ascertain which elements draw the reader to keep reading the *hikayat* – the story or the advice and guidance on the constitution discussed by Ismayatim with all the people he met. Initially, Ismayatim wrote for children his age. Ismayatim's writing ability caught the attention of the minister and the minister took Ismayatim to have an audience with the king. Thus, began Ismayatim's duties in the palace until finally he gained an influential position by the king's side.
>
> The statesmanship elements referred to in *Hikayat Ismayatim* are found in Ismayatim's advice to the people around him. The work-ethic principle held by him is that someone must be proud of the duty given to him and be obliged to carry out that duty with precision and full responsibilities. (pp. 245-245)

The study of *Hikayat Isma Yatim* was continued further with three other articles by Ayu Nor Azilah Mohd and Rohaimi Amin (2016), Muhd Norizam Jamian and Nor Asma Ab Aziz (2018) and Muhd Norizam Jamian and Zubir Idris (2019) respectively. Finally, there is also one article discussing the aspect of statecraft in *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* by Nor Asma Ab Aziz and Muhd Norizam Jamian (2016).

## Statecraft in the Corpus of Malay Legal Texts

Scholars have further argued that the elements of statecraft or *ketatanegaraan* also exist and can be extracted from the corpus of Malay legal texts. Abdullah Sani Usman (2005), for example, stated

that one of the three components that make up the contents of Malay legal texts concerns the power of the ruler and laws related to the administration of the country. Meanwhile, Harun Mat Piah et al. (2002) put forth their remarks on this issue as follows:

> …the importance of the traditional Malay legal texts not only for those with an interest in legal history but also for those interested in Malay literature in the widest sense, and on the theoretical understanding of the state as found in classical Malay society…they also present the struggles of past thinkers to define a world of justice and well-being, in which the more human emotions are held in check by the application of the laws of God and man. (pp. 440-441)

The earliest known work that established this trend is *Warisan Persuratan Johor II: Perundangan dan Ketatanegaraan Melayu*, published in 1999. Out of 21 articles in this book, three of them dealt with the discussion on the aspects of statecraft that can be found in the corpus of Malay legal texts. In the context of this sub-topic discussion, Malay legal texts refer to all legal texts that have existed in the various Malay sultanates throughout history. The first one was *Hukum Kanun Melaka* in the 15th century, while the last one was compiled by the Sultanate of Terengganu in 1911 titled *Itqān al-Muluk bi Taʿdīl al-Suluk*, also known as *Undang-undang Bagi Diri Kerajaan Teraengganu*. Three articles on these texts were written by Norazit Selat (1999), Sidik Fadzil (1999) and Ahmad Fawzi Mohd Basri (1999) respectively.

Norazit Selat (1999) considered *Undang-undang 99* Perak as a kind of "constitution" for the Perak Sultanate. He argued that the articles in this legal text could be classified into three groups equivalent to the contemporary division of the power of the state, namely legislative, executive and judiciary power. He further argued that this legal text also laid down the hierarchy or bureaucracy of power in state governance. These elements were parts of "the art of conducting state affairs" that defined statecraft, as discussed earlier. It is important to note that Norazit Selat can also be considered as the earliest scholar who approached Malay legal texts as a type of state constitution and not merely a legal text that is only concerned about rules and punishments. Later on, this approach was adopted and expanded by Wan Ahmad Fauzi Wan Husin in his PhD thesis, which was published in 2018. Accordingly, other

studies on the aspect of statecraft in this legal text can be found in articles written by Jelani Harun (2003), Halimah Hassan (2019) and Mohamad Hazizie Sulkafle and Hafiz Zakariya (2020) respectively. Jelani Harun, in his article, argued about the importance of a ruler to have a good relationship with his ministers in order to ensure good governance and peace. Meanwhile, Halimah Hassan argued about the roles and responsibilities of the ruler and aristocrats in governing the state and maintaining peace and rule of justice.

Sidik Fadzil (1999) further discussed the influence of Islam towards the development of Malay political thought, which is reflected in several Malay legal texts, such as *Itqān al-Muluk bi Taʿdīl al-Suluk*. Compiled in 1911, this legal text was considered the second modern legal text in Malaysia after *Undang-undang Tubuh Kerajaan Johor* (1895). The main purpose of its compilation was to strengthen the status of the Terengganu Sultanate as an independent and sovereign state. Sidik Fadzil argued that with the coming of Islam, Malay rulers were held accountable for their actions to Allah S.W.T. It is their responsibility to rule with justice and to follow the command of Allah S.W.T. He further added that the ruler's criteria and responsibilities listed in *Itqān al-Muluk bi Taʿdīl al-Suluk* reflect the same criteria and responsibilities listed by previous Muslim scholars, such as al-Mawardi in *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* and al-Ghazali in *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*. Sidik Fadzil's idea was further expanded and discussed by Halimah Hassan (2006) in her article concerning the roles and responsibilities of the ruler and the aristocrats. The same line of argument can also be seen in the article by Hanif Md. Lateh in 2018.

Ahmad Fawzi Mohd Basri (1999), in his article, argued that the aspects of statecraft in *Itqān al-Muluk bi Taʿdīl al-Suluk* consist of three elements: 1) laws on the selection and appointment of the ruler and his responsibilities, which also involved the role played by the *Ahl al-Hal wa al-Aqd* in the selection process; 2 & 3) the hierarchy and the model for the state government, which involved the formation of the Cabinet (*Jemaah Menteri*) and Council State (*Mesyuarat Kerajaan*). It is also interesting to note that Ahmad Fawzi Basri also compared *Undang-undang Tubuh Kerajaan Johor* with *Itqān al-Muluk bi Taʿdīl al-Suluk* to show that both legal texts share the same ideas and frameworks that formed Malay political thought for centuries.

The growing interest in this trend also led to the study of statecraft elements in *Hukum Kanun Melaka*. In 2006, Liaw Yock Fang—an expert in Malay legal text, particularly *Hukum Kanun Melaka*—discussed this issue. He argued that, other than *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*, the sources of reference for Malay statecraft can also be found in Malay historical narratives and legal texts. *Hukum Kanun Melaka* should be studied as the primary source for Malay statecraft since it is the earliest Malay legal text and has significantly influenced subsequent legal texts, such as *Hukum Kanun Pahang*, *Undang-undang Kedah* and *Undang-undang 99 Perak*. Accordingly, his discussion is quite similar to Norazit Selat, where he focused on the status of *Hukum Kanun Melaka* as the constitution for the Melaka Sultanate and the division of power between the executive and judiciary, which is reflected in this legal text.

Another example for discussion of this trend can also be found in an article by Jelani Harun, which was written in 2006 and further revised in 2008. His study was based on a legal text from Kelantan titled *Hukum Maksiat*. This legal text is available in the National Library of Malaysia, under catalogue MS 783. The author and date of this legal text is unknown. However, throughout the discussion, Jelani Harun (2006) suggested a certain time frame for its writing and the potential scholar who might have written it. According to Jelani Harun (2006; 2008), this legal text can be divided into three parts and the elements of statecraft in this legal text are mainly in the introduction part. Among the advice that the ruler is reminded of are: (a) to be considerate to his people and not to pass judgement hastily; (b) to always observe and check the duties of his aristocrats, especially in the collection of *zakat padi*; (c) to always investigate the affairs of his people and; 4) to always control and check the weight measurement in business and prices of goods to avoid any manipulation.

Last but not least, Jelani Harun (2003; 2008) also initiated the study of statecraft in two other legal texts, namely *Undang-undang Raja Nati* and *Safīnat al-Ḥukkām*. He briefly mentioned these two legal texts in his book, *Pemikiran Adab Ketatanegaraan Kesultanan Melayu*, before making a more comprehensive discussion in his later book, *Undang-undang Kesultanan Melayu dalam Perbandingan*.

**The Study of Malay Statecraft: Its Potential and Future**

Other than the above-mentioned trends of studies, some other potential trends can be explored to further widen and enrich the discussion in the study of Malay statecraft. One of them is the idea discussed by Jelani Harun in a paper presented in 2001. In this paper, Jelani Harun (2001) argued that Malay legal texts should be studied alongside Malay statecraft literature. This combination of two genres will further enrich the discourse and bring new insight and perspective in Malay-Islamic civilisation studies.

Further examples for this combination of two genres can be seen in a study done by Abdullah Sani Usman (2005). The aspect of statecraft in *Kanun Syarak Kerajaan Aceh* can be seen from one part of this legal text that discusses the required qualifications to be a ruler and a palace official. The author further discussed the aspects of statecraft from both *Kanun Syarak Kerajaan Aceh* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* and their influence on the Sultanate of Aceh.

Interestingly, this combination of genres can also be seen in several studies, such as that of Muhd Norizam Jamian and Shaiful Bahri Md Radzi (2013). Both authors discussed the idea and concept of a just leader in Malay society through traditional Malay literature based on statecraft literature (*Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, *Bustan al-Salāṭīn* and *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*), historical narratives (*Hikayat Raja Pasai*) and *hikayat* literature (*Hikayat Maharaja Ali*, *Hikayat Abu Syahmah*, *Hikayat Raja Jumjumah* and *Hikayat Ibrahim bin Adham*) as their references. Another interesting example is done by Rahimah Hamdan and Arba'ie Sujud (2018), who discussed the aspect of proper rules of conduct for the rulers in governing the state. This article was based on *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Inilah Syair Tenku Perabu di Negeri Singapura Adanya* and was compared with the actions of Sultan Hussain Muadzam Syah of the Singapore-Johore Sultanate in governing the state. This article is significant as it is among a few studies that have compared the theoretical framework of the Malay statecraft in the corpus of traditional Malay literature with the real actions and conduct of the Malay rulers. It has analysed the extent to which the Malay rulers followed and adhered to the given advice, the idea of justice and proper conduct in governing their respective state. Meanwhile, Rahimah Hamdan and Siti Nor Hamiza Ibrahim (2019) in their article analysed *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*

and *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain* to answer the question, "Were the guidelines for rulers, as recorded in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, in line with the code of conduct (*adab*) for rulers and warriors in the epic *Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain*?" (p. 115). This question is important since both works were popular and widely read among the Malay society, especially by the royals and aristocrats.

It is important to highlight that in the broader context of Islamic civilisation, the study of statescraft literature or "Mirrors for Princes" entered another phase towards the formation and conceptualisation of Islamic political thought. In this phase, instead of discussing the literature theoretically or within the scope and framework of literature (*kesusasteraan*), scholars started to seek a practical dimension by studying its influence and impact on the Islamic society in general and the formation of Islamic political thought in particular, which significantly influenced the course of history. The examples of works of this type can be seen in studies done by Ann K. S. Lambton (1981), Anthony Black (2001) and Mehrzad Boroujerdi (2017). The authors of these works included "Mirrors for Princes" in Islamic literature as well as *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* by Al-Mawardi, *Kitāb Al-Sulṭān* by Ibn Qutaybah, *Kitāb al-Taj* by al-Jāhiz and *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* by Imām al-Ghazali as part of their references to formulate Islamic political thought and its impact on the Muslim society and the course of Islamic history.

This trend of study eventually gained its ground in Malaysia with the publication of several similar works. The earliest known work that can be considered under this trend is Chapter Eight of Jelani Harun's PhD dissertation in 1999, which was later published as *Bustan al-Salatin: A Malay Mirror for Rulers* in 2009. Jelani Harun further explored this idea and trend in his work entitled *Pemikiran Adab Ketatanegaraan Kesultanan Melayu* in 2003. Another example is *Pemikiran Politik Islam dalam Sejarah Persuratan Alam Melayu* by Auni Haji Abdullah in 2015. This book is significant because it provides an in-depth study on the historical background of seven scholars in the Malay world, who produced their works and ideas on Malay statescraft and the way their works and ideas influenced the course of history. These scholars  are Bukhari al-Jauhari (*Tāj al-Salāṭīn*), Sheikh Nuruddin al-Raniri (*Bustan al-Salāṭīn*), Syeikh Faqih Jalaluddin al-Asyi (*Safīnat al-Ḥukkām*), Abdullah bin Muhammad al-Misri (*Bayan al-Asmā'*, which became part of *Undang-undang Raja Nati*), Raja Ali Haji (*Muqaddimah fī*

*Intiẓām Waẓā'if al-Malik* and *Thamarat al-Muhimmah*), Tok Sheikh Duyong (*Kitab Nasihat Raja-Raja*) and Sheikh Wan Ahmad Zain al-Fathani. Except for the works and ideas of Sheikh Wan Ahmad Zain al-Fathani, the other scholars' works are mentioned and discussed accordingly in the previous section. A study done by Shah Rul Anuar Nordin (2019) can also be included under this trend. In his book, he analysed the idea and concept of Malay statecraft in the Sultanate of Aceh based on three texts, namely *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, *Sulālat al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*. These three texts helped him to formulate the political thought of the Sultanate of Aceh.

Besides the works and literature that have already been mentioned, several other works related to Malay statecraft are also worthy of mention. One of them is *Kedaulatan dan Kekuasaan Melayu dalam Teks Sastera*, published in 2019. It is a compilation of 18 essays produced by a group of experts in Malay studies. This book has brought a new perspective in the study of Malay statecraft by exploring the idea and concept of sovereignty and power as understood by the Malay society based on historical texts. This has led to the formulation of Malay political thought, as remarked by Zainal Kling in this book (2019). He encourages interdisciplinary studies towards the corpus of Malay literature and considers this corpus not only as "literature" per se but as a source for Malay history, culture, intellectual tradition and civilisation and to match it with any relevant contemporary field of knowledge. This exposes the society to the application or practical aspect of knowledge and intellectual heritage in the corpus of traditional Malay literature in the contemporary world and places it as among the sources of knowledge for the contemporary world. The works done by Salmah Jan Noor Muhammad (2018) and Auni Haji Abdullah, as mentioned above, are among the prime examples for this approach. Other examples also can be seen from work done by Shaharir Mohamad Zain (2012) and Fazril Saleh (2018), which has also been mentioned earlier. All these works have tried to formulate and develop the idea and concept of statecraft, political thought and organisation management based on selected texts from traditional Malay literature as well as bridge the gap with contemporary knowledge.

## Conclusion

From this lengthy discussion, it can be observed that the study of Malay statecraft began with the study of statecraft genre in traditional Malay literature, such as *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* and *Bustan al-Salāṭīn*, which was closely related to the study of "Mirrors for Princes" or "Mirrors for Rulers". These initial studies were concerned with the idea of justice, the concept of sovereignty and the advice to rulers and palace officials on their responsibilities in governing the state according to the principles of Islam. This was achieved through numerous anecdotes from the history of old kings and ministers. Later on, the study of Malay statecraft further expanded its scope by including Malay historical narratives as well as *hikayat*, but with the same focus and themes of discussion.  In addition to the Malay legal texts as part of the discussion on Malay statecraft, the focus was expanded to specifically include the hierarchy and division of power within the governance of the Malay sultanate as well as the responsibilities of certain palace officials, such as *Menteri*, *Penghulu Bendahari*, *Temenggong*, *Shahbandar*, *penghulu* and judges.

To conclude, this study would like to propose that it is time to redefine the scope and framework of the Malay statecraft to not only discuss the idea of justice, the concept of sovereignty, the advice to the rulers and palace officials and their ideal characteristics and general responsibilities, but also to include discussion on the idea and concept of state and hierarchy, and division and conferment of power in the governance of Malay sultanates. It should also include other relevant historical documents, such as treaties, palace officials' documents and records, travellers' accounts, letters and *surat kuasa*. This approach will lead to further understanding of the idea and practice of statecraft in traditional Malay society and the way Malay rulers perceived their sovereignty and governed their respective state. More importantly, this approach will also be able to bridge Malay statecraft with contemporary ideas on leadership, governance, political thought and nation-building.

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# The Transformation of Islamic Studies: An Ethical And Methodological Analysis

**Muhammad Mumtaz Ali** [1]

**Abstract:** The field of Islamic Studies, like any other discipline, necessitates ongoing research and refinement. However, the nature of this research- whether theoretical, empirical, or a combination of both- remains a critical question. This inquiry prompts a reconsideration of Islamic Studies, prompting a re-evaluation of its scope and methodological foundations. Historically rooted in a limited perspective that framed Islam solely as a religious phenomenon, this paper contends that such a narrow conception fails to capture the comprehensive essence of Islam, as portrayed in the Qur'an. Islam, according to the Qur'an, is a holistic worldview encompassing a way of life, a source of values, morals, laws, and universal principles crucial for cultural and civilisational development. The argument presented herein posits that the scope of Islamic Studies must transcend the confines of traditional religious studies. Instead, it advocates for a paradigm shift towards a more comprehensive examination that includes issues related to worldview, way of life, culture, and civilisation. This paper asserts the imperative need for a transformative approach in Islamic Studies, advocating for a broader research program that addresses the multifaceted dimensions of Islam. Utilising a qualitative method of content analysis, this paper aims to explore and analyse the scope and objectives of Islamic Studies, identifying research problems that extend beyond conventional religious frameworks. Ultimately, the paper seeks to situate Islamic Studies within a broader cultural and civilisational context, emphasising its role in fostering human and social development.

**Keywords:** Islamic Studies, Subject-Mater, scope, *Din*, religion, civilisation

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## Introduction

According to Carole Hillenbrand (2020), the Islamic Studies, as taught in the West, is a discipline that seeks to explain what the Islamic world has achieved in the past and what the future holds for it. Its past is indeed rich. The Islamic Studies as a multidisciplinary and academic field studies the subjects such as religion, history, theology, culture, law, and social issues that are considered as part of Islam. The growth of modern Islamic Studies in the Muslim world has been credited to the West. It is said that the medieval Christians, "motivated by polemical ends, aimed at establishing self-authenticity and pre-eminence, by attributing to Islam, often pejoratively, error or wilful misappropriation" (Nanji, 1997). According to some others, the discipline of Islamic Studies focuses on the study of history of Islam and Islamic philosophy. Islamic studies, as a discipline, is taught in many universities in the West and in the East. It is asserted that it is a branch of knowledge that seeks to study "a wide-ranging series of issues and developments in Islamic Studies, in order to profile the 'state of the art' in the discipline" (Ahmed & Sonn, 2010).

From all over the world, academics come from many different backgrounds and disciplines and focus to study and have knowledge on Muslim societies as they are today and as they have been in the past. It is said its past is indeed rich. For Bustami, the Islamic Studies is considered as one of the modern academic fields of the study of Islam (Khir, 2007). At present, at the heart of the discipline of Islamic Studies is the investigation of Islam as a faith and a practical guide for everyday life in a secular environment and the languages of the Muslim world. In this sense, the discipline of Islamic Studies, it is argued, refers to the study of Islam as a religion that focuses on the history, texts, and theology of Islam, its doctrines and faith system (Musa, 2004; Faisar Ananda & Sugianto, 2004). It is also asserted by academics that its primary focus is on religious knowledge through basic religious texts. The study of the Qur'an and the Hadith are taken and studied as the primary religious sources. The scope of Islamic studies includes the study of theology, Sufism, legacy of Islamic civilisation, social and legal sciences of Islam, inter-faith dialogue and Muslim contribution to natural and physical sciences (al-Mahmood, 2010). All these studies are related to Muslim communities and Muslim religion. They have nothing to do with the rest of humanity.

For some others in the West and East, in Islamic Studies the focus of the discussion is on Islam as a religion. Religion is generally considered as the product of culture and history. A few others say Islamic Studies refers to the academic study of Islam and Islam is taken as religion and religious traditions. It refers, according to some others such as Azim Nanji (1997), Richard C. Martin (1996) and Shiraz Thobani (2010), to the study of traditional forms of religious thought and rituals. For many, it is the discipline that focuses on the investigation of Islam as a faith and religion. So, Islam in Islamic Studies is not studied as worldview, the way of life, the source of culture, and civilisation. It is not studied as a living player and actor that is capable of guiding life and society. Life and society are not the main subject matters of Islamic Studies. Islam has been considered as the reality of the past. As a religion, Islam deals with faith. It is studied by orientalists and Muslims in general as one of the living religions of the world.

According to Richard C. Martin (1982), Islam began during the seventh century in present-day Saudi Arabia whereas the truth is that Islam began with the Prophet Adam (pbuh). Currently, Islam and its worldview, the way of life, the source of values and morals, the source of culture and civilisation are not the main concerns of Islamic Studies. Hence, in Islamic Studies, Islam is introduced as religion and Islamic thought as religious thought. Before we further investigate to understand the nature and problems of research in Islamic Studies and its subject matter and scope, it is imperative for us to know more about Islam, its aim, scope, and methodology. We need to know, in a comprehensive and holistic manner, the truth about Islam based on sound ethical search.

## What is the Truth about Islam?

Is Islam a religion and faith constructed by any human mind in a specific historical period as claimed in the modern world? The fact is that most people, Muslims and the followers of other faiths and ideologies, understand it merely as a religion based on some doctrines and belief system. Basic issue here is how to answer this question related to the truth and reality of Islam. Can we answer this question based on speculation and conjecture as answered by philosophers and thinkers? If we answer based on conjecture, can we consider it as an

ethical search? Can we depend on speculation and conjecture if we deal with some basic metaphysical issues? Dependence on speculation and conjecture and neglecting for knowledge-based answers would fulfil the criteria of an ethical search. What is the truth and reality about Islam? Do we find some knowledge about this question? I argued that certainly we find knowledge about Islam, its origin and history in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is, in fact, the Book of Knowledge. Based on that knowledge one can argue that Islam is not a mere religion. Hence, it is not the truth that Islam is a religion in a limited sense. It is introduced in the Qur'an as *al-Dīn* - which means the world view and the way of life, code of conduct, and source of values, and laws as well as a scheme of life and society - source of culture and civilisation whose goal is to guide people to achieve Comprehensive, Holistic, and Sustainable Development (CHSD) in time and space context for success here in this world and in the next world. The discipline of Islamic Studies must present Islam in the above-mentioned sense.

## Islam: Its Beginning and Place

Many scholars think Islam began during the 7th century Christian Era (Esposito, 1983). It is not the truth and reality. This trend is the distortion of the truth and reality of Islam (Ali, 2023). The claim that Islam is a religion like any other religions such as Hinduism or Christianity is not confirmed based on the knowledge which is contained in the Qur'an. The Qur'an does not state that Islam was revealed during the 7th Century but begins with the life of mankind on earth. Islam, according to the Qur'an, began with the first Prophet - the Prophet Adam (pbuh) and his progeny. It is neither the product of history in a specific historical period nor any human mind. It started with the history of mankind. Islam was not founded by any human being. It was revealed to mankind from the Creator of the entire universe, Allah SWT for the guidance of mankind. In this way, Islam enjoys the central role in the scheme of life and society. The name Islam and Muslim were not given by human beings. They have been given by the Creator Allah SWT. This truth about Islam was given to mankind through the knowledge which reached mankind by means of revelation. So, the source of Islam, about its origin, history, its engagement with generations of people is knowledge - True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK). See the following statement of the Qur'an:

> Believers bow down and prostrate yourselves before Your
> Lord and obey [serve] Your Lord and do good that you may
> prosper. Strive in the cause of Allah in a manner worthy of
> that striving. He has chosen you [for His task], and He has
> not laid upon you any hardship in Din. Keep to the faith of
> your father Abraham. Allah named you Muslims earlier and
> even in this [Book], that the Messenger may be a witness
> over you and that you may be witnesses over all mankind.
> So, establish Prayer, and pay *Zakah*, and hold fast to Allah.
> He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector; what an
> excellent Helper (22: 77-78).

Allah SWT declares that the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) and Ismael
were Muslims who wanted their progeny to be Muslim. It is recorded
in the Qur'ān as historical evidence. See the following *ayah*:

> …Abraham and Ismael praying: Our Lord! Make us Muslim
> [submissive to You] and make out of our descendants a
> community [of Muslims] that submits itself to You and
> show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us
> in mercy (2: 127-128).

The Prophet Abraham was a Muslim and it is reconfirmed in other
verses of the Qur'ān. See the follow statements of the Qur'ān:

> Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a
> Muslim, wholly devoted to God.  And he certainly was not
> amongst those who associate others with Allah in His Power
> [Divinity] (3: 68).

> Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed
> to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the
> descendants [of Jacob] and in what was given to Moses and
> Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their
> Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we
> are those [Muslims] who submit to Allah" (2: 136).

## The Name Muslim Was Given by Allah SWT

One can see in the Qur'ān that not only was Prophet Abraham a
Muslim but all other Prophets (pbut) were Muslims. In the above-
mentioned *āyah*, 2: 136, a few Prophets (pbut) are mentioned who said

they were *Muslimūn*. The Arabic world *Muslimūn* is used. According to the Qur'an not only is Islam the way of life which was granted by Allah SWT but also the name Muslim was given to all the Prophets (pbut) by Allah SWT and to all those who came before and after them and submitted to Allah SWT. The Arabic term *Muslimīn* is used in the following ayah.

> Recall when…Abraham and Ismael praying: "Our Lord! Make us [Muslim] submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that submits [of Muslims] itself to You and show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us in mercy (2:127-128).

In other *āyah* it was made clear that the system of life which was followed by the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) was the same which was followed by all other Prophets (pbut) and they all said that they were *Muslimūn*.

> Say: "We believe in Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and to Isaac and Jacob and his descendants, and the teachings which Allah gave to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him do we submit." (3: 84)

Hence, it is logical to say that a Muslim is one who follows Islam as the worldview, the system of life and society and submits to that worldview and the way of life. That is why Islam is literally explained as submission. Islam means submission to Allah SWT through His system of life and guidance. This submission is conscious with a sound understanding of Islam, life and the world which is based on Knowledge granted to mankind by the Creator Allah SWT. All this understanding is not the result of human speculation or faith and belief systems but Knowledge. This Knowledge and its Truth are subject to all kinds of examination and critical analyses. It is made clear in the Qur'ān, about this Knowledge, that if anyone does not find any concrete evidence, he/she is free to reject it because not a single claim of this Knowledge is without empirical evidence.

Further, it was made clear that Allah SWT bestowed upon the Prophet Abraham (pbuh) and his offspring, the Prophet Ishaq (Issac)

and Yaqub (Jacob) and each of them the same way of life - the *dīn*. He did guide them to the Right Way as Allah SWT had earlier guided the Prophet Noah (pbuh) to the Right Way, and his descendants. Allah SWT guided the Prophet Daud (David) and the Prophet Sulayman (Solomon), the Prophet Ayyub (Job), the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph), the Prophet Musa (Moses) and the Prophet Harun (Aaron) to the same way of life. Thus, He rewarded those who did good (6: 84); Allah SWT said: [And of his descendants] We guided Zakariya [Zechariah], Yahya [John], Isa [Jesus] and Ilyas [Elias]: each one of them was of the righteous (6:85); [And of his descendants We guided Ismail [Ishmael], al-Yasa [Elisha], Yunus [Jonah], and Lut [Lot]. And each one of them We favoured over all mankind (6:86); Likewise, We elected for Our cause and guided onto a Straight Way some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren (6:87); Abraham was in the self-same way [as Noah] (37;83). Through all these messages it was made clear that Islam is the only way of life which is suitable for mankind. It was made clear repeatedly in the Qur'ān. Allah SWT said: "He has prescribed for you the *Din* [Right Way] which He enjoined upon Noah, and which was revealed to you [O Muhammad], and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, commanding: Establish this *Din* [the way of life for the benefit of people] and do not split up regarding it…" (42:13).

## Nature of Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought

Islam as the worldview and the way of life is universal and all-inclusive and Islamic Thought, thus, developed based on Islamic worldview is also all-inclusive. Islam is not a religion which was revealed during a historical period. Islam as the worldview and the way of life existed since the inception of life on earth. The first man was also the Prophet (pbuh) of Allah SWT who lived with Islam and taught to his progeny Islam as the worldview and the way of life. Life on earth began based on Islam and created culture and civilisation, maintained peace, harmony and environment of love and fraternity. Islam, throughout history, implemented rule of law in societies. As the worldview it is truly universal, hence, does not make any discrimination between people of the world. They belong to the one single family of humanity.

There is no superman or lower man. No upper caste, no lower caste, no white man and no coloured. All are created in the same capacity and with equal status as human beings but different from all other creatures. Islamic Studies as a discipline must stand to promote the above truthful and realistic and universal worldview, the way of life, the source of morals and values among people of the world. Muslims have been instructed to share this truth with everyone: Do not confound Truth by overlaying it with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the Truth (2: 42). Islamic Thought is an umbrella concept like Islam, it cannot be taken as the study of a particular religion. In its studies it includes all aspects of life, society, state, and government. It stands for the comprehensive and holistic development of culture and civilisation.

Islamic Thought is not based on human conjecture or contemplation but, rather, on Islamic worldview and the Islamic way of life that naturally produces an Islamic culture and Islamic civilisation. Its subject matter is life, society, state, government, development, and wellbeing of people irrespective of ethnicity, race, colour, language, and religion and ideologies. Rule of law and dissemination of justice are its goals. As a worldview it is founded based on three pillars, namely: *Tawḥīd*, the Prophethood and *Ākhirah* (the understanding and reality of the next world).

As the way of life, it stands to show to people of all times the Right Path of Development - *Sirāt–al-Mustaqīm* and the real meaning of *falāḥ* (Success) here in this world and in the next world. It is repeatedly reminded in the Qur'ān that Islam is the Right Way of Life. There are many places in the Qur'ān wherein we have been reminded about the Right Way for the benefit of people, society, government, and state (Ali, 2023). Why do these reminders appear again and again in the Qur'ān? It is made clear that for good and successful living, in peace and harmony with prosperity and happiness, we are in dire need of Allah's guidance. It is also made clear that the East and the West; the heavens and the earth all belong to Allah SWT, and it is He who guides whomsoever He wills onto the Straight Way. However, it does not mean that we do not need to search to find out the Right Way. We need to search and supplicate consciously and work hard for the Right Way then only will we be guided to the Right Way (2: 150). Allah SWT through the Right Way directs us in matters on which we may disagree with each other due to lack of clear understanding. "Allah guides whomever He wills

onto a Straight Way (2: 213)". In another verse, it is said in the Qur'ān that Allah SWT teaches us to the Right Way as He has full knowledge of everything (2: 282). Allah SWT assures us: Whoever holds fast to Allah, will certainly be guided to the Straight Way (3: 101).

It is also clearly reminded that the Right Way stands distinctly from wrong ways. Now it is up to us to follow either the Right Way or wrong. We all are at liberty. In all matters of life, we are totally free to choose any line of thinking and action. There is no compulsion: "The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the Wrong" (2: 255). Hence, Allah SWT guides people who struggle for the Straight Way (4: 68). Allah SWT does not direct the wrong doers to the Right Way. Allah SWT does not set the deniers of the Truth on the Right Way (2:264) because He has made His signs clear to every one of us. Now it is for us to recognise what is right and what is wrong. If we fulfil this condition, then we are guided to the Right Way (1:6; 3:103). What matters to us and needs to be accepted? The Truth and Reality of life and the world. There are still many people who do not understand the importance of the Truth and Reality of life and the Right Way as shown by Allah SWT. Due to their ignorance and arrogance, they do not take these matters seriously and do not follow the Right Way. They assume that they can think and design right way:

> These are the ones who have purchased errors in exchange for guidance. This bargain has brought them no profit and certainly they are not on the Right Way (2:16).

> Those who have refused to follow the Way of Allah resemble cattle; when the shepherd calls them, they hear nothing except shouting and crying; they are deaf, dumb, and blind, and so they understand nothing (2:171).

> And whoever exchanges *iman* for unbelief has surely strayed from the Right Way (2:108).

## The Current Literature on Islamic Thought

In current literature on Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought, Islam is being continuously presented as religion against the truth and reality of

Islam and confined to the religious thought and religious studies, even by some good scholars. For example, the *Observing the Observer: The State of Islamic Studies in American Universities* (Ahmad, Bukhari, & Nyang, 2012) covers, in the field of Islamic Studies, subjects such as the study of Western approaches to Islamic Studies, the study of the Quran, gender studies, Sufism, interfaith dialogue, and critical analysis of other religions. In the departments of Islamic Studies in American universities and elsewhere, Islam as the worldview, its authenticity, truthfulness, and universality, its comprehensive and holistic nature have not been studied.

The editors of *Islamic Studies Today*, published by Brill (Daneshgar & Saleh, 2017), include in it subjects such as Islamic Exegesis and Tradition, the Qur'an and Qur'anic Studies, Islam, and the Qur'an, and Tafsir etc. as part of religious studies. They focussed on the Qur'an and *tafsir* as an academic exercise of a religious book. The main theme of the Qur'an, man and society, culture and civilisation have not been the main concerns of Islamic Studies programs. The Qur'an is not taken as the Book of Knowledge and Guidance but as a sacred religious book of Muslims. These subjects were not touched. The Qur'an, Islam and their study as an academic discipline must focus on how the Quran and Islam can play a role towards the development of a healthy civilisation free from crisis and crimes. For the editor of *Contemporary Islamic Thoughts* (Rahman, 2012) the materialistic approach "towards religion forced religious intellectuals to reevaluate the actual state of Islamic disciplines, renovate their methodology, and write new texts for contemporary learning" (Ahmad, Bukhari, & Nyang, 2012). Hence, he sees the studies of Islam as religious studies and scholars and intellectuals as religious experts.

Abdullah Saeed, the author of *Islamic Thought: An Introduction*, published by Routledge, London, considers the Knowledge granted to mankind since the inception of life on earth through the process of revelation or transmission as religious knowledge (Rahman, 2012). Therefore, for him, all studies related to Islam are taken as religious studies. The study of Islam and development of Islamic thought are confined to the domain of religion and religion, including Islam, is confined to the followers of that religion. He asserts, "This book is not a history of Islam, Islamic culture, or Islamic civilisation. Its primary focus is on Muslim doctrines, the development, production and transmission

of religious knowledge, and the key trends, schools and movements that have contributed to the production of this knowledge" (Ahmad, Bukhari, & Nyang, 2012, p. vii). What an understanding of Islamic Thought! The Quran from the first page to the last page repeatedly reminds the whole world about the True, Authentic, and Universal Worldview, the True, Authentic, and Universal Way of Life, about the laws of rise and fall of civilisations, and the aim of life that has been now confined by the Islamic Studies into the fold of religious studies.

Contrary to above-discussed books, Shaykh Taha Jabir Al-Alwani in his book, *Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Al-Alwani, 2005) genuinely presents the scope of Islamic Thought and its themes representing true Islam. He argues that his book presents, "the reader with a collection of studies, all of which deal with reform-oriented and goal-oriented Islamic intellectual issues and belong to the same intellectual approach: The Islamisation of Knowledge, which has been active since the 1950s, promotes knowledge and thought, as well as their accompanying elements and philosophy, dedicated to achieve a culture that widens one's intellectual horizons and expands the opportunities for cultured and civilised interaction between cultures and civilisations" (Al-Alwani, 2005) based on a true, authentic, and universal worldview (Ali, 2023).

## Focus on Islamic Studies: Methodological Consideration

What is the role of scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies? As scholars, they must educate people for the proper development of themselves and their societies through the adoption of the True Worldview and Right Way of life. For this purpose, they must present Islam to them in its proper cultural and civilisational perspective. Recognition and Acknowledgement of Allah SWT based on Knowledge and understanding are the prerequisite for any process of cognition and development of civilisation. The existence of Allah SWT as the Absolute Truth and Reality is the foundation of epistemology and philosophy which must be an integral part of educational philosophy. The Qur'an must be introduced in the educational system as the Book of True, Authentic and Universal Knowledge (TAUK), Guidance and Mercy (7: 52); (21:7). Islam should be taught as the True, Authentic and Universal Worldview, the Way of Life, the Code of Conduct and

Values. Islam means submission to the Will of Allah SWT through the practice and implementation of the *Shariah*. The *Shariah* is not the Islamic law in a limited sense but is a program and scheme of life, a means of moral conduct, a source of cultural and civilisational development too.

The Qur'ān speaks about various types of people such as *Muslimīn* (the Muslims those who submit to the will of God), *Mu'minīn* (the believers those who have faith in God), *Ṣādiqīn* (the truthful or honest ones), *Ṣiddiqīn* (the truthful and righteous), *Shuhadā'* (the martyrs - those who die in the way of God), *Ṣāliḥīn* (the righteous or virtuous), *Mūqinīn* (those with firm conviction), *Ṣābirīn* (the patient ones), *Ṣāmitīn* (the listeners or those who hear attentively), *Mushfiqīn* (the compassionate ones); *Munfiqīn* (those who spend for the sake of Allah), *Mustaghfirīn* (the repentant or those seeking forgiveness), *Dhākirīn* (those who remember God), *'Ābidīn* (the worshipers or servants of God), *Rāki'īn* (the humble or those who bow down before God), *Sājidīn* (the prostrators those who bow in prayer), *Muqnitīn* (the submissive or obedient), *Ṭayyibīn* (the pure or good-doers), *Khashi'īn* (the humble or those filled with awe), *Khā'ifīn* (the fearful or those who fear God), *Qānitīn* (the devout or obedient), *Ḥāfizīn* (the guardians or protector), etc. What is their role towards the development of culture and civilisation? Do we teach about them in Islamic Studies and recognise them in our societies? Does our educational system produce them? All these aspects are fundamental for our understanding of a good civil society. Can we ignore them? Are not all these aspects an integral part of Islamic Studies? Is not the rejection of Islam as the True, Authentic, and Universal Worldview, going against the Truth and Reality of Life and the World and creating *fitnah* (crisis and chaos) and *fasad* (destruction and crimes) in life and society.

Are all studies and research in Islamic Studies directed towards the proper explanation of Islam? Do they educate people properly so that they can guarantee development in their societies? For this goal are they not bound to explain one of the fundamental principles of Islam: *Amar bi-l-Ma'rūf wa Nahi 'an-l-Munkar* - propagation of right and virtuous things and prohibition of vices and evils as recognised by Allah SWT? The scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies must study the past and present heritage of mankind and plan for the betterment of the future of mankind in the light of the worldview of Islam.

For this purpose, scholars of Islamic Studies are bound to follow their own criteria of study, analysis, and examination based on the criteria of the revealed Truth and Reality of Life, society, and the world. No dimension of life can be ignored. They must take life in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Life is not divided into compartments. Focus is on a balanced and moderate development of people and societies in a comprehensive and holistic way in accordance with the True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK). They must educate and guide the whole process of development of societies, governments, and states in line with the perspective of TAUK. They are expected to clearly explain the advantages of Islamic perspective and harm of secular perspective for human development. Their position is an independent position. They are guided and motivated by the Qur'an and Sunnah in the time-space context. They are neither unaware of current circumstances nor totally under their influences. They must study Muslim and human heritage critically in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah and adopt an independent position suitable for their existing societies. They work based on their own agenda. They have their own topics and titles for further research. They should work according to their own vision and mission.

## Observation and Historical Experience

Scholars of Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought must work based on the principles of observation, experiment, critical thinking, use of skills of comparative studies, use of historical facts, and rational and scientific approaches. They are not blind followers of the West and modern world, not even the Muslim world. Their approach must be critical and creative. They should stand for the creation of an alternative culture and civilisation by proposing a new model of development which must be built up based on sound spirituality and moral excellence. Their observation and historical experience should remind us that life and society cannot be developed without seeking help from the only One and true God - Allah SWT and His guidance.

We need the only one and true God - Allah SWT and His true guidance because we are convinced of this. The scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies are bound as the experts of Islam to explain this Truth to the people of the entire world. They should not be ready to sacrifice

Truth for the sake of worldly material benefits. With untiring research and all their intellectual contributions, the scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies are under an intellectual obligation to convince people around the world to realise the Truth and Reality of Allah SWT.

## Empirical Realities

Who can deny the empirical reality of millions of cases of child abuse, child force labours, child refugees, child illiteracy, child ill-health, child unhygienic conditions, child suicides, child deaths due to lack of proper nutrition and child pornography? Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2-17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional, violence or negligence in the past year ("Violence against children," 2022). Total number of migrant children in 2019 from January to December are estimated at 202,945. A new UN report finds that some 19 million children were displaced within their own countries due to conflict and violence in 2019 ("19 million children," 2020).

Globally, the rate of illiteracy among youth from aged 15 to 24 has increased from 83 per cent to 91 per cent over two decades. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for children, adolescents, and young adults aged 15-to-24-year-olds. Over 25 million images are reviewed by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children annually ("The issue," n.d.). That's over 480,769 images per week. Other than this, the production of weapons of mass destruction and wars, conflicts and violent activities are obvious. The world has witnessed the first world war, second world war, cold war and now war against terrorism. It seems that the modern world cannot live without the complex of war. Humanity has been divided into nations and nations fear their neighbouring nations. Hence, they are forced to buy weapons. As a result of this, they spend the maximum budget on defence every year. The false pride of a nation allows it to kill and destroy the people of other nations. Hence, scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies need to plan their own program of research in the context of our contemporary needs so that they can save humanity. They must be able to differentiate between the basic needs of people and the problems created by religions, worldviews, ideologies, and unfounded perspectives.

### How to Deal with Islamic Intellectual Heritage: Methodological Consideration and Principles

We must realise and admit that at present all those who are involved in Islamic Studies programs need to demonstrate their determination for the quest for new knowledge, creativity, and empirical approach, and scientific understanding based on Truth and Reality of life and the world. Now we all are under the obligation to bring about change, first in our thinking from negative to positive and then change in society from underdeveloped to developed. We are bound to dedicate all our scholarship and research to serve humanity and save people from self-destruction, suicides, crisis, crimes, corruption, chaos, and the fire of Hell in the Next World. For this purpose, we must follow a new methodology and also few but new universal principles of validity and authenticity of our research methods. We must look for fresh interpretation of everything and development of new thoughts relevant to our situation. For this, we need to follow certain principles. I outline a few of them:

1. The first and the fundamental methodological principle to deal with Islamic heritage is the principle of recognition of the difference between divine knowledge and its human interpretation.

2. The second principle is the principle of permanent and change; whatever is Divine, it is subject to our understanding and whatever is human it is subject to critical study, examination, and analysis.

3. The third principle: based on analysis of heritage it is subject to improvement, addition, and innovation.

4. The fourth principle: for the process of analysis and examination first we seek guidance from the Qur'ān and Sunnah and then study and analyse the heritage.

5. As a fifth principle we should not go first to heritage. We should first develop a framework of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and based on it we should deal with any subject, past or present, any topic, title, or issue of our research. This exercise must be based on the framework of the following:

   a. the Qur 'ān,

   b. the Sunnah,

    c.   the Biography of the Prophet (pbuh),

    d.   the Heritage of Islam,

    e.   the long-term goals,

    f.   the short-term goals and

    g.   the goals of urgent issues.

6.  As a sixth principle we should not simply always respond to the issues and problems created by other religions, worldviews, and ideologies.

7.  According to the seventh principle we should study and conduct research but based on our own plan of study. We should develop our own process of analysis and examination according to our own worldview, vision, and mission in line with the Truth and Reality of life, society, and the world.

8.  As an eighth principle, we should differentiate between various perspectives within the community of scholars of Islamic Studies. The perspective of the traditionalists, the modernists, the liberalists, the progressive, the reformist, and finally revivalist.

9.  As ninth principle we should liberate our contemporary discourse in Islamic Studies from the influences of other traditions and perspectives which are harmful for humanity.

10. As per tenth principle we need to understand that in the discourse of Islamic Studies there is no place for the use of phrases and terminologies which do not reflect the Truth of Islam, such as the use of the phrase before Islam as there is no period before Islam, use of the word verse for *āyah*, use of monotheism for *Tawḥīd*, use of scripture for revealed books especially the Qur'ān, use of theology for *Uṣūl-al-Dīn* because theology is the term which is used in Christian scholarship. It does not reflect the empirical and rational approach of *Uṣūl-al-Dīn*. The use of terms such as faith or belief for Iman are not suitable in Islamic discourse. Iman is a cognitive term whereas belief refers to doctrinal foundation. The use of religion for Islam is not appropriate and in the same way the use of the term divinity for the Power of Allah etc.

## Concluding Remarks

As the scholars and researchers of Islamic Studies, we must differentiate between the spiritual and moral needs of people and the material needs. Material needs cannot be fulfilled properly without spiritual and moral foundation. Justice cannot be done to anything unless they are intimately treated within the paradigm of the Truth and Reality of life, society, and the world. The strong foundation of spirituality and morality of life cannot be laid down without accepting the central role of Allah SWT in the scheme of the universe, life, and society. It is the acceptance of Allah SWT and His guidance which constitutes the real meaning of spirituality which can guarantee peace, harmony, and prosperity for all. Realisation of the truth and reality of Allah (SWT) based on True, Authentic, and Universal Knowledge (TAUK) is the master key to the path of peace, harmony, prosperity, and development. Hence, the whole structure of the idea of Islamic Studies as an academic discipline requires the whole transformation of it. Its philosophy and goals both need a new transformation in order to be relevant to our time and context.

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# Emerging Social *Waqf* Model for the Welfare of Pandemic Orphans

## Saheed Busari [1]

**Abstract:** The increasing number of COVID-19 orphans in Malaysia poses an alarming threat to the socio-economic fabric of the nation. Hence, policymakers are confronted with this escalating dilemma, as the surging population of COVID-19 orphans could lead to a rise in problems, such as child sexual abuse, children dropping out of school and suicide. The pandemic of orphans as one of the hidden tragedies of COVID-19 has triggered the need for a sustainable social intervention that can guarantee the socio-economic protection and psycho-emotional care of orphans, especially in Muslim societies. Moreover, the reported number of orphans in the world is over 140 million children, with almost six million pandemic orphans arising from COVID-19 deaths across the globe. Recent studies also suggest that some of the children in orphanages in Malaysia are malnourished from skipping breakfast, lack dental care and even basic needs because of limited funding. Nevertheless, social *waqf* has been receiving significant attention as an Islamic social intervention to cater to vulnerable members of society. Studies have shown that Islamic religious institutions and organisations have been sustained through the *waqf* system. The enormity of the challenge posed by the COVID-19 orphans is such that some activists have been calling on the government to adopt the children into its social scheme. Overwhelmed by the socio-economic challenges arising from the pandemic, the government has also been appealing to private stakeholders to extend their social mission to the care of pandemic orphans. It also requires funding for individual families willing to provide care and protection for orphans. Hence, this highlights the need for an appropriate intervention to take care of the pandemic orphans.

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This study conducts a qualitative analysis of the potential of social *waqf* interventions for the pandemic orphans' care. Extensive desk research on the classical evidence of the socio-economic protection of orphans in Islam are detailed. The study explores the Islamic guidelines for fostering orphans through *kafala* (custody) and the current challenges in their implementation. From the findings, the study proposes a *waqf* model useful for providing social welfare intervention and adequate financial support for the sustainable care of orphans' needs through social workers, orphanages and foster care families, in addition to further empowerment of orphans with needy single parents.

**Keywords:** *Waqf*, Orphans, COVID-19, Sustainable social intervention, family protection

## Introduction

Achieving a sustainable social intervention for orphans has been a challenge in modern times because of the associated dimensions requirements, such as human capital, education and socio-economic empowerment related to financing ("Financing an inclusive recovery for children," 2021). However, classical evidence argues that *waqf* (Islamic endowment) has been a form of socio-economic protection and empowerment since the period of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions (ASW). Comprehensive social finance and sustainable endowment are potential panaceas to the incessant challenges of achieving sustainable social intervention for vulnerable members of society.

The significance of *waqf* in Islam made it attractive in history such that many people hearken towards participating in its understanding and application by various means. *Waqf* is a means of serving humanity to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) (Sadique et al., 2016). It is an effective Islamic social instrument for preserving humanity by protecting society from the dangers of malice, envy and hatred, as well as from the spread of chaos, theft and forced robbery. It caters to the basic needs of the vulnerable members of society and promotes healthy living, peace and harmony (Baqutayan et al., 2018).

One of the Islamic intents of the endowment is to protect society from danger and facilitate cohesion and cooperation among its

members. Just as every other Islamic social finance, *waqf* can benefit both the donors and beneficiaries. On the one hand, it is a means of voluntary purification for the wealth, soul and family of the donor and, on the other hand, it is a means for providing socio-economic support and empowerment for the vulnerable members of society (Fa-Yusuf et al., 2021).

There are many types of charitable deeds and spending that can be categorised under *waqf* based on the intention and satisfaction of the conditions of Islamic endowment. The rich, philanthropies and corporate donors can contribute their desired share to benefit people, such as the vulnerable and needy, the poor, students of knowledge, widows, orphans and wayfarers, as well as public services, such as the construction of mosques, schools, housing units, canals, wells and roads (Hamber & Haneef, 2017). The concept of *waqf* has been practiced since the era of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions (ASW), as history records that the virtual majority of the companions (ASW) left *waqf* property behind either for family or charity purposes. However, *waqf* in contemporary times can be traced to efforts in the establishment of schools, medical centres and social facilities in selected Muslim countries (Ahmed, 2004). This study comprises four main sections. The first section highlights recent literature on social *waqf* intervention and the need to cater to orphans. The second section describes the potential contributions of *waqf* to social sustainability. The third section presents the finding proposed on the social *waqf* model. The fourth section presents the conclusion and recommendation.

## Literature Review

### *Pandemic Orphans*

Pandemic orphans are one of the hidden consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic that every society will have to deal with in the long run (He & Harris, 2020). COVID-19 has a hidden impact on the family structure due to factors such as the deaths of heads of the family and breadwinners. Pandemic orphans are children who have lost either one or both parents due to the COVID-19 virus attack (Hillis et al., 2021). According to Michaud et al. (2022), COVID-19 deaths pose a

significant threat to the lives of children who have lost either one or both parents. This may result in mental health problems, school dropout, low self-esteem, child exploitation, sexual risk behaviours, suicide and excessive violence against children. Over 5,000 children have lost their parents to the COVID-19 infection, thereby signalling a rising need for social intervention in the education, emotional and economic support for victim families (Hillis et al., 2021).

Studies have suggested the need to explore the situation of the pandemic orphans concerning their social and emotional development and perceived social support to enhance their welfare, care and safety amidst and after COVID-19 (Azman et al., 2020; He & Harris, 2020). Rashed Mustafa Sarwar, the UNICEF representative for Malaysia and Brunei, also contends that considering the situation of the pandemic in the region, there is the possibility of exposing the pandemic orphans to danger and child abuse, hence, suggesting the need for research into this circumstances for an appropriate intervention for the COVID-19 orphans in Malaysia and Brunei (CNA, 2021). As reported in *The Borneo Post*, Lim Kit Siang expressed concern over pandemic orphans in Malaysia being the highest in the whole of ASEAN region and suggested that the government should consider the adoption of over 5,000 orphans into its social schemes (Edward, 2021).

Since early 2020, Malaysia has witnessed political uncertainty amid the continued influence of COVID-19. Since the pandemic's onset in January 2020, Malaysia has reported five million confirmed COVID-19 cases and 36,700 fatalities. The COVID-19 case fatality rate among individuals under 18 in Malaysia is 0.02 percent, with 15 deaths reported out of 82,341 cases in this age group. It is crucial to recognise that the virus poses a much higher risk to older individuals, especially those aged 60 and above who are more prone to severe illness and fatalities ("Country Office Annual Report 2022: Malaysia," 2022). Hence, the impact of COVID-19 deaths on children in Malaysia is wide-ranging and substantial. It includes emotional and psychological distress, disrupted family dynamics, financial hardship, educational disruption, increased vulnerability to exploitation, social isolation, mental health challenges and potential stigmatisation. To address these effects, the government, communities and support organisations need to provide access to mental health services, social support and financial assistance

to help children cope with their loss and navigate these challenges effectively (A Concerned Nationalist, 2021).

## Social Waqf

*Waqf* literally means to prevent or to protect from possession of the third party. *Waqf* is interchangeably used with the term *habs* in literary Arabic (Ibn Manzūr, 2010). *Waqf* is anything that is kept by the founder to appreciate such that the founder enjoys sustainable and continuous charity (Burhānu ad-Din, 1981). According to Imam al-Zarqa, Abū Hanīfah opined that the *waqf* contract includes the sustainable benefit of the *waqf* property but excludes *waqf* asset (Al-Zarqa, 1997). Abu Yusuf and Muhammad Shaybānī, the foremost students of Abū Hanīfah and other jurists, however, argued for the retention of ownership to the underlining asset of the *waqf* property, which no longer belongs to the donor after the declaration of *waqf* (Al-Zarqa, 1997). Moreover, other scholars viewed the donor of the *waqf* property seized to be the owner after declaration or promise to make it *waqf*. Therefore, the property belongs to Allah (SWT) and the authority is the custodian of the property of Allah (SWT). Abu Zahra (1971) viewed *waqf* as "the prevention of a benefit-generating estate from corporal disposal but using its usufruct and benefit in charity, intended so at the time of creation and thereafter." This means that *waqf* should be an immovable property that gives beneficial perpetuity to the beneficiaries. However, contemporary scholars have argued that in order to relevantise the philosophy of *waqf*, immovability and perpetuity may not be strict conditions to permit other forms of socio-economic, environmental and religious benefits of *waqf* in the contemporary time. Therefore, to expand the scope of *waqf* from stagnation by including movable, immovable, usufruct and liquid assets, Laluddin et al., (2021) describe modern *waqf* as the holding of certain property and preserving it for the confined benefit of certain philanthropy and prohibiting any use or disposition of it outside that specific objective. It is interesting to note that *waqf* is a kind of *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) based on sustainable continuity for socio-economic empowerment. However, *waqf* differs from general *sadaqah* because the underlying asset in *waqf* is neither transferable nor transmittable to other parties—rather, the asset is retained to enhance continuous and recurrent charitable utilisation by the beneficiaries (Laluddin et al.,

2021). In the context of the following *hadith*, for example, *sadaqah jariyah* refers to *waqf* property donated by the donor for his personal benefit, his family and the poor and needy.

> When the son of Adam dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: Sadaqah Jariyah (continuous charity); A knowledge which gives benefit, or a righteous child who prays for him (the deceased). (Al-Naisābūrī, 2006, no. 1631)

There are three main types of *waqf*—property *waqf*, corporate *waqf* and cash *waqf*—that are common in contemporary society and depict a dimension in *waqf*. First, property *waqf* is an endowment that is based on immovable assets such as land, mosque, hospital, school and other public properties that are dedicated to the benefit of the public in order to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) (Ambrose et al., 2018). Secondly, corporate *waqf* is a form of *waqf* that is managed by corporate organisations such as banks, takaful operators and Islamic financial institutions that manage *waqf* asset as an issued share in the corporate ownership. Thirdly, cash *waqf* differs in its approach but has wider diversification such that its initial proceeds are in cash form and can further be diversified into socio-economic benefits and empowerment for the public interest. Another significant dimension of *waqf* is its categories of beneficiaries (Rahmalan & Abu Hussin, 2021). *Waqf* property is for public use and benefit, meaning that it provides welfare support and empowerment for the needy, poor and vulnerable members of society. Family *waqf* is dedicated to relatives and specific members of the family of the donor, and the *waqf* will be transferred to the public upon the deaths of the dedicated beneficiaries. However, joint *waqf* combines beneficiaries from the relatives of the donor and other specific individuals from the public (Suruhanjaya Sekuriti, 2014).

## *Sustainable Social Intervention*

Governments have traditionally been primarily responsible for tackling challenges such as substandard living conditions, exploitation, poverty and unemployment by promoting human development through initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, corporations are increasingly getting involved in community assistance through charitable efforts (Cibrario & Ciambra, 2019). Despite the

various backgrounds and investments of these organisations engaged in supporting projects, the author contends that their overarching aim, irrespective of their geographical presence, should be to strive for sustainable philanthropic endeavours (Ab Samad & Ahmad, 2022; Hopkins, 2019). The empirical study of Jiang et al. (2021) found that combining stringent social distancing measures with comprehensive income support programmes was particularly effective in reducing COVID-19 cases and deaths, especially in countries with limited socio-economic resources and healthcare infrastructure. This underscores the importance of customising government responses to address the unique socio-economic conditions of each country in the fight against the pandemic. For instance, in September 2021, the then-Deputy Minister Datuk Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development revealed that the government identified 4,696 children who have lost their parents due to COVID-19. Her ministry took proactive measures to protect their wellbeing and ensure they continue to receive uninterrupted education to prevent them from facing educational setbacks ("Deputy minister," 2021).

Inadequate funding, constraints in resources and the emergence of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic directly affect the long-term sustainability of non-profit organisations (NPOs). The inability of these organisations to navigate these limitations effectively can have detrimental effects on society, given their crucial role in providing social services and contributing to sustainable development efforts. If progress towards achieving the United Nations' SDG 2030 goals is hindered, it is the marginalised groups, including children, the elderly, women, immigrants, ethnic minorities, the homeless and the disabled, who are likely to bear a disproportionate impact (Santos & Laureano, 2022; Van Steenburg et al., 2022).

The socio-ecological structure of society is a significant challenge to the role of social workers towards providing sustainable intervention for vulnerable members of society. Social work satisfaction requires providing necessary socio-economy and material support for the social workers towards achieving sustainable development goals. Hence, the essence of sustainable social work is to provide empowerment for the vulnerable members of society (Peeters, 2012). A recent empirical study on the future challenges of social work suggests that a committed and well-sponsored social work intervention can help in achieving

the sustainable development goals from the three main dimensions of eradicating poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. Social work-related disciplines in modern society need complete integration with the study of sustainability science to achieve a robust framework for the empowerment of the vulnerable members of society, such as orphans, the needy and the poor (Picado-Valverde et al., 2022). Despite the achievement of social care in the empowerment of vulnerable people, there is still an incessant and urgent need to address funding the reform of social work for a sustainable society. When the social need is provided at the time of acute need from orphans, the poor and needy are considered unsustainable social intervention. The reality of unsustainable social intervention is spurred by the fact that many societies are not prepared to provide sustainable social assistance for vulnerable groups of society when they need it most (Fa-Yusuf et al., 2021). Sustainable social interventions are better achieved in a cohesive society when the community comes together to address the social challenges of the society. Sustainable social intervention for the vulnerable leverages the cooperation between the government and non-governmental and religious bodies to prevent harm by keeping people safe and healthy, connecting social infrastructure to enable socioeconomic values and sustainable empowerment for all (Bedford & Harper, 2018). A stack data on the "Impact Evaluation of the project '*Strengthening Sustainable Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Care and Support in Côte d'Ivoire*' in the urban context of Abidjan" suggests that funding orphanage activities, beneficiaries and caregivers is the main challenge facing the achievement of sustainable social intervention for orphans in the modern society. Hence, collaborating with necessary local and international agencies is a significant approach to addressing the challenges of orphan care in society (Balestri & Meda, 2014).

## *Kafālah of Orphans in Shariah*

Considering the increasing number of orphans after the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, there is a dire need for Islamic social assistance to support government initiatives to enhance effective and sufficient care for orphans. Alwani (2020) contends that the responsibility of orphans is considered in Shariah as the moral and

legal obligation of society (*farḍ kifāyah*). Both the Qur'an and Sunnah emphasise on social intervention for orphans, suggesting its importance in Islam because Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was raised as an orphan and eventually became the leader of mankind.

> Did He not find you an orphan, and give you shelter? (Ad-Duḥā: 6)

Similarly, it is compulsory to protect orphans from all forms of child abuse.

> So as for the orphan, do not oppress. (Ad-Duḥā: 8)

Moreover, the Qur'an emphasises on the process of empowerment and the significance of fair dealings with the properties of orphans and their independence.

> Test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage, and then if you find them mature of mind hand over to them their property, and do not eat it up by either spending extravagantly or in haste, fearing that they would grow up (and claim it). If the guardian of the orphan is rich let him abstain entirely (from his ward's property); and if he is poor, let him partake of it in a fair measure, when you hand over their property to them let there be witnesses on their behalf. Allah is sufficient to take account (of your deeds). (An-Nisa: 6)

Islam also sets strict consequences for violating the rights of orphans, both collectively and individually: "Behold, those who wrongfully devour the properties of orphans only fill their bellies with fire. Soon they will burn in the Blazing Flame" (An-Nisa: 10).

It is interesting to note that Islam has guidelines for fostering orphans through *kafālah* (custody), which entails Islamic rulings and practices for fostering orphans and children without biological parents. Despite the roles of the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia, orphanage homes and foster families in catering to orphans and vulnerable children, the situation of COVID-19 orphans requires specific intervention, such as social *waqf*, which can guarantee their essentials (*ḍarūriyyah*) and needs (*ḥājiyyah*).

> (Their bearings) on this life and the Hereafter. They ask thee concerning orphans. Say: "The best thing to do is what is for their good; if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren; but Allah knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good. And if Allah had wished, He could have put you into difficulties: He is indeed Exalted in Power, Wise." (Al-Baqarah: 220)

According to the exegeses of Ibn Kathir, after the rules of punishment for those who mismanage the affairs of orphans by divulging their wealth and affairs, many people began to create a strict distinction between their wealth and that of the orphans such that it was getting lack of proper attention and care. It was then that Allah (SWT) revealed: "if ye mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren" (Al-Baqarah: 220). This Qur'anic verse suggests an improved approach to caring for orphans, emphasising on the integration of their essential requirements, such as food, shelter, clothing and socio-economic needs, instead of isolating them out of fear or harm, which may lead to wastage and loss. Hence, orphans occupy a prominent position among the beneficiaries of Islamic charitable initiatives and social expenditure, particularly among the marginalised, impoverished and needy. Another verse in the Qur'an emphasises on the essence of charity to categories of deserving people, especially orphans.

> They ask thee what they should spend (In charity). Say: Whatever ye spend that is good, is for parents and kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers. And whatever ye do that is good, Allah knoweth it well. (Al-Baqarah: 215)

The Qur'an also emphasises that orphans should be one of the beneficiaries of worldly gains and incomes earned as a way of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

> As for gains granted by Allah to His Messenger from the people of ˹other˺ lands, they are for Allah and the Messenger, his close relatives, orphans, the poor, and ˹needy˺ travelers so that wealth may not merely circulate among your rich. Whatever Messenger gives you, take it. And whatever he forbids you from, leave it. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is severe in punishment. (Hashr: 7)

## Potential Contributions of *Waqf* to Social Sustainability

Charitable *waqf*, whether in the form of cash or goods, is intended to support vulnerable individuals in need among the impoverished population. In accordance with the broader goals of Shariah, charitable *waqf* strives to promote the ongoing spiritual and economic progress of society. This entails preserving the original assets or funds to generate benefits that can be utilised for the wellbeing of those who are vulnerable within the community (Laluddin et al., 2021). According to Abdur-Rashid (2021), in the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his companions (ASW) acquired knowledge on setting up *waqf* (charitable endowment) through direct teachings from the Prophet (PBUH) himself. It is documented in Sahih Bukhari that the Prophet (PBUH) allocated a piece of land for charitable purposes (*sadaqah*), setting an example for his companions (ASW). Specifically, he provided instructions to Umar (ASW) on how to establish properties for Islamic philanthropic objectives, which subsequently served as a blueprint for many notable companions (ASW) of the Prophet (PBUH) to establish their *waqf* (Abdur-Rashid, 2021).

The implementation of legislative strategies rooted in the *maqasid* (higher objectives) framework is intended to protect the fundamental nature of charitable *waqf* institutions. This was prompted by the ongoing struggle to maintain the essential assets that generate benefits for disadvantaged individuals and those in need (Yaakub & Abdullah, 2020). During the post-formative period of the early Abbasid era, *waqf* experienced a notable development and greater recognition in Islamic legal terminology. This was manifested in the establishment of physical structures, such as mosques, and educational institutions, such as madrassas (Abdur-Rashid, 2021). However, from the mid-19th century until World War I, *waqf* underwent a significant decline and deterioration. This decline was primarily a result of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which fell under the control of colonial powers. Despite the potential of *waqf* as Islamic social finance to collect from the rich and benefit the poor, the efficiency of *waqf* can better be determined through the measurement of the efficiency scores of the indicators of *waqf* institution operation in the management of staff and resources as well as the social impact to the right beneficiaries in short- and long-term projects (Bakri et al., 2014).

An empirical study of Nur Atikah Atan &  Fuadah Johari (2017) on the role of *waqf* between 2006 to 2016 found that the past success stories of *waqf*'s contributions to the socio-economic development of developing countries have called for its revival in modern times to protect the vulnerable in society. *Waqf* remains an alternative voluntary Islamic social financing that extends from *zakat*, which is obligatory based on strict conditions (Sulistyowati et al., 2022; Aliyu, 2018). However, within the period explored in this study, the research focus was on issues related to cash *waqf* (19.4%), *waqf* property (13.8%) and *waqf* concept (12.5%). Although one-third of the studies addressed the issue of the role of *waqf* in poverty alleviation, two-thirds focused on corporate *waqf* and its governance, suggesting an important gap in other sectors, such as *waqf* for healthcare facilities.

Stack evidence suggests that there are numerous studies on the potential contributions of *waqf* to socio-economic development, yet few studies with diverse findings have been conducted on case study development on the real impact of *waqf* in modern society. Alshater et al. (2022) conducted a bibliometric study from 1914 to 2020 to explicate the most relevant scientific actors in *waqf* research and the extent of their impacts, especially cash *waqf* endowment, Islamic accountability of *waqf*, the government's role in *waqf* as well as *waqf* as Islamic social finance. Procuring sources of finance remain the main challenge for many non-government organisations in running *waqf* institutions. The study of Sulistyowati et al. (2022) posits the dire need to provide a non-governmental budget for financing *waqf* institutions' activities. A sufficient budget can enhance human resources, social finance empowerment, collaboration and coordination of education and healthcare facilities. It is fair to mention that the concept of *waqf* is one of the Islamic philosophies of promoting mutual assistance and empowerment for vulnerable people and families. The history and juristic justification of *waqf* highlight the intention for the sake of Allah (SWT) as a condition for acceptable *waqf* in Islam towards championing socio-economic empowerment, environmental stability and spiritual intelligence of the society (Sani, 2016).

## Findings

This study explores the potential of social *waqf* in activating sustainable welfare for pandemic orphans after the demise of their primary caregiver from the COVID-19 outbreak. The study found that despite the existing challenges of orphan care in orphanage homes and with foster parents, the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak triggered an increase in the socio-economic challenges of children without parents across the globe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a notable rise in the number of orphans who have lost their primary caregivers, especially in Muslim societies. This hidden consequence has spurred a growing demand for sustainable socio-economic interventions to support these orphans (Hashim, 2021; Andrade et al., 2022). Social *waqf*, an Islamic social finance mechanism, plays a crucial role in addressing this need. It involves the strategic investment of *waqf* funds and properties to meet the ongoing needs of vulnerable individuals, aiming to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT). Social *waqf* functions as an enduring endowment, ensuring continuous education, accommodation, food, clothing and other essential support for the sustenance and wellbeing of those in need. Ultimately, *waqf* proves to be an effective tool for preserving social interventions that protect families and promote long-term family and societal welfare (Widiastuti et al., 2022; Lamido & Haneef, 2021).

However, there still remain issues with the *waqf* institutions, especially the lack of human resources, limited sources of finance, legal considerations in Malaysia and limited digital applications. These challenges require urgent implementation of capacity building programme, activating big data connectivity and establishing a sustainable legal framework for social *waqf* to cater to pandemic orphans' needs, protection and development, especially in the post-pandemic situations (Sulistyowati et al., 2022).

The socio-economic challenges of the pandemic orphans are also evidently experienced by their substitute caregiver from among their immediate family, foster parents, orphanage homes or even those opting for adoption. The reality shows that volunteers who cater to the socio-economic, mental and educational needs of the pandemic orphans might require sustainable financial support that one-off financial assistance might not be able to provide, except with the activation of sustainable

social invention mechanisms, such as social *waqf*. The study shows that *waqf* is one of the effective means of enhancing continuous and sustainable welfare and care for orphans who have lost either one or both parents to COVID-19.

## *Proposed Social Waqf Model*
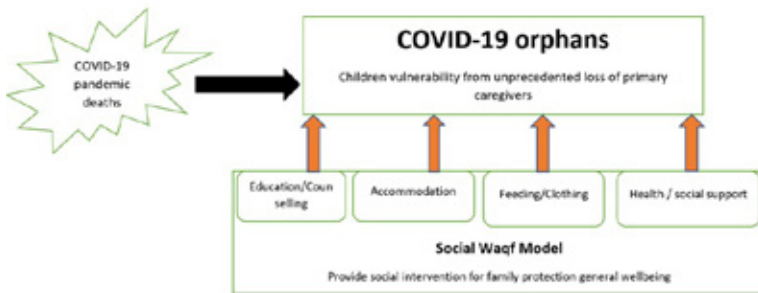


**Figure 1**: Social *Waqf* Model

## Discussion

I.   The unprecedented outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact, leading to a significant increase in the number of orphans who have lost one or both of their primary caregivers.

II.  This surge in COVID-19 orphans has brought to light a hidden consequence of the pandemic, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable socio-economic interventions to ensure the wellbeing and survival of these orphans, particularly within Muslim societies.

III. Social *waqf* emerges as a powerful Islamic social finance mechanism designed to address this pressing issue. It involves the strategic allocation and investment of *waqf* funds and properties, with the primary aim of meeting the ongoing needs of vulnerable individuals, all in pursuit of seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

IV. Social *waqf* functions as a unique form of endowment, capable of providing sustainable and continuous support, including education, housing, food, clothing and various health and social services, thereby ensuring the comprehensive wellbeing of those in need.

V. In essence, *waqf* represents a highly effective tool for sustaining social interventions that safeguard families and promote the overall wellbeing of communities, thus contributing to the long-term welfare of society as a whole.

## Conclusion

The challenges of providing primary care for orphaned children have significantly intensified in the past two years due to the unprecedented surge of COVID-19. Despite ongoing global discussions regarding sustainable social interventions to address the hidden impacts of COVID-19 on society, little attention has been given to the potential of social *waqf* as a means of offering long-term socio-economic support and assistance to meet the basic needs and safeguard the wellbeing of these pandemic orphans. Despite several fundraising and social economic intervention measures by Keluarga Malaysia, social *waqf* has viable potential for sustainable care for the pandemic orphans if properly explored. Implementing the Social *Waqf* Model would enable social welfare offices to establish a robust plan for the comprehensive development and protection of COVID-19 orphans after the loss of their primary caregivers. This intervention can also serve as an empowerment mechanism for various stakeholders involved in providing care, including orphanage homes, foster families, religious institutions and individual family members willing to take responsibility for the ongoing protection and care of these orphans. This study emphasises on the urgent need for comprehensive quantitative data on the demographic requirements of COVID-19 orphans and their anticipated social interventions to address their basic needs, in conjunction with the potential of social *waqf* to cater to their needs in orphanage homes, under foster care or with family members.

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# In Awe of the Holy City: Mecca in the Eyes of Five Medieval Travellers

## Aditya Pratama Widodo[1]  and Alwi Alatas[2]

**Abstract:** This paper elaborates and analyses the situation of Mecca between the 11th to 16th centuries based on travel accounts of five medieval travellers: Ibn Khusraw (1004–1072), Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217), Ibn Battuta (1304–1369), Ma Huan (1380–1460) and di Varthema (1470–1512). Moreover, by thoroughly consulting primary sources scored by above-mentioned travellers and other relevant secondary sources, this study aims to ascertain the importance of Mecca, in the given period, in the eye of Muslims and non-Muslim travellers. As the holiest city in Islam, which is also associated with Muslim religious pilgrimages, Mecca has a long and intriguing history throughout the ages. Furthermore, more often than not, during the medieval period, the pilgrimages to Mecca, which are usually conducted during the Islamic month of Dzulhijjah, were haunted by challenges and dangers posed by natural and social environments in and around Mecca, thus made the journey experiences of above-mentioned travellers all the more challenging, precious and memorable. However, at the end of the day, their hardships paid off and their praises proclaimed since they found themselves drenched in joy and in awe of the beauty and greatness of the Holy City. This research uses historical methodology, focusing on primary texts written by the five pilgrims mentioned above. This study provides a more comprehensive picture of the condition of the Holy City of Mecca in the era under study.

**Keywords:** Mecca, pilgrimage, pilgrim, journey, caravan, Masjid al-Haram, Ka'abah.

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## Introduction

As the holiest city in Islam, Mecca has a long and intriguing history throughout the ages. It is said that Mecca was once known as Baca (Bakka), and was associated with pilgrimages, springs, balsam trees, and the Greek even translated Baca as 'the Valley of Weeping' (Sardar, 2014, pp. 1–3), given that Mecca is located in the valley. In Islamic tradition, another name for Mecca is al-Balad, 'the main city'. According to Islamic tradition, the importance of Mecca is closely related with the life of Prophet Ibrahim who brought his wife and son, Hājar and Ismā'īl, to that valley, which subsequently developed into a settlement. Furthermore, it was in this city that Prophet Ibrahim built a cube structure called the Ka'bah, which stands at the heart of the Holy City (al-Bukhāri, 1997; Hadits No. 3364 & 3365).

Subsequently, Prophet Abraham's son, Prophet Ismā'īl, made this city his home. The latter married a woman from the Jurhum tribe, a southern Arab tribe, who bore him twelve sons (Ibn Hishām, 1990). Thus, Prophet Ismā'īl became the progenitor of early inhabitants of Mecca, and his offspring, Banu Ismā'īl, inhabited in and around the city for many centuries before they finally left Mecca and gradually became astray and succumbed to paganism (Ibn al-Kalbi, 1952). Much later, the Banu Ismā'īl returned to Mecca as the Quraysh tribe, who previously lived a sedentary and nomadic life (Sardar, 2014; Peters, 2017; Alatas *et al.*, 2020). Mecca became a strong permanent settlement once again sometime around 400 CE, thanks to the initiatives of a Quraysh leader, Quṣayy ibn Kilāb, who cleared the immediate vicinity of the Ka'ba and settled his own people "in the newly cleared area, with a defined territory eventually assigned for the domicile of each tribe" (Peters, 2017, p. 18). Quṣayy initiated a new confederal structure centred in Mecca, which continued until the rise of Islam (al-Mubarakpuri, 1996).

The birth and subsequent life of Prophet Muhammad in Mecca, in the seventh century, has brought considerable changes to religious situation and landscape in Mecca, and later in neighbouring cities. However, before the time, as well as in early days, of Prophet Muhammad, polytheism and idol worship were flourished in Mecca. As a matter of fact, Qurasyh tribe, the descendants of Banu Ismā'īl and which happened to be the tribe that the Prophet belongs to, was among the most prominent proponents of such tradition (al-Mubarakpuri,

1996; Peters, 2017). However, thanks to God's final revelation, which accompanied Prophet Muhammad's unrelenting *da'wah* effort, Mecca finally fell into the hands of Muslims in December 629. Subsequently, the 360 idols which were placed by the pagans around the Ka'bah were burned and destroyed (al-Mubarakpuri, 1996; Peters, 2017; Sardar, 2014). Thus, Mecca once again became the Holy City for the monotheists and, henceforth, became a magnet that attracted countless pilgrims from all over the world to drench in a spiritual journey, at least once in a lifetime. As a matter of fact, religious pilgrimage, *hajj*, is among the most important contributors to the greatness and wealth of Mecca.

More often than not, during the medieval period the pilgrimages to Mecca, which are usually conducted during the Islamic month of Dzulhijjah, were haunted by challenges and dangers posed by natural and social environments in and around Mecca. As far as natural environment is concerned, the journey across the Red Sea from Africa and journey through the deserts to inland Mecca, either from Medina or Jeddah, was often accompanied with obstacles. As for the social environment, unfriendly Christian states in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula and hostile local Jewish communities in certain period of times, the unscrupulous raids by the Bedouins, and even some corrupted local Muslim rulers in and around Mecca, sometimes jeopardised the pilgrims. However, it goes without saying that, for many people, such challenges and dangers actually made the journey to Mecca all the more challenging and precious, not to mention that the pilgrimage itself is also a very enlightening experience and notches unforgettable memories.

Since early medieval period, these experiences have been recorded in many pilgrimage accounts, some of which have been published as books. Not only do they elaborate the procession of pilgrimage, in many cases, those accounts also discuss the situation of Mecca and adjacent towns. Among the renowned medieval pilgrims who wrote their accounts pertaining to their visit and pilgrimage to Mecca are Ibn Khusraw (1004–1072), Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217), Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240), al-Tujaybi (the end of 13th century), Ibn Battuta (1304–1369), al-Abdari (d. 1336), Ibn al-Sabah (late 14th century), Ma Huan (1380–1460), and Ludovico di Varthema (1470–1512) (van Leeuwen, 2023).

Without a doubt, those accounts, or travelogue, provide some valuable information concerning Mecca and the pilgrimages in the middle ages. However, this article only focuses on the description of Mecca left by five travellers who came from five different cities in three different continents, namely Ibn Khusraw of Merv (Persia, Asia), Ibn Jubayr of Valencia (al-Andalus, Europe), Ibn Battuta of Tangier (Maghreb, Africa), Ma Huan of Kuaiji (China, Asia), and di Varthema of Bologna (Italy, Europe). By employing historical methodology that scrutinises the travel accounts of the above-mentioned pilgrims and by means of descriptive approach, rather than analytical, this study aims to find out a detailed representation of Mecca between the 11th and 16th century. Moreover, this study also aims to ascertain the value of Mecca, in the given period, in the eyes of Muslims and non-Muslim travellers.

## The Travellers and the Background of Their Journey

The first traveller is Abū Muʿīn Ḥamīd al-Dīn Nāṣir ibn Khusraw, a renowned writer and scholar of the Ismaili school of Persian ethnic background. He was born in 1004 in Qabodiyon but later lived in Merv. Initially, he was a civil servant in charge of finances and running the country, serving Sultan Toghrul Beg, ruler of the Seljuk dynasty, who captured Merv in 1037. Based on his confession, in October–November 1045 (Rabiul Akhir 437), when Jupiter was at its highest point in the fragile zone, he prayed two cycles of prayer and then prayed to Allah to grant him prosperity. Subsequently, his prayers were answered, hence he immediately went to Djouzdjanan (Jowzjan), a district in Balkh Province, and spent a month there enjoying wine. However, in this city, one day he had a dream. In his dream he met someone who questioned him: "How long will you drink this wine which deprives man of reason? It would be better if you looked back on yourself." The wise man in his dream then proceeds with some advice:

> Loss of reason and self-possession... does not calm the mind;
> the sage cannot therefore recommend anyone to let himself
> be guided by madness. On the contrary, we must seek what
> increases the spirit and the intelligence (Ibn Khusraw, 1881,
> pp. 3-4).

Then, a man in his dream pointed towards the Qibla. After waking up, Ibn Khusraw realised that he had to abandon the life he had lived for forty years, hence he improved his conduct and changed his way of life. Therefore, on Thursday, 20 December 1045 (6 Djumadil Akhir 437), he purified himself and went to the mosque, asking Allah's help to give him the strength to fulfil His commands and gave up things that were forbidden by the religion (Islam). Subsequently, he left for Merv in order to express his desire to his superior to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, thereby resigning from the government position he had held so far. He also left notes and his possessions, except for important needs for his journey. His journey to Mecca began from Balkh on 4 March 1046 (23 Shaaban 437). Long story short, after going through many major cities in Persia, Iraq, Egypt, and Medina, Ibn Khusraw finally reached Mecca at the end of May 1047 (Dzulqaidah 438). He would later come again to Mecca for the second time on 16 May 1048 (end of Dzulqaidah 439), and for the third time on 19 September 1050 (the last day of Rabiul Akhir 442). His journey from Balkh to Mecca is outlined in his monumental work, Safarnama (Ibn Khusraw, 1881).

The second traveller is Abū al-Husayn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr, a geographer, poet and a scholar from al-Andalus who was of Arab descent. He was born in 1145 in Valencia. He was a descendant of 'Abd al-Salām ibn Jubayr of the Kinānah tribe, who joined an army sent by the Caliph in Damascus to al-Andalus in 740 to quell a Berber rebellion there. Later, Ibn Jubayr served as secretary to the governor of Granada which was under the rule of the Almohad caliphate.

According to the introductory note in his recently-reprinted travelogue, while serving as an official in Granada, it is said that Ibn Jubayr was forced by his superior to drink seven cups of wine. Even though he did not drink the wine, he felt so guilty, that he decided to atone for his "sin" by resigning from his position and then embarking on a pilgrimage to Mecca. However, the truth of this dramatic story cannot be ascertained because of the weak chain of the story, besides Ibn Jubayr does not mention this episode in his book (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). After his pilgrimage and journey to some other places, Ibn Jubayr returned to his country, despite seemingly only for a brief period. He eventually left al-Andalus and became a Sufi sheikh and teacher of Hadith in Alexandria.

Ibn Jubayr left Granada on 3 February 1183, accompanied by Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Ḥassan, a physician from Granada. Subsequently, on 24 February 1183, he boarded a Genoese ship bound for Cairo. On 4 August 1183 (13 Rabi'ul Akhir 579) he arrived in Mecca for the first time. His first pilgrimage experience was set forth in his *rihlah*, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr: A Medieval Journey from Cordoba to Jerusalem*, which was originally published in Arabic and was later published in English for the first time in 1852 (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, p. 20).

The third traveller is Abū 'Abdullah Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah al-Lawatī at-Tanjī ibn Battuta, a Berber scholar of Maghreb origin. Ibn Battuta was born into an Islamic jurist (*faqih*) family on 24 February 1304 in Tangier. His family came from the Lawata tribe. It seems that Ibn Battuta also had a qualification in literary and scholastic education (Gibb, 1958). Given his background, it is understandable that Ibn Battuta decided to depart for the Holy Land at the age of 22, in 1325. The purpose of his pilgrimage was not solely to fulfil religious demands, but also to seek opportunities to broaden his horizons, and to obtain more insightful knowledge from various sources, so that he would become a good and qualified scholar.

Ibn Battuta started his itinerary from Tangier and - after going through several important cities such as Tunis, Tripoli, Alexandria, Cairo, Damascus - he arrived in Mecca for the first time in mid-October 1326. He described his travel experience in detail in the voluminous *Masterpiece to Those Who Contemplate the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Traveling*, or better known simply as *Rihlah Ibn Battuta* (Ibn Battuta, 1958; Dunn, 1986). Perhaps, Ibn Battuta is the most famous Muslim traveller, not to mention that he also travelled more than any other medieval explorers, totalling around 117,000 km.

The fourth traveller is an emissary cum chronicler named Ma Huan, an important yet ill-known Chinese traveller, overshadowed by his far more famous superior, Admiral Zheng He. Ma Huan was born in 1380 into Ma family in Kuaiji, a district of Shaoxing, near Hangzhou bay. Although he humbly described himself as "the mountain woodcutter of Kuaiji," and despite the simplicity of his opening poem in his book, it is quite obvious that he was fairly well-educated, and that he was acquainted with Chinese classics and Buddhist books. Furthermore, he had previously received Arabic and Persian literacy lessons from

a scholar in his hometown, so that, while accompanying Zheng He, he also acted as a translator and interpreter (Mills, 1970). This is certainly understandable considering that in Hangzhou, a city Marco Polo described as a "noble and magnificent" and by Ibn Battuta as "the biggest city I have seen on the face of the earth," there used to be a village of Arab and Persian merchants (Polo, 1907, p. 314; Ibn Battuta, 1958, pp. 900–901; Bretschneider, 1871, p. 11; Hirth and Rockhill, 1911, pp. 102–204).

In 1413, when he was barely twenty-five years old, he was assigned to participate in Zheng He's expedition for the first time. In addition, Ma Huan was also assigned to accompany Zheng He in the latter's seventh and last expedition, departing in 1431. On this occasion, Ma Huan voyaged in a detached fleet under the commandership of eunuch Hung Pao which departed from China. This eunuch Hung Pao dispatched Ma Huan as emissary to Mecca, hence the latter landed in Mecca in the October 1432, after several stops at Bengal and Calicut. It is also said that, while in Mecca, Ma Huan fulfilled his obligations as a follower of "religion of the Heavenly Square (Mecca)," that is to say, Muslim (Mills, 1970, p. 35). The story of his adventures, as well as descriptions of places he visited, was set out in detail in *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan* (*The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores*), which was published for the first time in Chinese in 1451.

The fifth traveller was actually a non-Muslim, let alone visiting Mecca for a religious pilgrimage. Instead, he only stopped briefly at Mecca on his way to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. However, interestingly, he is the first non-Muslim to successfully visit Mecca, not to mention that his experience and description are also noteworthy. This person was Ludovico di Varthema, a nobleman who was born in Bologna in around 1470. Although very little is known about the further background of di Varthema, he did mention that he was the "most skilled maker of large mortars in the world," which might imply his occupation as a gunsmith. Furthermore, he also proclaimed that "I have found myself in some battles in my time...," which might indicate that he used to be a soldier as well (di Varthema, 1863, pp. 50 & 280).

The motive behind his travels is his curiosity about various foreign countries in the East - countries rarely frequented by the Venetians and Bolognese - and his desire to be adventurous, to feel, and to see first-hand

the situation there, and, in the end, to gain recognition from the public (di Varthema, 1863). Thus, his journey started from Venice, at the end of 1502, first to Cairo, and between April and June 1503 he had reached Mecca and stayed there for several weeks. His travel experiences are set forth in his book, *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Desert and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508*, which was first published in Rome in 1510, and later published in English for the first time in 1577.

## In Awe of the Holy City

### *The journey thither from adjacent towns*

In the first half of the 11th century, Ibn Khusraw made his first pilgrimage from Balkh to Mecca. After numerous stops at many towns in Persia, Syria and Palestine, he left Jerusalem for Mecca on 14 May 1047 (15 Dzulqaidah 438). After 13 days of journey, he finally arrived in Mecca, probably at the end of the same month. However, food was very scarce in Mecca at that time; there were no caravans from other countries there, which might indicate that there was famine in Mecca. Moreover, when he visited Arafat some time later, he also found out that everyone was in fear of Arabs attack, hence he abruptly ended his first pilgrimage and return to Jerusalem.

Roughly a year later, before arriving in Mecca for the second time, Ibn Khusraw made a stop in Egypt on 4 January 1048 (15 Radjab 439). There, it was announced that the sultan of Egypt would arrange a caravan, complete with the soldiers, horses, camels, and provisions, to secure the safety of for the pilgrims on their way to and in Mecca. However, later, still in the same year, another letter bearing the sultan's seal was publicly read and urged the public not to make the pilgrimage due to the famine that struck the Hejaz (Ibn Khusraw, 1881). Nevertheless, Ibn Khusraw, still bent on performing pilgrimage, departed from Qulzoum (Gulf of Suez) sailing to Medina, and continued on foot from Medina to Mecca, a distance of 100 fersengs.[3] After walking for

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[3] *Ferseng*, or *parasang*, is a historical Iranian unit of walking distance. One *ferseng* is equal to 4.8 or 5.6 km. Thus, the distance between Medina and Mecca, according to Ibn Khusraw's description, is equal to 480 or 560 km.

eight days across rocky ground, he arrived in Mecca around 16 May
1048 (end of Dhulqaidah 439) and encamped at the Gate of Safa. It
turned out that famine overtook this city and even the guards of the
Ka'aba (*mujawirin*) were forced to leave and no pilgrims came. As a
matter of fact, many people fled from the Hejaz. Even so, thanks to his
determination, Ibn Khusraw made time to perform the ritual on Mount
Arafat, before finally returning to Egypt (Ibn Khusraw, 1881).

For his third pilgrimage, Ibn Khusraw departed from Egypt and
arrived at Aydhab, one of the most important Egyptian Medieval ports,
on 11 August 1050 (20 Rabiul Awwal 442). He was forced to stay there
for three months since no ships leave for Jeddah at that time. When
the monsoon winds started to blow, he boarded a ship that departed
for Jeddah, heading north (Ibn Khusraw, 1881). On arrival at Jeddah,
which is 12 *fersengs*[4] away from Mecca, Ibn Khusraw received passes
(safe-conduct) from the governor of Jeddah, who was the servant of the
emir of Mecca, who stated that he was a scholar and did not need to
be taxed. Subsequently, he left Jeddah after Friday prayers and arrived
in Mecca on Sunday, 16 September 1050 (the last day of Rabiul Akhir
442[5]). While Ibn Khusraw did not specifically mention the name of the
*mīqāt* point, he recounts that he wore his *ihram* garment at "towers and
chapels" at the distance of half fersengs[6] from Mecca (Ibn Khusraw,
1881).

Similar to Ibn Khusraw's third pilgrimage made more than a century
earlier, Ibn Jubayr, who left Granada on 3 February 1183, departed from
Aydhab for Jeddah aboard the *jilabah* in an eight-days voyage across the
Red Sea that left him feeling "died and lived again" due to unrelenting
tempest (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). *Jilabah*, also known as *jalba* or *galbah*
(pl. *jilab*/*gilab* or *jalbāt*/*galbāt*), is an ancient watercraft of Sudano-
Egyptian or Arabic origins that was normally used to transport cargo
and pilgrims in the Red Sea and southern Arabian waters. According to
Ibn Jubayr, the *jilabah* he was aboard was made from planks that were
sewn together, without single nail, "with cord made from qinbar, which

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[4]  Equal to 57.6 or 67.2 km.

[5]  It is important to note that the last day of Rabiul Akhir 442 was actually on 19
    September 1050. However, Ibn Khusraw mentioned that he arrived at Mecca
    on Sunday, which was probably 16 September 1050.

[6]  Equal to 2,4 or 2,8 km.

is the fibre of the coconut and which the makers thrash until it takes the form of thread, which then they twist into a cord with which they sew the ships" (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, pp. 200; Agius, 2008; Hourani, 1951). While in Jeddah, Ibn Jubayr and the group of pilgrims were wrongly treated, and even treated worse than the treatment received by the *dhimmis* (i.e. Christians and Jews under tribute), by the local residents and authorities on the orders of the Emir of Mecca, Muktir ibn 'Īsā. The pilgrims, including Ibn Jubayr, were arrested and only released if they paid bail as a form of custom tax. Fortunately, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī sent 2,000 dinars and 2,002 *irdabh*[7] of wheat to the Emir of Mecca in order to cover pilgrims' customs dues (Ibn Jubayr, 2020).

In his travelogue, Ibn Jubayr recorded his grievance pertaining to this unjust treatment, and, in fact, as he recounts, al-Andalus jurists were of the opinion that pilgrimage (*hajj*) was not obligatory for Muslims since they were often faced with danger and treated badly by the people of the Hejaz. So irritated was he, to the extent that he stated that Hejaz is an Islamic land which sins must be washed away with bloodshed, because of the actions of Hejaz people - which included confiscation of property and banning the property of pilgrims and killing them, while employing deception and false pretexts - were in fact loosening up the Islamic brotherhood. On this occasion he also greatly praised the Almohad government who, according to him, managed to triumph Islam in al-Andalus and North Africa. He also praised the ability and achievements of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in ensuring the smoothness of pilgrimage (Ibn Jubayr, 2020).

After a short stay in Jeddah and after being bailed out by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, Ibn Jubayr left this town, which he described as a "village on the coast," on 2 August 1183 and stopped at al-Qurayn to rest from morning to evening. In this place there was a spring with sweet water, so that the pilgrims filled the provisions to continue their journey to Mecca, or, when the pilgrimage is finished, to Jeddah. At this al-Qurayn, which he thought to be the *mīqāt* point, the pilgrims began to put on their *ihram* garment and then made their way to Mecca at night. When marching at night, under the full moonlight, the pilgrims recite *talbiyah* formula together, and sometimes add prayers. So arrived Ibn

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[7]  2,002 irdabh is equal to 146 metric tonnes.

Jubayr and his entourage at the Umrah Gate in Mecca on 4 August 1183 (13 Rabiul Akhir 579) (Ibn Jubayr, 2020).

Meanwhile, Ibn Battuta, at the age of twenty-two, intended to perform the pilgrimage and visited the Prophet's Tomb in Medina. He departed from Tangier on Thursday, 13 June 1325 (1 Rajab 725). As mentioned in his account, at first he set out on the journey alone, though later accompanied by an entourage, determined "to leave all my lovers, women and men, and leave my house like a bird leaves its nest" (Ibn Battuta, 1958, p. 8). Ibn Battuta approached Mecca via Medina, in contrast to the previous two travellers who departed from Aydhab to Jeddah, then to Mecca. However, it is important to note that, initially, it seemed that Ibn Battuta also intended to cross the Red Sea from Aydhab, but he was unable to take this route any further due to enmity between Mamluk sultanate and Aydhab ruler, al-Hadrabi, which caused the latter to sink the ships that belonged to the former. Thus, he had to return to Cairo (Ibn Battuta, 1958).

From Cairo, Ibn Battuta continued his journey to Damascus and then from there to Mecca. On the way from Damascus to Mecca, he stopped at Taiba (Medina), probably in early October 1326. Upon arrival there, the caravan of pilgrims stopped at al-Salām Gate in the Prophet's Mosque, after which they prayed in the garden (*al-rawḍah al-saghīrah*) which is located between the Prophet's Tomb and his pulpit. Ibn Battuta and his entourage encamped in Medina for four days, and spent every night at the Prophet's Mosque to read the Qur'an while sitting in a circle (*halaqah*). At this occasion, some of them also made *dzikr* (remembrance), contemplated at the Prophet's Tomb, offered prayers in that blessed site, and gave alms to the needy (Ibn Battuta, 1958). It is clear that, from a lengthy description in his book, Ibn Battuta spent his time observing various sacred buildings in Medina, interacting with several scholars and pious people who resided in this city. After completing their activities in Medina, the pilgrims headed towards Mecca, but first stopped for a moment at the Dhul Hulayfa Mosque, the *mīqāt* point. There, the entourage bathed and cleaned themselves, put on their *ihram* garments, and performed 2 *rak'ah* of sunnah prayers. After that, the *talbiyah* formula accompanied the pilgrims' journey along the valleys and hills, and then camped at al-Rawha, al-Safra, Badr, until they finally arrived in Mecca one morning in mid-October 1326 (Ibn Battuta, 1958).

Unlike the previous three travellers, the fourth, Ma Huan, took the sea route almost entirely. On 19 June 1430, Emperor Xuande issued an edict ordering Zheng He and several other admirals to sail west, in which the chroniclers of the voyage were required to record the strange things which they heard. The participants of this expedition included soldiers, ship crews, interpreters, businessmen, doctors, craftsmen, and various other professions with a total of 27,500 people (Mills, 1970). Ma Huan was assigned as Zheng He's staff and official interpreter, despite the fact that he was not voyaged with his fleet, but with Hung Pao's.

The Hung Pao's fleet consisted of hundreds of ships which departed from Longwan (Dragon bay) in Nanjing, on 19 January 1431, heading straight to Bengal then to Calicut. From Calicut, Ma Huan was sent to Mecca with seven Chinese emissaries. From Calicut, the ship was sailed southwest and had to voyage for three months before finally anchoring at the port called Chih-ta (Jeddah). From Chih-ta, Ma Huan and his entourage headed east for a day until they finally arrived at the city of Mo-ch'ieh (Mecca), probably in the second half of 1432 (Ma Huan, 1970).

As for the last traveller, Ludovico di Varthema, he was not a Muslim who went to Mecca for religious pilgrimage. Thus, at the end of 1502, by spreading the sails after praying for protection, di Varthema reinforced his intention to sail to Alexandria. Upon arriving there, because he longed for novelty, di Varthema immediately continued his journey to Cairo, and then to Damascus. He described Damascus as very beautiful, extremely populous and rich, and inhabited by many Moors (i.e. Muslims), Mamluks, who were renegade Christians, and also Greek Christians. It was also in Damascus that di Varthema stayed for several months in order to learn the Moorish language (i.e. Arabic) (di Varthema, 1863).

Subsequently, on April 8, 1503, di Varthema left Damascus for Mecca, which the distance is forty days and forty nights from the former city. On this trip, he befriended the captain of a Mamluk caravan who provided him with Mamluk clothing and a horse. In doing so, he was able to disguise himself as a Mamluk (i.e. Muslim). He said to the captain that he was a Roman who became Moor in Cairo, therefore he was allowed to become a member of the Mamluk guard which consisted of sixty men, whose job was to protect this caravan of 35,000 camels

and 40,000 men (di Varthema, 1863). Their journey to Mecca was not so
smooth, as they were attacked several times by groups of Bedouin Arab,
including being stopped at a place they called Sodom and Gomorrah,
which was a mountain range called Akabet el-Shami according to the
editor of the book, because they could not afford to pay for water (di
Varthema, 1863). The caravan continued its journey and, around mid-
May 1503, they arrived at Medinathalnabi (Medina).

The caravan stopped at Medinathalnabi for three days and di
Varthema took the time to visit the Prophet's Mosque and the Prophet's
Tomb. In his account, di Varthema describes the two buildings in
sufficient detail, while inserting somewhat resentful comments on the
Prophet Muhammad and his companions. After Medina, di Varthema
and the caravan continued their journey to Mecca, which took several
days, and arrived on 18 May 1503. Interestingly, later, while on the way
from Mecca to Jeddah, di Varthema's cover was almost blown, hence
he lied that, supported by the Mamluk attire he wore, he was a Roman
who became a Mamluk in Cairo (di Varthema, 1863). His dishonesty
was fruitful, and he managed to travel further to Malay-Indonesian
Archipelago before eventually returned safely to Italy.

### *Geographical and socio-economic situation of Mecca*

In general, Mecca was well and brightly-painted by the five travellers,
even though di Varthema, as a non-Muslim, seemingly had mixed-
feelings towards the city and sometimes did not shy away from
shedding negative comments about the Holy City, Islam and Prophet
Muhammad. Arriving in the later part of the 12th century, Ibn Jubayr,
in the spirit of pilgrims, described Mecca as a noble sacred place, "It
is the Haram [sacred precinct] of God, and His place of security... the
source of inspiration and revelation... was the resort of the prophets of
God and his noble apostles." Ibn Jubayr was also of the opinion that
the greatness and wealth of the Holy City, since ancient times, were
the fruit of the prayers of Prophet Ibrahim (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, pp. 130–
132).[8] Meanwhile, rougly a century and half later, Ibn Battuta called

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[8] Here are Prophet Ibrahim's prayers for Mecca: "My Lord, make this city
of Mecca secure and provide fruits to its people—those among them who
believe in Allah and the Last Day" (al-Baqarah, verses 126); "My Lord!

Mecca the "city of surety," and illustrated it as large and compactly-build town with oblong shape, located in the hollow of valley, and he also ascribed the glory and wealth of Mecca with the blessed prayer or Prophet Ibrahim (Ibn Battuta, 1958, pp. 187 and 190–191). Ma Huan did not score any eulogy about Mecca, while di Varthema described the "very noble city of Mecca" as the "most beautiful city" (di Varthema, 1863, p. 35).

Ibn Khusraw, who arrived in Mecca in mid-September 1050, related that Mecca stood in a valley that stretched between majestic mountains. According to him, the length and width of Mecca did not exceed two arrows shot. At the southern tip of Mecca there is Jabal Abu Qubeis, on the slopes of which are two hills called Safa and Marwah. He observed that the climate of Mecca was extremely hot (Ibn Khusraw, 1881). However, during his visit to Mecca (in September 1183) Ibn Jubayr experienced a rather unusual weather in Mecca. The heat that was usually brought by *samum* (the notorious hot wind) was alleviated, hence he and other pilgrims would spend the night on the roofs of houses covered with blankets to protect themselves from the cold of the night (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). Ma Huan added that Mecca was always hot, all year round, like summer and without rain, lightning, frost, or snow, despite its heavy dew at night (Ma Huan, 1970). Meanwhile, di Varthema was of the opinion that, since there were neither grasses nor trees around it, Mecca has been cursed by God (di Varthema, 1863, p. 37).

In the mid-11th century, as set forth by Ibn Khusraw, the well of water in Mecca tasted brackish and bitter, hence almost impossible to drink from. In order to provide better quality water, ten thousand dinars must be spent to dig lots of basins and reservoirs which were used to collect rainwater that flowed down from the canyon. In addition, in Mecca there was an underground aqueduct, or conduit (*qanats*), built by the emir of Aden. The water that flew through this aqueduct came from a basin outside the city, which first flew to Arafat for agricultural

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Make this city of Mecca secure, and keep me and my children away from the worship of idols.... Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley, near Your Sacred House, our Lord, so that they may establish prayer. So make the hearts of believing people incline towards them and provide them with fruits, so perhaps they will be thankful" (al-Balad verses 35 and 37).

irrigation purposes, so that only a small amount of water reached Mecca. However, Ibn Khusraw later narrated that it was the son of Chad Dil, the emir of Aden, who ordered the construction of those basins. The purpose of this costly project was to provide water for the pilgrims (Ibn Khusraw, 1881; Peters, 2017). According to Ibn Battuta, there was another underground acquaduct which channelled water that came from a gushing spring in a place named Khulais, which was located outside Mecca. Moreover, apparently a gushing spring at Marr al-Zuhran (now called Wadi Fatima) also provided Meccan inhabitants with water (Ibn Battuta, 1958). In addition, Ibn Khusraw also mentioned the importance of *bir ez zahid* (the well of the religious) in his time, which was located just outside of Mecca, in providing palatable water which, in turn, was distributed and sold in Mecca. Due to heavy dew in the Holy City, another method to collect water in Mecca was, according to Ma Huan, "by put out an empty bowl to receive it until day-break, the dew-water will be 3 *fen* [deep] in the bowl" (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 176).[9] As if confirming Ibn Khusraw's four-and-a-half-centuries earlier account, di Varthema recounted that at the foot of Mount Arafat there were two very beautiful reservoirs to collect rainwater, and other water which was transported from many faraway places, in order to fulfil the needs of the inhabitants of Mecca (di Varthema, 1863).

Despite that fact, di Varthema maintained that the inhabitants of Mecca suffered from serious dearth of water so that, in order to fulfil their daily needs of water, they needed to spend more than 4 *quattrini* (di Varthema, 1863, p. 37). The presence of the well of Zamzam, which lies at the heart of Mecca as eternal source of water, must not be overlooked and underestimated. This well, according to Ibn Khusraw, "lies to the east outside the Ka'abah.... The water is drinkable, although it tastes brackish" (Ibn Khusraw, 1881, p. 205). Nevertheless, by the time of his pilgrimage, Ibn Jubayr seemingly found that Zamzam water had become more palatable and tasted like "milk coming from the udder of the camels." So miraculous and beneficial was the water that, he added, if one poured it on his/her body, all fatigues would be relieved and that he/she would be enlivened in an instant (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, pp. 140–141). Correspondingly, Ibn Battuta stated that the water in this well also miraculously increased in volume on the eve of each Friday (Ibn

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[9] 3 *fen* is equal to 0,3 inch.

Battuta, 1958). Ma Huan called this well A-pi-San-san, which contained pure and sweet water. It was usually stored, in their ship, by people who travelled to faraway places so that, if they met typhoon at the sea, the water could be scattered so "the wind and water are lulled" (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 177). Meanwhile, di Varthema related that the belief and tradition among the pilgrims in his time was to draw three buckets full of water from this well - a structure he described as "very beautiful" – and to bathe with it from head to feet. People believed that, by reciting *basmallah* and *istighfar* and bathing simultaneously, their sins would be washed away by the water (di Varthema, 1863, pp. 40–41).

According to Ibn Khusraw, who stayed in Mecca from 19 November 1050 (1 Rajab 442) to 29 April 1051 (15 Zulhijjah 442), at the time of his visit, Mecca was inhabited by not more than 2,000 men, while the rest were 500 *mujāwirīn* or foreigners (Ibn Khusraw, 1881). In the early 16th century, di Varthema recounted that Mecca was very well-inhabited by around 6,000 families who lived in extremely good houses, and some of the houses worth 3,000 or 4,000 *ducats* each (di Varthema, 1863). Ibn Battuta maintained that the residents of Mecca "are given to well-doing, of consummate generosity and good disposition." Therefore, it is not surprising if the customs among them was to act kindly towards strangers, the poor, and those who devoted their lives to religious life. It was customary for the residents of Mecca to invite them "with courtesy, kindness and delicacy, and then giving them to eat," or bought grain, meat and vegetables for orphans, or even invited them to eat. As far as fashion and physical attributes are concerned, Ibn Battuta found that

> The Meccans are elegant and clean in their dress, and as they mostly wear white their garments always appear spotless and snowy. They use perfume freely, paint their eyes with *kuhl*, and are constantly picking their teeth with slips of green arak-wood (made from *Salvadora persica*). The Meccan women are of rare and surpassing beauty, pious and chaste. They too make much use of perfumes .... (Ibn Battuta, 1958, p. 215–216)

Ma Huan described the physical features of inhabitants of Mecca as follows:

> The people of this country are stalwart and fine-looking, and their limbs and faces are of a very dark purple colour. The menfolk bind up their heads; they wear long garments; [and] on their feet they put leather shoes. The women all wear a covering over their heads, and you cannot see their faces ....
> (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 174)

Ma Huan proceeded by expressing his astonishment on the orderly of the inhabitants of Mecca:

> The law of the country prohibits wine-drinking. The customs of the people are pacific and admirable. There are no poverty-stricken families. They all observe the precepts of their religion, and law-breakers are few. It is in truth a most happy country. As to the marriage-and funeral-rites: they all conduct themselves in accordance with the regulations of their religion. (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 174)

It is also important to note that imams became the pillar of community in Mecca, and Ibn Jubayr mentioned four imams of Sunnite, and one Zaydi imam, living in Mecca at that time. While not giving the number of the population of Mecca, Ibn Jubayr related that, in the second half of 12th century, the houses in Mecca, especially those that surrounded the Masjid al-Haram, had high roofs with belvederes. The inhabitants used to pass the night and cool the waters on that roof; they looked upon the Ka'bah and prayed (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). Ibn Jubayr's description about the houses in Mecca was later confirmed by Ibn Battuta, who also provided some details about the location of the houses which belonged to notable and pious figures during and after Prophet Muhammad's era. In addition, Ibn Battuta also compiled a long list of virtuous and pious figures who resided in Mecca, including their deeds, habits, customs, "miracles," thoughts and stories surrounding their lives (Ibn Battuta, 1958).

Masjid al-Haram was surrounded by bazaars. In the time of Ibn Khusraw, many houses were built at the foot of Marwah, and there was also a bazaar "containing twenty shops placed opposite each other; they are all occupied by barbers who shave the heads of pilgrims"; the length of the bazaar was 50 paces (Ibn Khusraw, 1881, pp. 184–187; Ibn Jubayr, 2020, p. 122). In the 12th century, Ibn Jubayr recorded that, in the months of Rajab, Sha'ban and Ramadhan, the ground between Safa

and Marwah was flooded by foods, a sight that he never encountered anywhere else, including in Egypt (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). According to Ibn Khusraw, there were two baths in Mecca, the bases of which were made of green stones (Ibn Khusraw, 1881). More than a century later, Ibn Jubayr mentioned that the two baths were named after two important scholars, Jamāl al-Dīn and al-Mayanishī (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). Ibn Khusraw mentioned that the caliph in Baghdad built shelters in this city, which were intended for pilgrims from Khorasan, Iraq, Transoxiana, and other places; but now some of the buildings had collapsed or been converted into private buildings (Ibn Khusraw, 1881).

Apparently, by the time of Ibn Khusraw's visit to the holy city, the remnants of the Hejaz famine that occurred in 1047 still lingers, therefore food was expensive and many people migrated. However, Ibn Khusraw witnessed a joyful sight in the month of Behmen Mâh 428 (around end of January 1050) of the Persian calendar: cucumbers (*badrengs*) and new aubergines were seen in Mecca. Later, on 15 Farvardin 430 (March–April 1051)  "ripe grapes brought from the countryside which were sold at the market; on the 1st day of Ordibehesht 430 (April–May 1051) melons were abundant. Throughout the winter, there are fruits in large quantities and they never ran out" (Ibn Khusraw, 1881, pp. 150 and 190). In similar vein, Ibn Jubayr was amazed to witness that Mecca was overflowing with good foodstuff, including fruits ranging from figs, dates, grapes, pomegranates, quince, peaches, lemons, walnuts, almonds, raisins, palm-fruit, water-melons, to cucumbers, and all the vegetables like eggplant, pumpkin, carrot, cauliflower and other aromatic and sweet-smelling plants. He also highlighted the distinguished quality of water-melons that "its odour is the most fragrant of smells and the best .... and when you taste it, it seems to you like sugar-candy or purest honey" (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, p. 137–138). In similar vein, Ibn Battuta maintained that the quality of foodstuffs in Mecca were unrivalled in the world, while the flavour and sweetness of melons brought there were also peerless (Ibn Battuta, 1958).

As an Andalusian who felt that situation back home is better than anywhere else, Ibn Jubayr seemed to be overjoyed to find that vegetables flowed into Mecca uninterruptedly all year round, and all the fruit and vegetables there tasted extraordinary compared to the other places. These fruits and vegetables were imported from nearby places, such as al-Taif, Udum which was also located in Taif valley, Batn Marr, Wadi

Nakhlah, 'Ayn Sulayman, as well as Yemen. Ibn Jubayr also highlighted the importance of people from Maghreb, with proper skills in tillage and husbandry, as the reason for the fertility of above-mentioned lands (Ibn Jubayr, 2020; Ibn Battuta, 1958). Ibn Battuta related that, in the middle of the 14th century, fruits and vegetables were also brought from Marr al-Zuhran, which was a blessed fertile valley, where many date palms grew and were well irrigated due to its proximity to a flowing water source (Ibn Battuta, 1958). The abundance of fruits and vegetables in Mecca was also confirmed by Ma Huan during his pilgrimage in 1432, and he added that the people of Mecca, or around it, cultivated unhusked rice, wheat, black millet, but rice and grain were scarce. Moreover, he mentioned about the cultivation of "a kind of tree with twisted flowers, like the large mulberry-tree of the Central Country; it is 1 or 2 *chang* in height; the flowers blossom twice a year; [and] it lives to a great age without withering" (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 176).[10]

As far as meat is concerned, Ibn Jubayr said that the meat in Mecca was wonderful, and that many people, who had gone across the horizon and traversed many regions on earth, admitted that the meat in Mecca was the best they had ever eaten. The fatter the meat is, he added, "the more appetizing and acceptable it is, and you will find it so tasty and tender that it will melt in the mouth before you bite it, and for its lightness be speedily digested by the stomach" (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, pp. 138–139). Ibn Jubayr ascribed this high quality of meat with the goodness of the pastures. Meanwhile, Ibn Battuta found out that meat in Mecca was fatty and "exceedingly delicious in taste" (Ibn Jubayr, 1958, pp. 191). With regards to animals, Ma Huan mentioned many kinds of animals in Mecca, such as camels, horses, donkeys, mules, oxen, goats, cats, dogs, fowls, geese, ducks, and pigeons (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 176).

In addition to fruits, vegetables and meats, honey could also be found in Mecca, which was called *al-mas'udi*, which was of better quality than *al-mahdi* honey. Furthermore, Ibn Jubayr mentioned the imported sugar cane, sugar and confectionaries, in all kinds of unusual forms, "with honey and thickened sugar in many shapes, including imitations of all the fruits, fresh and dry." As for dairy products, in Mecca there were various types of high-quality milk as well as butter made out of milk that is as sweet as honey" (Ibn Jubayr, 2020, p. 138). As far as general

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[10] 1 chang is equal to 10 feet 2 inches.

foodstuffs are concerned, di Varthema related that, in the early 16th century, they were imported from Cairo, Zidda (Jeddah), Arabia Felix (southern coast of Arabian Peninsula) and Ethiopia (di Varthema, 1863).

In terms of trade, Mecca, although not an entrepot like Jeddah, could also be considered flourished. Although trade there was only conducted during the pilgrimage season, the people who flooded Mecca from the east and west brought with them a great deal of merchandises, ranging from pearls, precious stones, many kinds of perfumes and odoriferous including musk, camphor, amber, and aloes, cotton, silk, to drugs. Furthermore, in this city one can also find products produced by neighbouring countries, such as Syria, Iraq, Khorasan (Persia), India Major and Minor, Ethiopia, and Yemen. Di Varthema admitted that, during the 20 days he remained there, he "never saw so many people collected in one spot.... Of these people some had come for the purposes of trade, and some on pilgrimage for their pardon" (di Varthema, 1863, pp. 37–38; Peters, 2017, pp. 24–33).

Despite the other four travellers not mentioning Mecca's products, during his visit, Ma Huan somehow listed some merchandises produced by the Holy City, which included rose-water, *an-pa-erh* (*ambergrist*) incense, *ch'i-lin* (giraffe), lions, the "camel-fowl" (ostrich), the antelope, the "fly-o'er-the-grass" (lynx), all kinds of precious stones, pearls, corals, amber, etc. (Ma Huan, 1970, p. 176). However, Ma Huan was alone in mentioning the names of these animals and was not supported by the narratives of the other travellers.

As the true magnet that attracts many travellers to visit Mecca, Masjid al-Haram stands at the heart of the Holy City and occupies an extensive area, with the Ka'bah in the centre of it. According to Ibn Battuta, "The aspect of the mosque is [so] exquisite, its outward sight [so] beautiful [that] no tongue could presume to describe its attractions, and no voice of description do justice to the charm of its perfection" (Ibn Battuta, 1958, p. 191). Even di Varthema portrayed Masjid al-Haram as a "very beautiful temple, similar to Colosseum of Rome," with sweet-smelling temple (i.e. the Ka'bah) full with spicery and delicious odours (di Varthema, 1863, pp. 38–39). While all travellers agreed that this holiest mosque in Islamic world was surrounded by rectangle, or rather oblong, walls, it is important to note that there are discrepancies concerning the detailed description of Masjid al-Haram. As far as the

number of gates surrounding the mosque is concerned, Ibn Khusraw mentioned the existence of 18 of them, while Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta agreed that there are 19 gates in Masjid al-Haram. Ma Huan specified that there were 466 openings on that wall, while di Varthema stated that there were around 90 or 100 doors on that wall (Ibn Khusraw, 1881; Ibn Jubayr, 2020; Ibn Battuta, 1958; Ma Huan, 1970; di Varthema, 1863). As for the minarets, Ibn Khusraw and Ibn Jubayr agreed that there were seven of them. Ibn Battuta counted that there were five minarets, and Ma Huan reckoned that the number were four, while di Varthema did not mention any minaret (Ibn Khusraw, 1881; Ibn Jubayr, 2020; Ibn Battuta, 1958; Ma Huan, 1970).

As for the interior of Masjid al-Haram, Ibn Khusraw described that it was surrounded by "three galleries covered with a wooden roof supported by marble columns," and that those marbles were imported from Syria and, at the order of caliph in Baghdad, transported therefrom via sea route (Ibn Khusraw, 1881, pp. 194–195). Not did he mention the existence of 471 marble columns, Ibn Jubayr also illustrated that the circumambulation (ṭawāf) area in the Masjid al-Haram was covered with very beautiful marble-like-polished granite. In addition, his description about the existence of circumambulation area specifically for women, which was located at the edge of paved stones, might imply the enactment of sex segregation in the circumambulation ritual in the later part of 12th century (Ibn Jubayr, 2020). Ibn Battuta confirmed the existence of 490 tall marble pillars, hence, the number is slightly different from that of Ibn Jubayr's. In similar vein, Ma Huan mentioned that the roof of Heavenly Hall Mosque (i.e. the Masjid al-Haram) was supported by 467 pillars made of white jade stone (Ma Huan, 1970). According to di Varthema, from the gate of Masjid al-Haram, one must descend ten or twelve steps of marble before they finally reached the "temple" (i.e. the Ka'bah) at the heart of the holy mosque. Upon descending, he found out that there were many arches, under which "4,000 or 5,000 persons, men and women, which persons sell all kinds of odoriferous things; the greater part are powders for preserving human bodies, because pagans come there from all parts of the world" (di Varthema, 1863, pp. 38–39). The presence of those merchandises explains the "sweet-smelling" of the Ka'bah, as mentioned earlier.

Aside from the descriptions of the exterior and interior of Masjid al-Haram, all five travellers offer rather long and detailed descriptions

about other essential parts of the holy mosque. Ibn Khusraw, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Battuta and di Varthema made some very informative depictions concerning the exterior and interior of the Ka'bah, including its waterspout (*mizab*), its curtain (*kiswah*), the opening of its door as well as customs and traditions related to it, and the sacred black stone (*hajar al-aswad*); imprint on stone of Prophet Ibrahim's feet (*maqam Ibrāhīm*); the well of Zamzam and the buildings nearby; and even the customs and traditions surrounding the Eid al-Adha as well as the commencement of ritual of slaughter (Ibn Khusraw, 1881; Ibn Jubayr, 2020; Ibn Battuta, 1958; di Varthema, 1863). However, since the broadness of the information about those buildings will require a whole, thorough and separated study, this article does not discuss that information.

## Conclusion

The journey of Ibn Khusraw to Mecca has been quite eventful, and his travelogue can be considered as a complete account and cover some essential parts of Mecca and the situation surrounding his pilgrimage. More importantly, his account also covers many places further inland of Arabia Desert, as well as describes geographical situations and many local communities, and their stories, in and around Mecca. It is safe to say that his account on Mecca is comfortably concise and easy to read, not to mention that he often includes the exact date of most of the events he experienced. As a man who devoted his journey to Mecca as a spiritual journey, it is not surprising if Ibn Jubayr provides lengthy description regarding situation of Mecca, in nearly a hundred pages. He also makes architectural description of Masjid al-Haram and the Ka'bah with particular detail. He covers the essential parts of Mecca, including the sacred places in and around it, the procession and situation surrounding the pilgrimage, and he includes numerous stories about some individuals. Like Ibn Khusraw, he provides some geographical information of Mecca, as well as commerce in the region. Interestingly, Ibn Jubayr revealed some unfavourable situations surrounding his pilgrimage to Mecca, especially the corruption of the ruler of Jeddah and Mecca, and the wickedness of some local communities.

As pilgrim and eminent scholar of Islam, Ibn Battuta's account does not only cover the physical description of Mecca in his time, but also numerous sites of sacred places, including the houses of earliest follower

of Islam (*tābiʿīn*), as a guidance for his reader. Furthermore, he listed many pious individuals during his visit, along with their virtues, good deeds, and habits, so that the reader can reap some lessons from the story of their lives. However, sadly, many sacred places with historical importance which were recorded by Ibn Battuta have been demolished in the 20th century since the current government of Saudi Arabia, which happens to be a staunch proponent of Ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb's teachings, decided to expand the Masjid al-Haram and make way to further development of the Holy City in order to provide more extensive services for the future pilgrims (Taylor, 2012). Rather different from three previous accounts, Ma Huan's travelogue highlights more of the economic situation in Mecca and also the social conditions of its inhabitants. This is understandable since *Ying-Yai Sheng-Lan* was meant to be an official record which, in turn, was to be reported to the Emperor of China, especially considering that the writer was indeed ordered to "record the strange things" (Mills, 1970, p. 15). As for di Varthema, it is safe to say that he was indeed very devoted to adventure, and we can see that from his willingness to disguise as a Mamluk and learn Arabic and the fact that he, and his caravan, was willing to put their lives on the line when faced with some raids on their way to Mecca. Quite similar with Ibn Khusraw, Ibn Jubayr, and Ibn Battuta, he includes descriptions of interesting places around Mecca, as well as the essential parts of Mecca in sufficient detail and with enthusiasm. Sometimes he painted Mecca brightly, which might imply the sincerity of his writing. However, given the fact that he was a Christian, it is not surprising that sometimes he inserts discordant comments about the sanctity of Prophet Muhammad and Islamic holy sites.

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# Unveiling Historical Trajectory and Civilisational Evolution: A Comparative Examination Through the Lenses of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler

## Zhilwan Tahir[1] and Abdulwahed Jalal Nori[2]

**Abstract:** This research article examines the comparative perspectives of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler regarding the progression of history and the advancement of civilisations. This article aims to argue that Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler shared a similar perspective on the progression and decline of nations and civilisations. At the same time, they had different perspectives as they lived in distinct historical periods. The study posits that their perspectives on history, society and civilisation are characterised by a reduced level of subjectivity and a greater emphasis on rationality. The analysis reveals that despite their shared cyclical historical patterns, there exist notable disparities on the mechanisms behind the growth of civilisations and the conceptualisation of civilisation's lifespan. The interpretations and definitions of history and civilisation put forward by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler have had a profound impact on the field of human sciences, fostering notable advancements. To attain a high level of accuracy, this study uses qualitative research techniques as a means to accomplish its aims. Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler possessed a comprehensive perspective of culture and history and the processes through which history unfolds. When discussing history, individuals tend to adopt a particular perspective and contemplate on the various facets

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of the subject matter. A comprehensive examination is warranted to enhance comprehension of their theoretical framework and grasp of the aforementioned topic..

**Keywords:** Ibn Khaldun, Oswald Spengler, civilisation, history, *aṣabiyyah*, culture

## Introduction

When it comes to comprehending and analysing history, there are two prominent schools of thought that play a crucial role: the cyclical theory and the linear theory. Advocates of the cyclical theory propose that history can be likened to a living organism, with each society experiencing a recurring life cycle referred to as the phenomenon of cyclical change. In contrast, the proponents of linear theory argue that history consistently progresses ahead, and linear evolutionism is defined by the recognition of sequential phases that lead towards a predetermined objective. A linear theory of historical development suggests a constant and one-way advancement from a primitive or underdeveloped society to a more sophisticated or developed state. This paradigm posits that human societies progress in a linear manner, with each stage of advancement building upon the accomplishments of the preceding stage. For instance, advocates of the linear theory of historical progression contend that human cultures have advanced from a condition of savagery to a condition of barbarism, and subsequently to a condition of civilisation. This concept posits that each phase of evolution is distinguished by distinct cultural, social and economic attributes, which are considered to be universal and relevant to all human cultures. The primary distinction between a linear theory of historical development and a cyclical theory lies in their conceptualisation of progression. The former asserts a consistent and one-way advancement, whilst the latter suggests a recurrence of cycles or patterns across time. Notable historians who have attempted to understand history through the concept of a cyclical progression of civilisations include the medieval Islamic sociologist Ibn Khaldun and the contemporary German philosopher Oswald Spengler. Although they resided in distinct eras, both individuals were firmly convinced of the soundness and apparent veracity of the cyclical idea of historical progression. This comparative study aims to re-examine

the perspectives of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler about historical development. It also aims to summarise history and civilisation as seen by these two prominent philosophers. Ibn Khaldun opined that cultures move through tribal, sedentary, thriving and decrepit eras. This includes moving from nomadism to urbanism. Meanwhile, Spengler regarded civilisations as living creatures with a genesis and a completion. This means that every civilisation has a lifecycle with periods of ascent, fulfilment and decay moulded by cultural and creative advances. This comparative study compares these two perspectives, examining the numerous factors that shaped their ideas and their consequences for historical interpretation and understanding.

## Overview of Historical Approaches by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler

Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), a 14th-century Arab historian, sociologist and philosopher, gained recognition for his significant contributions to history and his theoretical insights on the cyclical nature of civilisations' ascent and decline. Ibn Khaldun, who hailed from Tunis, dedicated much of his life to serving as a diplomat and judge in several urban centres across North Africa. His most notable contribution is the book titled *Muqaddimah*, which comprehensively analyses human society and its historical progression. In this seminal work, Ibn Khaldun postulated a cyclical trajectory of civilisations, characterised by phases of expansion, zenith, deterioration and ultimate disintegration. He ascribed these oscillations to the degree of societal cohesiveness and the potency of the ruling dynasty.

In his seminal work titled *The Decline of the West*, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936), a renowned 20th-century German historian, delved into similar concepts. He expounded a gloomy perspective on the course of history, positing that the collapse of civilisations is an inevitable consequence of their inherent limits and cyclical patterns. Drawing from diverse historical illustrations, Spengler observed that societies follow a predictable pattern of ascent and decline before eventually succumbing to the influences exerted by internal and external forces. He believed that cultural and artistic manifestations serve as a means to gain insight into the essence of a society and can serve as indicators of its eventual deterioration. Despite facing criticisms for his deterministic viewpoint,

Spengler's work continues to have a significant influence in the fields of history and cultural criticism.

It is important to note that the worlds in which Ibn Khaldun and Spengler flourished were very distinct from one another. Ibn Khaldun resided in an era characterised by substantial political and social turmoil, which undoubtedly influenced his intellectual perspectives. He experienced the ascent and decline of multiple Islamic empires and dynasties, and directly witnessed the consequences of their economic and political transformations on society. He prioritised the significance of comprehending the historical backdrop in which events unfold and the influence that economic and social elements have on defining the trajectory of history. Meanwhile, the historical milieu in which Spengler resided undoubtedly exerted a substantial influence on his contemplation of the deterioration of Western culture and the impact of history on the formation of human communities. His thoughts were shaped by the political and social transformations occurring in Europe during that period, together with the particular historical circumstances of Germany following World War I as well as the emergence of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. According to him, democracy was a symptom of the cultural levelling that was occurring in Europe at the time, and its ascent indicated the collapse of Western civilisation. The political shifts that occurred in Europe following World War I, such as the emergence of democratic administrations and the dissolution of old aristocratic institutions, probably had an impact on this viewpoint.

## Purpose and Scope of the Study

This article aims to compare the perspectives of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler on the nature of historical events in human history, taking into account the ongoing discourse among historians and philosophers in both Western and Muslim societies. Undoubtedly, a substantial body of literature exists about historical events spanning several epochs, including ancient, medieval, modern and current eras. One prevalent theory that has influenced the thinking of several intellectuals and philosophers is the concept of cyclical development. The significance of this approach to historical study lies in its emphasis on developing a comprehensive and rigorous theoretical framework for the field. Nevertheless, the majority of historical literature fails to

extend beyond the narrative phase. A fundamental understanding of the phenomena of development and transition across different historical contexts is necessary for exploring and examining the trajectory of history. Moreover, this study will especially compare the foundations of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler's perspectives and approaches used in analysing the character and substance of historical occurrences, including notions about sovereign authority and civilisation. This article is anticipated to serve as an instructive resource for anyone with an interest in this particular domain, owing to the extensive and profound concepts advanced by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler about the trajectory of history and the process of societal reconstruction.

## Organisation of the Discussion

This article is structured into three main parts. First explains Ibn Khaldun's perspective on the rise and fall of civilisation through the concepts of *umrān* (societal advancement) and *aṣabiyyah* (social cohesion). Oswald Spengler's historical analysis is also discussed here. It demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts relevant to the topic of the study. It also provides the broader areas of knowledge under consideration. Second, the article compares Ibn Khaldun's perspective to Oswald Spengler's on the rise of sovereign powers and civilisation to uncover their similarities and differences. Third, the applicability, narrow scope and generalisation of their views in contemporary society are briefly discussed.

## Theoretical Framework of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler

Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler share and differ in their methods for interpreting historical events. Ibn Khaldun studied the cycle of society, especially the transition from nomadic to established civilisations and the collapse and rise of new civilisations. He utilised Birth, Youth, Maturity and Death metaphors to explain his ideas. Meanwhile, according to Spengler, civilisations go through spring, summer, autumn, and winter phases, just as the seasons in a year. Social, political, and economic circumstances impact Ibn Khaldun's and Spengler's phases.

**Figure 1**: Ibn Khaldun's Theory of Civilisation



**Figure 2**: Oswald Spengler's Theory of Civilisation

## Ibn Khaldun's Perspective on Human Civilisation

Ibn Khaldun contended that history and civilisation undergo cyclical changes characterised by recurring phases of development, expansion and, ultimately, an inescapable fall. He believed that the ascent and decline of civilisation are influenced by intricate social interactions deeply embedded in evolving political processes. In his seminal work titled *Muqaddimah*, he provides a comprehensive examination of the progression of human civilisation by using the dialectical framework that emphasises on the interdependent connection between urban

centres and rural areas. This symbiotic link is deemed essential for the sustainability of society.

> The sedentary stage of royal authority follows the stage of desert life. It does so of necessity, as a result of the fact that royal authority is necessarily accompanied by a life of ease. In the sedentary stage and under (sedentary) conditions, the people of a given dynasty always follow the traditions of the preceding dynasty. They observe with their own eyes the circumstances (under which the preceding dynasty lived), and, as a rule, learn from them (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 230)

According to Ibn Khaldun, the progression of civilisations occurs through the mutual reliance of two primary and separate modes of existence. Firstly, sedentary communities possess the capacity to cultivate novel abilities, concepts, knowledge and an economic framework essential for societal advancement. Secondly, nomadic tribes can furnish coercive power, unity and moral fortitude required for a specific civilisation's formation, safeguarding and sustainability (Malešević, 2015). Ibn Khaldun classified civilisation into two distinct categories: the first is the desert or Bedouin type, characterised by its simplicity, and the second is the passive or city-based culture, which is more intricate. These two categories of civilisation are designated as such due to their distinct phases of societal development. Ibn Khaldun used the word *ḥaḍārah* to signify the state of sedentary civilisation and *umrān* for its pinnacle of advancement (Bakar, 2016).

> Civilization may be either desert (Bedouin) civilization as found in outlying regions and mountains, in hamlets (near) pastures in waste regions, and on the fringes of sandy deserts; or it may be sedentary civilization as found in cities, villages, towns, and small communities that serve the purpose of protection and fortification by means of walls. (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 99)

*Ḥaḍārah* is distinguished by the presence of urban life, expansion in economic activities, abundance and the development of cultural sophistication. The Bedouin civilisation, in contrast, is distinguished by its tribal lifestyle, military expertise and collective unity. According to Ibn Khaldun, these two forms of civilisation differ fundamentally in their social structure, principles and methods of production. He

contended that *ḥaḍārah* exhibits a greater inclination towards hierarchy and individualism, whilst the Bedouin type displays a tendency towards egalitarianism and collectivism. Furthermore, he thought that there is perpetual rivalry and friction between the two civilisations as they both aspire to rule over the other. Ibn Khaldun put forth that urban civilisations are frequently built in a way that stresses on social stratification and the consolidation of power in the hands of a small number of elites. This was the basis for his argument that *ḥaḍārah* tends to be more hierarchical and individualistic. In comparison, Bedouin societies are more equal, with resources and power shared more evenly among all group members. Likewise, his argument about the Bedouin type being more collectivist implies that they place great importance on social unity and cooperation. Members of Bedouin tribes rely on each other for survival in difficult surroundings, and this develops in them a strong sense of community and shared identity. Conversely, *ḥaḍārah* exhibits a greater inclination towards individualism, as individuals prioritise their interests and objectives over the collective demands of the group.

Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework about the progression and decline of civilisations encompasses several periods, namely the nomadic and sedentary stages. During the nomadic phase, individuals strongly feel family and community solidarity. However, a more individualistic mindset emerges in the stationary phase, emphasising on material acquisition (Dhaouadi, 1983). Ibn Khaldun classified the development of a governing authority into five distinct phases. The first phase encompasses the building stage, during which collective cohesion facilitates the selection of a leader and delegation of authoritative power for governance. The subsequent phase is consolidation, during which the leader tries to enlist followers to strengthen his leadership position. The third phase represents a period of prosperity, characterised by exercising governing authority and establishing harmonious living conditions for the populace. The fourth stage pertains to happiness, in which individuals get satisfaction from leading a tranquil and wealthy existence. The fifth stage represents a period of decline, characterised by the governing authority's engagement in acts of tyranny, avarice and extravagance, driven by their pursuit of personal gratification and indulgence. This is a phase characterised by a nation's trajectory towards its demise. Following the dissolution of the governing body, a subsequent civilisation will arise, leading to a cyclical recurrence of the

phases above under the newly established governance. This concept, referred to by Ibn Khaldun as the formulated cycle theory, is found in *Muqaddimah* (Abdullah, 2018).

Ibn Khaldun's theoretical framework about the longevity of empires is predicated upon the notion that the historical trajectory of an empire may be delineated into three distinct phases, with each phase aligning with the passage of a generation (Qadir, 1941), which is similar to a span of 120 years. He contemplated the containment of economic downturns inside the cyclical wave, with a suggested timeframe of 40 years or more (Mohammad, 2010).

Among the generations of the three phases, the first generation is often called the Builders Generation, characterised by their strong allegiance to authoritative power structures and their endorsement of state institutions. The Lovers Generation, as the second generation, derives economic and political advantages from the prevailing power structure without much consideration for the state's welfare. The third generation, sometimes called the Avalanche and Broken Generation, lacks emotional attachment to their nation and engages in behaviours without concern for the state's overall welfare. The impending collapse of a state is likely to occur when it reaches the third generation (Hernawan, 2017).

As explained in Ibn Khaldun's *muqaddimah*, the presence of *aṣabiyyah* (social cohesion) is a crucial determinant of the efficacy and durability of the ruling authority. *Aṣabiyyah* is a concept that pertains to the collective unity and social integration resulting from a shared sense of identity, including elements such as common lineage, religious affiliation and even linguistic ties. According to Ibn Khaldun, the concept of *aṣabiyyah* exhibits its most significant strength during the first phases of a dynasty, whereby the ruling lineage and its adherents possess a profound sense of collective identity and common objectives. As the dynasty expands and sees more affluence, the cohesion derived from *aṣabiyyah* gradually diminishes. Consequently, the ruling family and its adherents will shift their priorities towards preserving their economic and political influence rather than prioritising the principles and customs that first propelled them to authority. The gradual erosion of *aṣabiyyah* within the dynasty will result in increased susceptibility to

internal schisms and foreign challenges, culminating in its decline and eventual downfall (Onder & Ulasan, 2018).

This brings in Ibn Khaldun's views on religion, understanding how it has shaped human civilisation and how it continues to influence our lives. According to him, religion significantly emphasises on preserving five essential elements: religion itself, life, intelligence, offspring and property. Furthermore, he believed that a stable and equitable dynasty serves as a safeguard for property, which is a fundamental aspect in his perspective. Within this context, religion may be seen as a moral and ethical structure that guides people and society to uphold and safeguard these fundamental principles. Religious doctrines and teachings often proscribe theft, fraud and other unethical conduct that risk safeguarding property and other fundamental societal principles (Alrefai, 1994).

Religion can enhance *aṣabiyyah* and augment its societal significance. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that religion alone does not suffice. Additional reasons are required to sustain a robust societal framework. Homogeneity, which is the degree of resemblance among individuals within a community, is essential in establishing a robust dynasty. According to Ibn Khaldun, a sovereign needs to emerge from the most influential faction within a society, as this ensures the preservation of governance, the establishment of societal harmony and the safeguarding of the nation from external and internal perils. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that elements other than religion's mere presence are needed to establish a formidable dynasty (Hernawan, 2017).

The first leader of a dynasty assumes the crucial role of establishing the lineage and solidifying authority. This is achieved by using the dynasty's inherent group spirit, or *aṣabiyyah*, which denotes an innate attribute of unity and coherence among individuals within a collective entity. The inaugural king is additionally accountable for establishing an equitable governance system and preserving the ancestral customs and traditions. The first monarch of a society must be well entrenched in the habits and traditions prevalent within the desert region. He needs to be external to the urban centre, assuming the role of chieftain over nomadic military forces and commanding authority over various tribes and collective sentiments. The subordinate fighters and tribe leaders need to experience apprehension and deference towards the inaugural

generation's sovereignty, as each distinct faction that recognises the ascendancy of the leader's collective sentiment is inclined to comply with their authority (Pišev, 2019).

Ibn Khaldun's thesis posits that the second generation of a civilisation succeeds the first generation. Nevertheless, when the second generation assumes authority, they often exhibit less cohesiveness and prioritise the preservation of their affluence and influence. The first generation's establishment of the power structure has resulted in economic and political advantages for them. However, the second generation's primary emphasis tends to be on their own interests, with a diminished concern for the overall welfare of society (Hernawan, 2017).

The second generation is responsible for attaining royal authority and establishing a governing body, transitioning from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled and organised society, and relocating from rural areas to urban centres. This phenomenon is further characterised by transitioning from adversity to a life of opulence, from participating in triumph to experiencing enjoyment. It entails a change from a state of indolence to one of exertion and a transformation from a position of power and influence to one of subordination and shame. The concept of *aṣabiyyah* exhibits some fragmentation, though the recollections of the first generation persist (Zaynaleabidin, 2013). The second generation's phase, also known as the second stage, is widely regarded as a period characterised by strength and prosperity. During this stage, civilisation attains its peak in excellence, robustness, stability and mastery in various industries and sciences. The generation residing in this stage experiences economic prosperity, urbanisation and a high level of expertise. Consequently, they transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled and civilised existence, marked by an increased focus on luxury and comfort (Mansur, 2022).

In the second stage, the monarch effectively consolidates control by establishing a monopoly. He ascends to the position of an autocratic leader and can establish an improved state. This consolidation of power is the inevitable outcome of a governance system that sprang from inherent social unity. To consolidate his power monopoly, the monarch in question employs strategies such as the removal of coexisting power holders, the erosion of the initial sense of unity that supported his rise as well as the acquisition of loyalty from bureaucrats and mercenaries who

prioritise their allegiance to him and their employer above any kinship or religious motivations (Ibn Khaldun, 2005)

In addition to the employed military and administrative apparatus, a cohort of erudite counsellors play a significant function in ensuring the alignment of the state with the ruler's aims. Concerning the advising corps, Ibn Khaldun observed that those with expertise in a particular field may only sometimes possess the necessary skills to advise on political matters effectively. Individual specimens are sometimes overlooked in favour of the broader concept of species due to the emphasis on seeing general characteristics rather than specific details in their education. Moreover, individuals comprehend social and political matters via analogy rather than evaluating them based on their inherent qualities. Consequently, they are inclined to provide unsuitable political guidance (Stowasser, 1984).

The third generation, also called the Avalanche and Broken Generation, has a diminished emotional connection with their nation and demonstrates a propensity to act without consideration for the prevailing circumstances of the state. The subsequent generation exhibits a lack of interest in upholding societal order and needs more dedication to collective unity that was prevalent among their predecessors. Consequently, their actions contribute to the deterioration of *aṣabiyyah*, which serves as the cohesive force that sustains societal unity; this deterioration eventually leads to the collapse of the civilisation. According to Ibn Khaldun, after a state has entered its third generation, it is said to be approaching the imminent decline and collapse of its political structure, which spans around one century. Hence, it is evident that the third and last generation assumes a pivotal position in a civilisation's decline and ultimate collapse since they are the primary contributors to the erosion of *aṣabiyyah* and the disintegration of societal structures (Hernawan, 2017).

In summary, Ibn Khaldun has established a lasting presence in history and society, both in the East and the West. He has provided a unique interpretation of the cyclical nature of history, specifically regarding the patterns of ascent and decline in civilisations. However, certain aspects of his perspective seem only relevant to the historical era of the Middle Ages. As such, they are gradually diminishing in relevance in light of the events associated with modernity. Conversely, many tenets espoused by Ibn Khaldun in question possess a widespread resonance,

as shown by his assertion that *aṣabiyyah* serves as the fundamental element for fostering coherence within a state, hence facilitating its optimal functioning. The current state of the world environment and its organisation are closely intertwined with the notion of *aṣabiyyah*. Subsequently, by introducing his ideas, Ibn Khaldun's concept of *aṣabiyyah* has increasingly gained importance and relevance in the social structure of human societies (Ahmed, 2002). According to Ibn Khaldun's proposition, the progression of human history is characterised by recurring cycles resulting from the ongoing struggle between the Bedouin nomadic communities and the settled urban societies. As long as individuals are categorised based on their geographical location, the resulting disparities in their environments need adaptation and upheaval until a favourable outcome is achieved.

## Oswald Spengler's Perspective on Civilisation

This section expounds on Oswald Spengler's views about the emergence and demise of civilisations. According to him, civilisations are like biological creatures, exhibiting a life cycle encompassing infancy, youth and old age. He viewed each civilisation as possessing its trajectory of development and decline, influenced by its cultural and environmental factors. His conceptualisation of the dynamics of civilisation revolved around the notion that it is a perpetual process of evolution and transformation and not a state of permanence that characterises these entities. He maintained that these patterns are an inherent aspect of the world's structure, asserting that they are impervious to alteration or intervention. According to Spengler, civilisations undergo many phases during their life cycle. The first phase of a civilisation might be referred to as the "spring," representing its early life. During this period, the civilisation exhibits notable attributes such as optimism, innovation and expansion. Subsequently, the civilisation enters a phase referred to as the "summer," denoting the early stages of development characterised by territorial expansion, military conquest and the emergence of a prevailing cultural identity. The third phase might be called the "autumn" or the middle age of civilisation, distinguished by a prevailing sentiment of decline, deterioration and stagnation. Subsequently, the civilisation enters a phase called the "winter," which symbolises the period of old age, characterised by a decline, collapse and ultimate demise.

Spengler posited that every civilisation has a distinct morphology or structure, which is influenced by factors such as culture, history and geography. Every civilisation also has a unique and discernible essence, sometimes referred to as its "soul," which finds expression in many domains such as art, religion, philosophy and politics. Spengler believed that the morphology of a civilisation plays a pivotal role in shaping its ultimate fate, asserting that the transplantation of a civilisation into a distinct cultural context is an unattainable endeavour. His notion of societal morphology has significantly influenced the development of cultural relativism, advocating for assessing each culture based on its criteria, rather than through the lens of universal norms (Adomeit, 2015).

> Each Culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression which arise, ripen, decay and never return. There is not one sculpture, one painting, one mathematics, one physics, but many, each in the deepest sense of the word 'unique,' each limited by its own nature to its own world. (Spengler, 1928, p. 21)

According to Spengler, cultures are influenced by their surrounding environment, historical context and established customs. Each culture has a distinct worldview that is manifested in various forms of expression, such as art, literature, religion and philosophy. Cultures undergo development due to the obstacles and possibilities posed by their environment while also being shaped by the preceding cultures. As such, they should not be evaluated in terms of superiority or inferiority, but instead recognised as distinct entities with unique characteristics. Every culture has contributed to advancing human civilisation, emphasising on the need to understand and value these variations (Reilly, 2003).

The essence of culture pertains to its intrinsic vitality, including many expressions such as art, music, literature and religion. The concept of cultural spirit encompasses the external manifestations of a society, including its political, economic and social frameworks. According to Spengler, a profound interconnection exists between a culture's soul and spirit, significantly influencing the ultimate trajectory of its civilisation. Hence, his notion of each culture's distinctive essence and intrinsic nature comprehends its underlying attributes and ultimate trajectory (McInnes, 1997). According to his thesis on the life cycle of

civilisations, different groups of people are categorised into two distinct classifications: pre-civilised peoples and civilised peoples. Pre-civilised societies are characterised by their innate ability to comprehend and embody the symbolic elements of their culture without the need for conscious cognitive analysis. Society is now in its nascent phase of cultural development, whereby culture remains a dynamic entity intricately intertwined with its creators.

Conversely, societies that have reached an advanced phase of cultural progression are referred to as "civilised peoples" by Spengler, denoting the culmination of their cultural evolution. This particular stage is distinguished by the prevalence of rationality and technology over cultural and traditional aspects, resulting in the gradual decline of spiritual and creative influences that sustain a particular civilisation. Individuals at this stage have a notable level of self-awareness and tend to lead their lives mechanically. Pre-civilised societies have a natural and effortless command over cultural practices. However, modern societies have started to see these practices as cumbersome and prioritise logical examination, leading to their potential reconstruction or replacement (Swer, 2019).

Oswald Spengler used the term "peasant peoples" to describe societies he believed could not produce a civilisation. According to him, these societies are characterised by a lack of creativity, historical consciousness and a focus on the cyclical rhythms of nature, rather than the linear progression of history. He believed that peasant societies are fundamentally different from civilisations and are incapable of producing the art, science and philosophy that characterised the remarkable past civilisations. Spengler saw the rise of peasant societies as a sign of the decline of civilisation and believed that the future belongs to the new cultures that would emerge from the ruins of the old decline of civilisation (Callan, 1975).

Regarding the significance of religion in the context of civilisation and culture, Spengler believed that religion constitutes a foundational element inside every given society. It is a manifestation of the collective consciousness of a society and helps to influence the development of artistic, literary and philosophical endeavours. Spengler claimed that every community has a distinct theological viewpoint manifested via cultural expressions. The deterioration of a society is often concomitant

with a waning belief in its religious customs, resulting in a diminishment of cultural vigour. For instance, the collapse of Western civilisation may be attributed, in part, to the erosion of its Christian spiritual traditions and the concurrent ascent of a secular and materialistic perspective. In Spengler's perspective, religion is seen as a fundamental element within the framework of a civilisation, serving a pivotal function in forming its cultural fabric and collective identity (Hundert, 1967).

Spengler's theory of the life cycle of civilisations, as outlined in his book, *The Decline of the West*, includes several stages of development, including culture, civilisation and senility. The culture stage, also known as the spring stage, is characterised by a strong sense of community, a flourishing of art and culture as well as a deep connection to religious and spiritual traditions. Civilisation begins when the soul awakens with all its capabilities and begins to mature and form, which causes civilisation to bear the image of its existence. This is because civilisation is a spirit in which the fertile and vigorous forces of realisation reside, coming into existence in an external environment in absolute chaos, thus spreading order and imprinting its character around it. During this stage, a civilisation is still developing and has not yet reached its full potential.

The civilisation stage, also known as the summer stage, is characterised by expansion and conquest. During this stage, a civilisation reaches its peak of power and influence, and its culture becomes more complex and sophisticated; this is the stage following feudalism, so it is the turning point in every society. Here, there is a deviation from the value aspect as a result of the beginning of the influence of the clergy on power and their claim of mediation between God and Man. This causes every civilisation to witness the phenomenon of religious reform, which means the return of religion to the purity of its first idea. However, the civilisation becomes more bureaucratic and less creative, and its connection to its spiritual traditions weakens.

The senility stage, known as the autumn and winter stages, is characterised by decline and decay. A civilisation loses vitality and creativity in this stage, and its culture becomes stagnant and repetitive. Senility is the final stage in the life of civilisation, as it witnesses the dissolution of people's morals, whereby materialistic utilitarian ties prevail and their hearts become petrified and disappear. Due to the

domination of material and technical methods over human life, people's conscience does not give weight to the spiritual aspects, and there is no criterion except for the material criterion. The civilisation becomes more concerned with preserving its past achievements than creating new ones, and its connection to its spiritual traditions is lost.

In summary, Oswald Spengler created a theory that interprets civilisation grounded on a biological framework and centred on cyclical succession. This phenomenon may be attributed to the parallelism between the developmental phases and functions experienced by society and those seen in the life cycle of an organism, including birth, growth, youth, aging and, ultimately, death. From the inception of the soul's awakening to its development, maturity and ultimate depletion, the inevitable outcome for this soul is its destruction and cessation.

## A Comparison of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler's Perspectives on Civilisation

The primary objective of this comparative study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the progression of history and civilisation. It draws upon the scholarly investigations conducted by Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler, whose intellectual contributions were significantly influenced by their subjective experiences. Upon juxtaposing and evaluating the two divergent schools of thought, it becomes evident that both intellectual alignment and disparities exist between them.

The first similarity between Ibn Khaldun and Spengler is their view of the cyclical character of historical patterns. Ibn Khaldun (2005) observed the following:

> When people have acquired royal authority, they no longer do the tiresome chores they had been used to undertaking while still in search of it. They prefer rest, quiet, and tranquillity. Now, they seek to enjoy the fruits of royal authority, such as buildings, dwellings, and clothing. They build castles and install running water. They plant gardens and enjoy life. They take as much pride in apparel, food, household goods, and furnishings as possible. They get used to this attitude and pass it on to later generations. It continues to grow in their midst until God permits His command to be executed. God allows the ruling dynasty to end, its life to stop, and

disintegration to afflict it from all sides. The founder of a new dynasty is hardly able to make a stand against the established one. Consequently, he falls back on patience and perseverance until the senility of the ruling dynasty becomes apparent. Then, his people lost the belief that they owed submission to the ruling dynasty. They become sufficiently spirited to make an open attack in concert with (the founder of the new dynasty). Victory and domination are the results. (p. 223)

Similarly, Spengler made the following observation:

Every Culture passes through the age phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood, and old age. It is a young and trembling soul, heavy with misgivings, that reveals itself in the morning of Romanesque and Gothic. It fills the Faustian landscape from the Provence of the troubadours to the Hildesheim. (Spengler, 1928, p. 107)

Both Ibn Khaldun and Spengler provide compelling parallels in their respective view of the cyclical character of historical patterns. Ibn Khaldun, a prominent historian and philosopher within the Muslim intellectual tradition, posited a theoretical framework suggesting that civilisations undergo a cyclical process characterised by phases of ascent, maturity, deterioration and ultimate collapse. Similarly, Spengler, a renowned German historian and philosopher, posited that civilisations experience a cyclical progression characterised by the emergence of a vibrant culture, which then embarks on a trajectory of development, accomplishment and ultimate decline. Both authors emphasise on the inescapable nature of civilisations' fall and ultimate collapse, attributing these outcomes to intrinsic vulnerabilities within their societal frameworks.

In terms of the importance of religion, Spengler noted:

Every soul has religion, which is only another word for existence. All living forms in which it expresses itself, all arts, doctrines, customs, all metaphysical and mathematical form-worlds, all ornament, every column, and verse and idea are ultimately religious and must be so. (Spengler, 1928, p. 358)

This assertion posits that religion constitutes an intrinsic element of human existence and society, permeating many facets of life. Spengler contended that religion encompasses more than just ideas and rituals—it serves as a framework for existence that influences our perception of the world and our position within it. He further posited that many manifestations of human expression, including art, literature, science and mathematics, may be traced back to fundamental religious impulses and concepts. From this perspective, religion transcends its individualistic nature and assumes a collective and societal role in shaping and preserving a cultural framework.

> It has become clear that to be caliph, in reality, means acting as a substitute for the Lawgiver Muḥammad (pbuh) about the preservation of the religion and the political leadership of the world. The Lawgiver was concerned with both things, with religion in his capacity as the person commanded to transmit the duties imposed by the religious laws to the people and to cause them to act following them and with worldly political leadership in his capacity as the person in charge of the (public) interests of human civilization. They would be perfect if established through religious laws because they better understand the (public) interests (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, pp. 273-274).

According to the above excerpt by Ibn Khaldun, establishing organisations that serve the public interest would achieve a higher level of perfection if founded upon religious laws since these laws have a superior understanding of the public interest. Furthermore, religion may contribute to mitigating immoral behaviour by offering a structured framework that prioritises ethical behaviour and virtuous activity. Individuals with a collective religious belief system are inclined to adhere to its moral values, which include exhibiting compassion and respect towards others, refraining from engaging in detrimental actions as well as striving for personal growth and achievement. Moreover, the fear of divine retribution for engaging in unethical conduct might function as a disincentive to engage in such actions. Religion has the potential to foster social cohesiveness via the establishment of a collective belief system and moral structure that unify individuals and motivate them to collaborate towards the advancement of the collective welfare, thus contributing to the resilience and endurance of a society.

In terms of shared identity and values, Spengler noted that:

> So long as the man of a Culture approaching its fulfillment continues to live straight before him naturally and unquestioningly, his life has a settled conduct. This instinctive morale may disguise itself in a thousand controversial forms, but he does not controvert it because he has it. When Life is fatigued, a man is put on to the artificial soil of great cities - intellectual worlds - and needs a suitable theory to present Life to himself; morale becomes a problem. Culture-morale is what a man has, and Civilization-morale is what he looks for. The one is too deep to be exhaustible by logical means; the other is a function of logic. (Spengler, 1928, p. 354).

According to Spengler, culture plays an essential role in providing the fundamental basis for the development of civilisation. He posited that culture is fundamental to advancing civilisation by establishing a community's collective sense of identity, values and purpose. The absence of culture would result in a society that needs a coherent understanding of purpose and guidance, rendering it more susceptible to fragmentation and dissolution. Similarly, the diverse manifestations of religious beliefs across cultures are evident in several domains, such as art, politics, social structures and other facets of human existence. Spengler asserted that the essence of a culture is intricately linked to its historical progression, serving as the foundation for its artistic manifestations and evolution over time. Social cohesiveness is an essential element of culture, serving as the fundamental basis for the development of civilisation.

Ibn Khaldun also proposed shared identity, values and social cohesion.

> One of the various tribal group feelings must be superior to all, to bring them together, to unite them, and to weld them into one group comprising all the various groups. The superior group feeling then influences all the various groups (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 221).

According to Ibn Khaldun, the process of uniting several tribal groupings necessitates the establishment of a prevailing sentiment inside one of the tribes, which is deemed superior to the others. This sense of collective superiority will foster cohesion among diverse

groups, amalgamating them into a unified collective identity, including all groupings above. Consequently, the importance of power inside a particular group will impact all other groups. A robust collective consciousness is essential for fostering cohesion among disparate tribal entities. Therefore, the attainment of this objective is contingent upon the ability of a particular group to exert dominance and promote unity among all other groups.

In the following excerpt, Ibn Khaldun distinguishes two types of civilisation.

> The Bedouins restrict themselves to the bare necessities in their way of life and are unable to go beyond them, while sedentary people concern themselves with conveniences and luxuries in their conditions and customs. Bare necessities are no doubt before the conveniences and luxuries. Bare necessities, in a way, are basic and luxuries secondary. Bedouins, thus, are the basis of, and before, cities and sedentary people (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 166).

Meanwhile, Spengler noted: "Every culture has its own Civilization, and Civilization is the inevitable destiny of the Culture" (Spengler, 1928, p. 41).

The approaches of both historians vary in their methods of comprehending these features. Ibn Khaldun's methodology emphasises on examining social and historical determinants that contribute to the formation and development of civilisations, including elements such as geographical conditions, climatic influences and social structures. He differentiated between desert (Bedouin) civilisation and sedentary civilisation, highlighting the distinct qualities associated with each kind. In contrast, Spengler placed significant emphasis on civilisation's cultural and creative manifestations, including but not limited to art, literature and philosophy. He stated that every civilisation has a distinct "soul" or "spirit" that finds expression through various cultural manifestations. Thus, the emergence of civilisation occurs when a culture attains its ultimate degree of development.

On the beginning of civilisation, according to ibn Khaldun, the concept of civilisation may be seen as a societal framework that originates from a nomadic lifestyle mainly observed in desert regions.

Moreover, he posited that each civilisation has shared essence and encounters analogous to circumstances Ibn Khaldun also mentioned group feelings: "Group feeling results only from blood relationships or something corresponding to it" (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 173). In contrast, according to Spengler, the beginning of civilisation occurs when "a culture is born at the moment when a great soul awakens" (Spengler, 1928, p.123).

Ibn Khaldun and Spengler's theories vary in their methodologies for comprehending the origin of human civilisation. In Spengler's perspective, culture emerges when a profound individual has a spiritual awakening. In essence, a culture is formed by manifesting an exceptional personality or a great soul who personifies that particular culture's distinctive attributes and principles. Subsequently, this person serves as a source of inspiration for others, prompting them to adopt and advance cultural practices, which gives rise to a unique civilisation. On the contrary, in Ibn Khaldun's perspective, individuals often experience a profound feeling of allegiance and affiliation towards those bound by familial ties or have congruent interests and ideals. Establishing a collective sense of identity and mutual claims provides the fundamental underpinning for cultivating and advancing human civilisation. Spengler was more inclined to examine spiritual genuineness throughout the first stages of cultural development, as opposed to Ibn Khaldun's focus on *aṣabiyyah*.

> The maximum symbolic and super-personal form coincides with that of the Late period of the Culture - in China about 600, in the Classical about 450, for ourselves about 1700. The minimum in the Classical lies in the time of Sulla and Pompey, and for us will be reached (and possibly passed) in the next hundred years. (Spengler, 1928, p. 419)

The next difference between Ibn Khaldun and Spengler concerns the age of each cycle, or the concept of the maximum and minimum of symbolic and super-personal forms in different periods of culture. Based on the above excerpt, Spengler argued that the Late period of a culture—such as in China around 600 or in the Classical period around 450—represents the maximum symbolic and super-personal form. In contrast, the minimum symbolic and super-personal form in the Classical period lies in the time of Sulla and Pompey. He further

suggested that for the present time, which he refers to as "ourselves," the maximum of symbolic and super-personal form was reached around 1700, and the minimum will be reached (and possibly passed) in the next hundred years. Spengler believed that each cycle of civilisation has its unique age, which is characterised by the dominant cultural and spiritual values of that period.

On the life span of dynasties, Ibn Khaldun commented:

> Their duration may differ according to the conjunctions. However, as a rule, no dynasty lasts beyond the life span of three generations. A generation is identical to the average duration of the life of a single individual, namely, forty years, the time required for growth to be completed and maturity reached. (Ibn Khaldun, 2005, p. 227)

Ibn Khaldun noted that while the duration of a dynasty may differ depending on various factors, as a general rule, no dynasty lasts beyond the life span of three generations. Thus, a generation is identical to the average duration of the life of a single individual, which is 40 years. This is the time required for growth to be completed and maturity to be reached.

Upon evaluating their respective perspective of cultural decline and civilisational patterns, it becomes apparent that Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler have divergent viewpoints. Ibn Khaldun claimed that the ascendance and deterioration of civilisations are shaped mainly by factors such as social cohesiveness, collective identity and the societal function of religion. According to his perspective, the fall of civilisations may be attributed to the erosion of social cohesion and the disintegration of conventional norms and values. In contrast, Spengler held the perspective that the fall of civilisations is an inherent and unavoidable phenomenon marked by the depletion of cultural ingenuity and the onset of social deterioration. Spengler emphasised on the cyclical characteristic of civilisations, drawing attention to the inescapable pattern of ascent and decline seen in many cultures throughout history. In contrast to Ibn Khaldun, Spengler also claimed that societies are shaped by cyclic patterns that recur throughout time, instead of being influenced primarily by social cohesiveness. The variation in interpretation may be ascribed to the differing circumstances and life experiences of Ibn

Khaldun, who wrote during the Islamic Golden Age, and Spengler, who wrote in post-World War I Germany.

## A Brief Discussion on the Application, Limited Scope and Generalisation of Ibn Khaldun and Spender's Perspectives in Current Society

Oswald Spengler's notion of civilisation might be considered as approximately synonymous with Ibn Khaldun's notion of *umrān* and *ḥaḍārah*. Ibn Khaldun coined the term *umrān* to denote the phenomenon of societal advancement and growth that takes place when individuals establish permanent urban settlements and actively participate in economic and cultural endeavours. He held the belief that *umrān* is an indispensable prerequisite for the advancement of civilisation, marked by the expansion of knowledge, expertise and establishments that facilitate communal living in larger and more intricate societies. Ibn Khaldun employed the term *ḥaḍārah* to denote the tangible civilisation that arises from the *umrān* process. *Haḍārah* is distinguished by a significant level of social order, cultural sophistication and economic wealth. Furthermore, he argued that *ḥaḍārah* relies on the authoritative power and collective unity offered by nomadic tribes.

Spengler's view of civilisation shares a common focus on the significance of cultural and aesthetic accomplishments as well as the possibility of deterioration and decline in human society. He posited that civilisations undergo a life cycle, commencing with a phase of expansion and vigour, subsequently transitioning into a phase of maturity and equilibrium, and ultimately culminating in a phase of deterioration. According to Ibn Khaldun, the Islamic civilisation emerged from the process of *umrān*, which began with the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE. This migration marked the beginning of a new era in Islamic history, as it allowed Muslims to establish a new community based on shared religious beliefs and practices. Over time, this community grew and developed into a more complex society, with the establishment of cities, trade networks and political institutions. This process of *umrān* led to the development of the Islamic *ḥaḍārah*, which was characterised by a high degree of social organisation, cultural refinement and economic prosperity. The Islamic civilisation produced many great achievements

in fields such as science, art and literature, and it had a profound impact on the world. Similarly, Spengler's concept of civilisation can be seen in the development of Western civilisation. According to him, Western civilisation emerged from the process of cultural and artistic development that began in ancient Greece and Rome. This process led to the emergence of a distinct Western culture, characterised by a focus on reason, individualism and scientific inquiry. Over time, this culture developed into a more complex society, with the establishment of cities, political institutions and economic systems. This process of development led to the emergence of Western civilisation, which produced many great achievements in fields such as philosophy, art and technology.

When judging the usefulness and importance of Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler's respective ideas in the modern context, it is important to keep in mind the limitations and historical contexts that affected their respective work. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* and Spengler's *The Decline of the West* provide significant contributions to the understanding of historical dynamics. However, it is important to approach these views with a measure of care. The cyclical theory proposed by Ibn Khaldun, which focuses on the cyclical nature of dynastic rise and fall, may not provide a comprehensive explanation for the intricate dynamics seen in modern cultures. This is mostly due to the distinct features of current societies, such as their extensive worldwide interconnections and the quick pace of technological breakthroughs.

In a similar vein, it can be argued that Spengler's notion of the biological evolution of civilisations may be characterised as too deterministic since it fails to adequately acknowledge the role of human agency and the possibility of societal advancement. Nevertheless, certain elements of their ideas continue to have significance. The emphasis placed by Ibn Khaldun on the significance of social cohesiveness and the influence of economic variables might provide significant perspectives on contemporary geopolitical processes. In the same way, Spengler's focus on the decay of culture and the need for cultural rejuvenation might incite contemplation over the current issues faced by society. To arrive at a comprehensive assessment of their ideas, it is essential to adopt a nuanced perspective that integrates several academic perspectives and also take into consideration the unique characteristics of the contemporary global context.

When analysing the literary contributions of Ibn Khaldun and Spengler, it is crucial to explore the inherent limitations and broad generalisations that may be found in their respective works. Both historians endeavoured to delineate the course of history and civilisation, but their interpretations are not devoid of limitations. Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddimah* has often been subjected to criticism due to its tendency to concentrate on the Arab-Islamic world, overlooking the significant contributions made by other civilisations. Moreover, one may argue that his explication of historical cycles exhibits an excessive degree of simplification and fails to demonstrate a thorough comprehension of the intricate dynamics inherent in human civilisations. Spengler's *The Decline of the West* has been subjected to criticism due to its Eurocentric perspective, which neglects the significant contributions made by non-Western civilisations. Furthermore, while extensive in scope, his cyclical model of civilisation might be seen as a reductionist methodology that overlooks the intricacies inherent in particular historical circumstances. Hence, it is important to adopt a cautious stance while engaging with the scholarly works of both historians, recognising the inherent limitations and generalisations included in their assessments of historical events and societal development.

## Conclusion

Examining the ideas that Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler proposed about the trajectory of history and the development of civilisations have uncovered several shared characteristics and divergences. Both historians emphasised on the cyclical nature of history and civilisations' inevitable rise and fall. Nevertheless, their respective understanding of the origins and processes behind these cycles varies. According to Ibn Khaldun, the ebbs and flows of civilisations are shaped mainly by the level of social cohesiveness and the robustness of the collective or tribal entity. Similarly, Spengler posited that civilisations possess an intrinsic life cycle and experience a decline due to the depletion of cultural and creative resources. Ibn Khaldun's theory exhibits greater depth and complexity since it considers climate, geography and socio-economic dynamics. In contrast, Spengler's theory is more inclined towards determinism, stressing on the inexorable nature of decline.

In general, both theories have significantly contributed to the study of history and civilisation. Ibn Khaldun and Oswald Spengler had a comprehensive perspective on civilisation and history, including many dimensions, and offered insights into historical processes' development. The historical narrative provides a one-sided perspective and delves into all facets of the subject matter entirely and inclusively. Both Ibn Khaldun and Spengler saw the study of the state and civilisation as a means of conducting historical inquiry to enhance our understanding of historical events. Both philosophers also saw civilisations as organic entities with an impending demise. It is essential to acknowledge that these theories include inherent limits and may need further refinement to fully encompass the intricacies and variations of historical phenomena. The works of Ibn Khaldun and Spengler have considerable academic significance in the contemporary study of history and culture because they provide useful perspectives on the emergence and decline of civilisations, placing significant emphasis on the role of cultural and social elements in influencing their development. The idea of *aṣabiyyah* put forward by Ibn Khaldun and the theory of cultural and historical cycles proposed by Spengler provide distinctive viewpoints for comprehending the patterns and dynamics shown by civilisations across various historical periods. These theoretical frameworks enable us to better comprehend the current condition of human society and provide vital insights for altering the trajectory of our civilisations. Given this perspective, it is imperative for future research endeavours to further develop and expand upon these theoretical frameworks to get a more thorough comprehension of historical events and the evolution of human civilisation.

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# The Power Struggle Between the Military Junta and Democracy in Myanmar

## Amirah Syuhada Binti Shahruddin[1] and Fauziah Fathil[2]

**Abstract:** Ever since the first coup by the military forces in 1962, Myanmar has stood out among the Southeast Asian nations due to the prolonged political turmoil between the ever-powerful junta and the rising forces of the people, assisted by the National League for Democracy (NLD) party who demanded democracy. These clashes have profoundly affected the country's socio-economic and politics for decades. Hence, to find the root of this long-ongoing conflict, this paper examines the historical timeline of the friction between the two factions, the military junta (Tatmadaw), and the general population from the post-independent years until now. The study analyses various aspects, including the ethnic tension, the formation of Tatmadaw, the events leading to three military coups, and the people with their multiple uprisings. This paper also sheds light on the leading party, NLD, especially on the central figure, Aung San Suu Kyi, who became the voice of democracy. Overall, this study mainly used the library research method and a content-analysis approach to gather information and assess the dynamic relations between the two forces and how the power struggle remains well into the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Myanmar, Tatmadaw, Military coup, Democracy in Myanmar, National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi.

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**Introduction**

Located in the intersection between China, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Laos, Myanmar, the biggest country in Southeast Asia, has been one of the most conspicuous nations that attracted much apprehension from the watchful eyes of the international community. It is due to the prolonged turmoil and turbulent episodes of power struggle which could be seen as a direct rivalry between the authoritarianism of the military junta as the country's prolonged ruler and the emerging democratic force spearheaded by the citizens. However, as one goes deeper into this study, it can be seen how layers of conflict arose due to various factors and circumstances that led to the long chapter of political struggles there. Thus, this paper investigates and studies how these conflicts are interrelated, leading to a grave rivalry between the military and democratic forces in Myanmar. This article is divided into a few sections, comprised of the chronological history of the power dispute and sequential phases that took place during the Tatmadaw's rule, along with others.

Historically, Myanmar, previously known as Burma, is rich with numerous ethnicities and cultures. Currently, Myanmar consists of around 54 million people, with 135 different ethnic groups recognised by the government, using more than 100 types of languages (World Population Review, 2023). It shows how diverse this country is, and while this is one of its main charms, this diversity, unfortunately, is the catalyst for the constant turbulence in Burma. In the beginning, ancient Burma consisted of a few minor kingdoms, each dominated by certain ethnic groups, which were then united under King Anawrahta of Pagan (1044-1077). After that kingdom fell, the region was again separated into several dynasties until it reunited under the Konbaung Dynasty (1752–1885). Unfortunately, it was short-lived, as their encounter with the British led to a territorial dispute resulting in three wars from 1824 to 1885. The wars ended with Burma being annexed as an Indian province under the British Empire (Smith, 2002) which consequently changed the whole trajectory of Burma from a free nation to one that was under constant suppression by the British. Having experienced many significant changes under British rule, this had indirectly contributed to the political unrest in Myanmar until today.

All in all, British rule has intensified the ethnic division in Burma through their policy of 'divide and rule'. They divided the country into two parts: Lower Burma, dominated by the Bamar/Burman population, and Upper Burma, which consisted of various ethnic minority groups. Usually, the most radical policies were imposed on Lower Burma compared to the upper part, which was not much affected by British rule. Subsequently, these imbalanced rules, along with the abolishment of principal elements of the country, the monarchy, and the monkhood, led to many independence movements, especially from the Burman side (Taylor, 2005). Regarding ethnic division, the early tension intensified further as the British tended to recruit ethnic minorities like the Karen, Chin, and Kachin to become part of the colonial army. These have indirectly led to resentment between the majority group, Burman, and fellow minorities (Walton, 2008).

From this overview, it is clear how ethnic diversity held a significant role in shaping early Burma and the sentiments of the population, and later became the impetus for the military coup, which marked the beginning of the power struggle in Myanmar. It was after this period that Myanmar started to be torn between the authoritarian rule of the military junta and the democratic efforts of the general population. It became a long ongoing struggle between the two factions over the reins of power. The study seeks to demonstrate the chronological history of Myanmar from the early years of independence to the current period, where the nation is still suffering from the third military coup in 2021, and to assess the root cause of the problem and how the power rivalry unfolds.

## Literature Review

In dealing with the many events of power conflict that occurred, this paper went through the literature on the general history of Myanmar, followed by the works specifically on the Tatmadaw (military junta), and finally on the people's uprisings. To gather information on the nation's general history, this paper has extensively referred to official reports from outside government agencies and NGOs who work closely in the scene of conflicts. For example, Martin Smith, a Burmese journalist affiliated with Minority Rights Group International (MRG), has written a report entitled 'Burma (Myanmar): The Time

for Change' to raise awareness globally about the issues faced by the people there. This 48-page report describes in great length the historical narrative of Myanmar. The chapters described the country's background, the people, the conflicts, the human legacy, and many more, including some recommendations on how to solve the conflicts there. This report mainly focused on the people themselves instead of solely politics; hence, for beginners, it would be an excellent reading to understand the ongoing problems. Another official report used in this study is the ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR) report entitled, '"Time is not on our side": The Failed International Response to the Myanmar Coup' which focused more on the political aspects. Nevertheless, though it is easy to find works that describe the general history of Myanmar, the challenging part of studying this kind of literature is to look for an unbiased work that does not take any side while narrating the history. Either villainise one another or choose the winning side between the forces of Tatmadaw and democracy, one needs to have an objective view in reading them.

Meanwhile, on the military junta or Tatmadaw, some works are useful such as *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces Since 1948* by Maung Aung Myoe, an article 'Myanmar in 1989: Tatmadaw V' by James F. Guyot and John Badgley, and another by Konsam Shakila Devi, 'Myanmar under the Military Rule 1962-1988'. Tatmadaw became one of the main focuses as they have been the key players and the core of the political episodes in Myanmar's timeline. Though it is vital to find literature that is not one-sided, in this context, knowing specifically about the Tatmadaw is crucial to understanding the reasons behind the struggles, their actions and motives. For example, in his work, *Building the Tatmadaw: Myanmar Armed Forces Since 1948*, Maung Aung Myoe, an expert on Myanmar's history, exclusively explains the background of Tatmadaw's organisation. The chapters include information on the military doctrine, strategies, structure, training, and welfare of troops. It comprehensively explained the Tatmadaw's viewpoint in detail, thus, providing essential information in understanding this junta.

Lastly, regarding the people's reaction and the development of the democratic movement, until now, there have been three massive people's demonstrations and rebellions; the 8888 Uprising, the Saffron Revolution, and the Spring Revolution. Various works discuss these

incidents which include an article entitled 'The Role of Students in the 8888 People's Uprising in Burma' by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) focusing on the 8888 Uprising, a book chapter by Richard Horsey, 'The Dramatic Events of 2007 in Myanmar: Domestic and International Implications' that dwells on the Saffron Revolution, and the most recent by Michal Lubina on the latest rebellion in his work, 'Myanmar's Spring Revolution: A People's Revolution.'

Much of the literature has the same pattern where the authors closely intertwine democratic values with the uprisings. Such instance can be seen in the work of the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), 'The Role of Students in the 8888 People's Uprising in Burma.' From all those uprisings, countless people, including politicians, activists, and more, have been arrested and persecuted by the authorities; hence, to advocate for their release and freedom, some of the former political prisoners have founded the AAPP. Other than being vocal and physically assisting other political prisoners and their families, the association also conducted various research to spread awareness to the public regarding their involvement in Myanmar's history. Therefore, the mentioned article of the 8888 Uprising comprehensively narrates the history behind the rebellion, the role of the students who initiated the demonstrations, and on behalf of the politicians and activists, this work emphasises their efforts in achieving democracy. It highlighted the sacrifices of the people who fought to gain freedom, equality, human rights, and, most importantly, a democratic country. Various figures are mentioned in this work, including Aung San Suu Kyi and Min Ko Naing.

Besides the above-mentioned topics, namely the general history, the Tatmadaw, and the people's uprising, this paper also focused on other significant issues like ethnic tension and international responses to the unceasing conflicts. These are crucial for the study to understand the power struggle that happened for decades in Myanmar. This paper also intends to fill in the necessary gaps, focusing on both sides of the opposing parties while trying to delve deeper into each critical event that led to the political division there.

## Methodology of Study

This paper mainly used library research and content-analysis approaches to sift through the historical narrative of the political struggle and extract relevant information. It analysed two types of sources, including primary and secondary sources. Among the primary sources is the report by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. As mentioned, this association was founded by Myanmar's exiled political prisoners involved in the uprisings. They wrote the report to advocate for releasing other prisoners captured during the 8888 uprising. Another valuable source is a documentary by CNA Insider entitled, 'Military in Politics: Myanmar.' This documentary comprised primary interviews with people directly involved with the political crises, like the former Information Minister of Myanmar, NLD's secretary, and the citizens who participated in the uprisings.

In addition, there is a wide range of secondary sources used in this study as references, as this paper focused extensively on the whole power struggle, starting from pre-independence to the confrontation between the Tatmadaw and the democratic force over the past few decades. Multiple books and journal articles discussed the general history, specifically on the Tatmadaw, the uprisings, the democracy, the ethnic tensions and conflict, the international responses, and more. All these sources are significant and crucial in narrating the history of the power struggle and finding the gaps in the history of modern Myanmar.

## Independence Years of Burma

After decades of living under the persecution of British rule, there were massive efforts made by many nationalist groups and movements in the country to achieve independence. Aung San led the most prominent one. Starting from his youth, he began to fight for Burma's independence alongside his comrades through various means, including cooperating with Japan, who gave them military training to fight the British. Nevertheless, they betrayed the Japanese authorities once they realised the latter was the same as their old coloniser. They tried to have diplomatic meetings with the winning side, the British, to gain independence. His efforts were not in vain as, at the end of 1946, the British agreed to give Burma independence through Aung San and his party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). However,

this came with the condition that Aung San needed to discuss this future independence with the ethnic minorities (Walton, 2008). With 135 officially recognised ethnic groups, the ethnic composition in Burma is relatively very diverse. Thus, in paving the way for the future state of Myanmar, their views were deemed as important.

This density in ethnic composition was influenced by the settlements of various groups from the countries bordering Myanmar, like China, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Laos. Of those 135 groups, the majority were Bamar or Burman people, encompassing around 68% of the population. While the others, among the vital minority ethnic groups like Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan, comprised less than 10% of the total population (Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, 2021). This ethnic composition was highly crucial for the future government to decide on the new path for the country after independence. In the past, the colonial British practised the 'divide and rule' policy, which separated the diverse ethnic groups in Burma hence, consequently causing tension to rise between the dominant group and the minorities. According to Walton (2008), "It was British geographical divisions and colonial policies, however, that would solidify ethnic identity and have the greatest effect on the negotiations at Panglong and future ethnic relations" (p. 893). The ethnic tension was intensified because though Bamar was the majority, they were highly undermined during the British rule. They also viewed other minorities like Karen, Kachin, and Chin as British allies, as these groups were favoured by the British (Walton, 2008). Therefore, to gain independence, the British first gave the condition for the majority and minority ethnic groups to have a fair discussion and agreement to avoid any ethnic conflicts in the future.

To meet the conditions set by the British, in 1946 and 1947, Aung San and a few representatives from the Burmans and colonial government held a conference with some ethnic minority groups to discuss the possibility of a union. These meetings were held at Panglong, and the ethnic groups were the Chin, Kachin, and Shan, while the Karens acted as observers. The first meeting was full of suspicion, but moving to the second conference, the ethnic leaders finally agreed to form the Union of Burma. Their reluctance earlier was reasonable because they were afraid that with Burman's domination, the ethnic minorities would lose their identity, culture, and freedom (Kipgen, 2011). Hence, the

Burman leaders promised the rest that within the new constitution, the minority would later gain their desired state of autonomy and the right to secession from the Union. Unfortunately, a tragedy happened in 1947 when Aung San was assassinated by his rivals (Walton, 2008). It led to chaos and confusion in the nation, with the Panglong Agreement, left to crumble and become empty promises.

Following the assassination of Aung San, his closest ally, U Nu, took over the power, and finally, Burma declared its independence in January 1948. At first, U Nu tried to honour the Panglong Agreement and did not interfere with the internal affairs of the ethnic minorities. Nonetheless, he later tried implementing some Burmanisation policies, like enforcing the Burmese and Buddhism as the official language and religion. The minorities were firmly against this as they felt threatened by Burman's domination, which was against the spirit of the Panglong Agreement (Kipgen, 2011). Thus, this period was full of insurgent movements by ethnic groups and communists who opposed the democratic government. Among the ethnic minorities involved in the armed conflicts were the Karens, Mon, Pao, Rakhine, and others. Their strength was so strong that, in a short period, many towns fell into the insurgents' forces (Smith, 2002).

Meanwhile, the AFPFL also faced an internal rivalry issue, leading to the party's split into two factions. Hence, in preparing for the general election, U Nu asked Tatmadaw, the military force, to form a caretaker government. Under the rule of the army's Chief of Staff, General Ne Win, Tatmadaw successfully handled the election and reduced many issues in the country. Thus, when U Nu's faction won the election and formed another weak government that could not handle the insurgency, Ne Win led a military coup, ending the government in 1962 (Devi, 2014).

## Tatmadaw: First Military Coup & Rule in Burma (1962-1988)

Tatmadaw is another name for the Myanmar Armed Forces, and since the beginning, this military sector has been one of the most critical elements of the country. Founded by Aung San to achieve independence, the power of this military junta was further strengthened during the early years of independence. According to Myoe (2009), Tatmadaw helped

to restore law and order in the country in the age of civil war, thereby suppressing all the communist and separatist insurgencies and further maintaining peace and stability. Under Ne Win's rule, they handled the situation with such brutality by using a 'four-cuts' strategy where they cut off the food supply, funds, intelligence, and any support to the ethnic armed organisation. They also created free-fire zones where the soldiers could freely fire toward the insurgents without distinctions (ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights [APHR], 2022). All these had emboldened the Tatmadaw's reputation, who considered themselves as the guardians of the nation who made great sacrifices to avoid the possible collapse of the country to the insurgents.

Therefore, when another weak civilian government under U Nu was formed after the general election of 1960, Ne Win initiated a military coup to end the government. This action could be seen as necessary since the situation in Burma at the time was chaotic, to the point that even Rangoon, the capital city, was under threat (Kipgen, 2011). As a patriotic soldier who accompanied Aung San, one of the 30 commanders who fought for Burma's independence, Ne Win felt responsible for saving the nation (Kipgen, 2011). However, once he suppressed the insurgents and established military rule, it led to a long episode of power struggle in Myanmar. Beginning with ethnic divisions and insurgencies, the situation now has elevated even further. Instead of ruling the nation temporarily while waiting for it to become stable, the military junta now tried to hold on to its power as long as possible on the justification to protect the nation from the rebels. But, as this paper will demonstrate, Tatmadaw's actions created more trouble and political uncertainty, sometimes leading to huge people's uprisings demanding democracy.

Summarily, the Tatmadaw's rule after the first military coup can be divided into two phases: direct military rule (1962-1974) and Constitutional Dictatorship (1974-1988). In the first phase, Ne Win enforced direct military rule through the Revolutionary Council (RC) by dissolving the parliament, suspending the constitution, banning all the political parties, and putting all the powers under the Council. He also reformed Burma into a one-party state by establishing a new military-dominated party, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). Through this party and the Council, Ne Win's goal was to shape the country to become socialist, with an ideology called the 'Burmese Way

of Socialism' (Devi, 2014). Many changes took place during this period, which continued into the second phase, the Constitutional Dictatorship. Later, in 1974, the military suddenly dissolved the Revolutionary Council to introduce a new constitution and held the first election to select a new leader. Nevertheless, it was quite a sly movement from them because, as mentioned before, BSPP was the only eligible party, and they only held this election due to the promise that the military would transfer the power to the newly elected government. Hence, it can be seen as purely an act legitimising Ne Win's rule as Burma's legal president after winning the election through BSPP (Devi, 2014). The country continued under strict direct military rule until 1988 and this came to a halt when a tumultuous event occurred.

To understand the cause of the subsequent event, government policies need to be looked into. As many changes happened due to the socialist policies, some notable effects could be seen in the economic sector. For instance, the Burmanisation policy has nationalised many parts of the country, including lands, trade, banks, industries, and schools. It significantly impacted the people and worsened the economy, so many were penniless when Ne Win demonetised certain banknotes as he pleased. Throughout the two decades, many riots and demonstrations happened inside the country to protest the policies that caused food shortages and a declining economy. However, none of the riots was able to change the leadership until the breaking point in 1988. During that time, the government abruptly demonetised a few banknotes currency like 25, 35, and 75 kyat by replacing them with 45- and 90-kyat notes (Devi, 2014). This sudden decision caused one of the most significant uprisings against the military government.

The uprising was famously known as the 8888 Uprising as the peak of the demonstrations happened on 8th August 1988. As mentioned earlier, one of the triggers of this revolt was the demonetisation of the banknotes, and interestingly, the primary key player that spearheaded this movement was the university students. It is because money demonetisation usually wipes out people's savings as the banknotes would be useless, and this caused a massive burden to the students in paying their fees. Combined with the use of excessive force by the junta, it has triggered them to demonstrate in the street, demanding the end of mistreatment by the government (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, 2014) starting in the early months of 1988. After the news

of the students' demonstrations spread and with encouragement from foreign media like the BBC, it started to attract the public's attention. Finally, as planned by the student leaders, the largest nationwide uprising, joined by hundreds of thousands of citizens, including monks, teachers, government and hospital workers, broke out on the prearranged date, 8th August 1988 (AAPP, 2014). The people intended to get some solutions from the government for the problems facing them and to demand an end to military rule so that the move towards a democratic nation could start again. Regrettably, the end of this uprising did not turn out well as it quickly turned bloody due to the brutal and excessive reaction by the military junta, who injured and persecuted a vast number of demonstrators involved in the rally. From the very first night, the peaceful demonstrators had to face a vast number of soldiers who were under the instruction to fire directly at the demonstrators instead of shooting upwards. The death toll kept increasing till it reached more than 3,000 deaths in just five days (AAPP, 2014). Even so, the protest continued for over a month until another historic event happened.

Significantly, despite the heavy casualties, the 8888 uprising had successfully ended Ne Win's rule, who resigned from all his positions at the end of this eventful incident. Though it could not end the nation's power struggle, this uprising brought about two significant outcomes that became a game-changer to the power dynamic in Myanmar. The first one is the emergence of a new military coup by another general. Ironically, in contrast to that, second is the new rise of democracy with the founding of the most famous political party in Burma to date, that is, the National League for Democracy.

**The Second Military Coup in 1988**

The power struggle in Burma took another turn in 1988 when another military sector led a second coup against the ruling government, intending to stop the people's uprising by absolute force. Under the leadership of General Saw Maung, the junta seized control of the government, enforced martial law, and brutally suppressed all the demonstrations. Thousands of civilians and protestors died, and the rest were put under the rule of a new military institution called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which then changed to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) (Steinberg et al., 2023).

The name Burma also changed to Myanmar in this era. After the coup, the military claimed their rule would be temporary while preparing for a new general election in 1990. Fatefully, this 1990 election marked its place in Myanmar's history as an eventful election that witnessed a confrontation between the military junta and a newly emerged and soon-to-be powerful party, NLD. Both continued to be the leading key players in Myanmar's power struggle until today.

National League for Democracy or NLD fought for democracy and an end to military authoritarianism. It was co-founded by Aung San Suu Kyi, one of the most prominent political figures in Myanmar. She had just returned to her home country and as she witnessed the 1988 demonstrations, she was so moved to the extent that she dedicated her life to fighting for democratic rule. As the daughter of the late Aung San, combined with her great dedication and fighting spirit, the crowd became automatically drawn to her, and most of the people gave their trust and loyalty to her new party (AAPP, 2014). Unfortunately, she had been put under house arrest since 1989. Still, her spirit and voice helped to lead a majority win for NLD in the 1990 election, where they won four-fifths of the contested seats (Steinberg et al., 2023). However, SLORC refused to accept the result and continued to rule the country for the next decades while leaving Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest for 15 years (APHR, 2022).

Overall, nothing much changed under the new rule, as it was still authoritarian and similar to Ne Win's administration, which followed the goal of socialism. Some of the only changes were the creation of a free-market economy, which benefitted the leading military families in doing business, then a few joint ventures, and more open foreign policies (Guyot & Badgley, 1990). These policies brought little changes to people's lives, and in many ways, the economy worsened, and people suffered. The international responses to the 8888 Uprising also had detrimental effects on the economy of Myanmar. Guyot and Badgley (1990) described the response as outright condemnation, where the outside powers condemned Myanmar's government for their harsh suppression of the democratic uprising. The United States was among the international powers that suspended their aid, enforced trade bans, and charged the government with severe human rights abuse. The allies of the United States joined this international boycott, like the European Economic Community (EEC), Japan, Taiwan, Canada, and others, which

curtailed their assistance to Myanmar. However, a few countries, like China and Southeast Asian nations, ignored the restrictive policy and continued their economic relations with Myanmar. Still, the economy and welfare of Myanmar continued to suffer during those years under military rule.

Hence, like the 8888 Uprising, another demonstration emerged due to the economic problems and became another highlighted event in Myanmar's history in finding a democratic solution. It was named the Saffron Revolution based on the saffron robe colour worn by the monks who joined the civilian demonstrations in 2007, opposing the hike in fuel prices. The fuel prices first increased from 160 to 1500 kyat per gallon (diesel) and 180 to 1500 kyat per litre (petrol) in 2005, and then again jumped to 3000 kyat per gallon (diesel) and 2500 kyat per litre (petrol) in 2007. This surge greatly affected the people until they could not afford essential commodities like public transportation fares (Horsey, 2008). The military was first reluctant to respond to this demonstration due to the involvement of the monks. The monks' role was significant in this protest because, at first, they only joined the street protests along with the others, including the '88 Generation leaders. However, as one of the demonstrations happened at Pakokku, the primary centre of Buddhism in Myanmar, the number of monks who joined increased significantly.

As a result, many monks were injured during the suppression of the protests. Henceforth, the military government, represented by senior local officials, came to the monastery to apologise and request the monks to stop joining any demonstrations to avoid more religious conflict, which could create massive chaos in Myanmar. Regardless, the monks responded by taking the officials as hostages for a few hours. From here, the situation quickly escalated. As the monks continued to protest against the government, and as represented by a new group, All Burma Monks Alliance, they made demands to the authorities, which included the release of Aung San Suu Kyi (Horsey, 2008). When the demands were not fulfilled, many monks continued to protest in the streets for days. The climax of the uprising happened when the monks gave respect and asked for support from Aung San Suu Kyi; hence, the junta responded by brutally suppressing these revolutions, which caused a high number of killings and arrests of the monks and civilians.

This event showed the significant friction between the junta and Aung San Suu Kyi, who continued to rival in the power struggle there.

### Road to Democracy: Tatmadaw's Civilian Government and NLD

Overall, the nation's constitution was the most significant thing missing during the early rule of SPDC. Hence, in 2003, the junta finally started planning the new constitution as a part of the seven-step roadmap to achieve a "discipline-flourishing democracy." This road map can be understood as steps the military wanted to take before releasing their power to a new civilian government, which was finally approved in 2008 (APHR, 2022). Henceforth, the nation started planning a new general election in 2010. Immediately, it seemed like history repeated itself when this new election was also won by the military-dominated party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), and the dissolution of NLD before the election. However, the new president elected in February 2011, Thein Sein, has proved otherwise. Under this former general's reign, he directed a lot of democratic and liberalised reforms in many sectors, especially in politics and society; for example, he allowed peaceful demonstrations, eased press restrictions, pardoned thousands of political prisoners, and many more (Steinberg et al., 2023). Thein Sein also allowed NLD to re-register as a political party and held the fairest election in 2015 without imposing military control and tactics as in the old times. These changes marked a turning point in the constant power struggle and friction between the military junta and the democratic force.

By doing all these reforms and loosening restrictions on NLD, this democratic manoeuvre by the Tatmadaw's civilian government led by Thein Sein can be seen as an effort by the military to create a transition where they would release their power slowly before ceding it entirely to other's rule. Not to be misunderstood, Tatmadaw still held great control over any new government through the constitution, where 25 per cent of the parliamentary seats were reserved for the soldiers (APHR, 2022) to intervene in the law-and-order system. Still, it was a significant progress towards democracy and relaxed the power struggles, especially when NLD won the 2015 election and formed its own government. It was indeed a massive change for the country and could be seen as a win for democracy, although it did not last for too long. At the same time, NLD

had to deal with another problem regarding the presidency. Undeniably, Aung San Suu Kyi was the obvious choice due to her significant influence and reputation. However, the 2008 Constitution specifically single-pointed her background, for example, being a mother of two British or non-Myanmar nationals, thus, rendering her unqualified as the new president. Therefore, NLD created another position for her as the State Counsellor, who acted as the de facto leader (APHR, 2022).

Nevertheless, from 2011 until the rule of NLD as the government, the massive change and transition helped Myanmar become a democratic country. According to Lubina (2021), these years can be considered the best decade since the independence with all the changes and improvements made:

> Throughout the country roads were improved, infrastructure developed (with access to the electricity grid reaching 70 per cent of the population), connectivity enhanced, a cyber revolution enabled and modest progress achieved in education and healthcare. Socio-political space expanded significantly: corruption decreased, transparency increased, the Tatmadaw's grip weakened, and CSOs strengthened, empowering people. Most of the political prisoners were released; exile dissidents were welcomed home; civil society and grassroots organizations, including humanitarian, educational and religious institutions sprouted in big cities; political parties were re-legalised. (p.2)

Indeed, it was the best decade for the Myanmar people having experienced all the improvements and values, though it did not involve all as in the case of the Rohingya Muslims who suffered ethnic cleansing and persecution at the hands of the Myanmar government and Buddhist nationalists.

Rohingya is the name of the Muslim minority ethnic group living in the Rakhine State of Myanmar, bordering Bangladesh. They were once named the most persecuted ethnic minority in the world by the United Nations due to the constant violence enforced on them and the increasing number of Rohingya refugees who escaped seeking haven (Kipgen, 2020). For so long, they have been harshly persecuted by the military junta, who denied their existence. Furthermore, in the 21st

century, the issues became worse and caused a high number of refugees escaping from Myanmar.

The Rohingyas had to face a lot of discrimination and human abuse as they were seen as illegal immigrants. It caused them great hardship living in Myanmar having to worry about getting killed or expelled. From the citizenship issue to other issues like the killing of a Rakhine woman in 2012 that caused a massive outbreak of violence between the Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists, to the fight between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and military who consequently did massive clearance operations in 2017 (Kipgen, 2020), all these Rohingya problems constantly drew concern from the world. Therefore, even though Myanmar was on the right track to becoming a democratic government under Thein Sein and NLD, the international platform demanded that they solve this Rohingya issue. Those two governments, however, failed to meet the expectations. Thein Sein organised a 16-member committee to investigate the matter (Kipgen, 2020), but nothing changed.

Even Aung San Suu Kyi's outstanding reputation was tainted by this issue as she could be seen in defence of the army's actions, for example, when she had to face the International Court of Justice in 2019, answering to the genocide accusations by the military towards the Rohingyas (United Nations, 2019). These caused adverse reactions worldwide as many lost their trust in democratic values fought by the NLD party, as what happened to the Rohingya is far from what they have been preaching. Myanmar has also strongly avoided intervention from international bodies and foreign powers for years to justify its force. This situation became worse when there was another new military coup took over the country in 2021, causing the Rohingya issue to be put aside and remain unsolved.

## 2021 Military Coup

As mentioned before, the rule under the Tatmadaw's civilian government and NLD's democratic government from 2011 to 2021 produced the best decade of Myanmar that the people immensely enjoyed. Aside from the Rohingya issue, all other sectors and infrastructures vastly improved. Therefore, when the Tatmadaw did another coup during the NLD's rule

in 2021, it overturned all the situations back to the authoritarian era causing the power struggle to re-emerge as the people strived for true freedom and genuine leadership to rule the country. Ye Htut, the former Information Minister of Myanmar, described this coup as the result of mutual distrust between the NLD and the military. He pointed out the clash of principles between the two and how NLD viewed the military as a power-hungry institution and an obstacle, for which reason the democratic party tried to amend the constitution and isolate the army from the political arena in Myanmar. These actions by NLD triggered more tension with the military junta which led to a state of emergency (CNA Insider, 2021).

This latest historical coup happened after the recent general election in November 2020. NLD won another majority of the contested seats, which made it the next ruling government. The problem arose when the military junta vehemently opposed this election result. The USDP refused to accept it and asked for a rerun as they accused the earlier votes of massive fraud. This claim was rejected by the electoral commission, which was tasked to handle this voting. So, Tatmadaw made another demand to the government, asking for a delay in reopening the parliament, which NLD rejected (Steinberg et al., 2023). Stemming from these accusations, dissatisfaction, and rejections, the Tatmadaw began to attack the government. Under the instruction of General Min Aung Hlaing, they started the coup on the evening of 31ˢᵗ January 2021 by capturing the renowned Aung San Suu Kyi and the president, U Win Myint (Thein-Lemelson, 2021). They were put under arrest by the military even until the present day. Not just these two leaders, but the Tatmadaw arrested almost all the elected parliamentary members from the NLD government just before the reopening of the parliament (Thein-Lemelson, 2021).

In public, the army general justified his seizing of the democratic government as only temporary while they recounted the votes and set up a rightful government. However, until today, all the captured politicians are still under arrest, and Tatmadaw is still clinging firmly to power. As expected, this military coup gained a massive reaction from the international community, mainly against the unlawful act, while very few nations that were close to the junta supported it. Among the allies were Russia and China. Russia, for one, has always been the Tatmadaw's most prominent backer, and they have deep military

connections; China did not have one absolute stance, but still, due to them being the most significant source of weapons to Tatmadaw, they were also seen as the enabler of the coup. Meanwhile, the number of international communities against this coup exceeded the allies. For example, countries that previously put economic sanctions on Myanmar, like the United States and the European Union, reinstall their sanctions. The situation is more complicated for the United Nations and ASEAN. However, regardless of that, ASEAN strongly opposed the coup through the 'Five-Point Consensus,' where they tried to solve the issue peacefully and effectively (APHR, 2022).

Lastly, other than the international responses, it is only wise for the paper to discuss the people's reaction to the coup in their own country. This coup led to another massive uprising, the Spring Revolution. Just like the previous two upheavals, this revolution also used the same approach in demanding the end of military rule to take on the road. However, this Spring Revolution had a different twist as the people were now more exposed to the outside world. Hence, they used this knowledge to organise more systematic and practical rebellions. According to Kyaw Wunna, the Research Team Secretary from NLD, "The 21st century is the age of Information Technology. The UN general secretary declared there is no place for any kind of military dictatorship… In other words, the Myanmar people will never surrender to a military dictatorship again" (CNA Insider, 2021, 12:53). More than one million people have filled the Myanmar cities' streets, uniting members of the society from all walks of life. They also used social media to communicate with each other and to alert the outside world. The people held many strikes, most significantly the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and many more (Lubina, 2021). Expectedly, all these rebellions have been brutally responded to by the junta like in the old days. Nevertheless, instead of giving up, the people are getting more desperate to convey their suffering to the world and to stop the military rule for now and forever to this day.

## Conclusion

To conclude, it is clear how, throughout the past few decades until today, Myanmar has faced a lot of power struggle episodes that led to

a long, turbulent, and troubled history. The conflict started from the ethnic division, which led to the outbreak of insurgencies in the early independence period, to the first military coup in 1962, which from hereupon has set the nation to face more trouble and suffering under military rule. It continued with the direct power struggle between the Tatmadaw and democratic force in the country, notably led by Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD after the second coup, to a brief, peaceful transition between the two in the 2010s before getting into the conflict once again with the recent third military coup in 2021. Myanmar has undoubtedly been surrounded by a complicated and complex series of events that caused political unrest and power struggles. It is certainly hoped that one day, Myanmar could find the desired peace and an end to the people's sufferings who, more than anyone, wanted to be free from the military's firm control and find their state of freedom regardless of all the power struggles happening there.

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# Book Review

**Idris Zakaria. (2019).** *The Summary of Islamic Political Thought (Ikhtisar Pemikiran Politik Islam)***. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.**

by Makmor Tumin[1]

Western political philosophy in the Muslim world came by two waves. The first one was during the eighth, ninth, and tenth century, where the Greek and Roman's works were translated to other languages, particularly Arabic. Key philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle were examples those whose works were widely read by Muslims during that era. Figures such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā were among the earliest Muslims to emulate western influence in the Muslim world. The second influx took place in the 19th century, when figures such as al-Ṭahṭāwī, al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh began to explore works of Western thinkers, especially those from France and England. Key thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Hobbes, and John Locke were among those who impacted early Muslim political thinkers during the second influx of Western philosophy into the Muslim world.

While the first group of Western philosophers introduced new forms of disciplines in Islam such as political philosophy and rationalism as a tool to derive judgment and laws, the second group instigated the spirit of liberalism in the Muslim world based on logic and reason. Idris Zakaria, a former professor who specializes in theology and political philosophy in a Malaysian university wrote a book which focuses on

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the first influx of Western philosophy, especially Greek Philosophy in the Muslim world. In his book, he mentions key Muslim political thinkers of the past, centering his analysis on two major figures, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā.

In chapter one, he provides the historical development of Islamic political thought by highlighting many works in the Muslim world that garnered interest among contemporary Muslims, especially in Malaysia. The books range from al-Fārābī's *Al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah* to Ibn Khaldūn's *Muqaddimah*, which he believes are extremely relevant to contemporary Muslim society. In chapter two, he then discusses in detail the political ideas of the two major figures, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. The former is known to be non-partisan, whereas the latter was a partisan political thinker.

Chapter Three discusses the importance of political philosophy as well as its influence in Muslim Malay society. The author highlights that there was a kind of strong rejection of the teachings of political philosophy as the Malay Muslims were more inclined towards Islamic jurisprudence-based politics rather than rational-based politics. He further explains that while *Siyāsah al-Syar'iyyah* (God's law-based politics) and Philosophical *Siyāsah* (Logic-based politics) were understood generally in Malaysia, the latter was strongly opposed, especially by groups who are more exposed to strict interpretations of Islam, condemning it as heresy.

In Chapter Four, the author lists a form of advice to the rulers, by highlighting eleven aspects that the rulers in the country should emulate, including:

- The objective of living a life of peace
- God's trust above people's trust
- Close ties between scholars and leaders
- The strengthening of family institutions
- A loving society

He highlights how lessons from past thinkers, especially from al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā should be learned by the current government and society. Hence, in his point of view, there is an urgent need for

Malay Muslims to appreciate the dynamics and importance of political philosophy.

The discussion on political philosophy, both Islamic and Western is limited in Malaysia, and this is reflected by the number of university courses offered in the country as well as the limited number of books published in the local language. This book, hence serves its importance in filling up the gap. After all, the book itself was written by a former local educator with a robust experience in political philosophy. Secondly, unlike many books that only provide empirical evidence for discussion, this book is more dialectic in its approach. Not only did the author set the discussion on the historical events in Islamic political philosophy and mention the detailed account of ideas, he also then set out eleven specific advices for contemporary Muslims.

While it is true that such a book is needed, I have a few reservations. One is that we are no longer dealing with the past influx of Western influence. Although it is still important to know those ideas and concepts originated from the West, readers might be more interested to know what the Muslims should do in response to more contemporary issues, mainly surrounding the ideology of liberalism - How should Muslims deal with the morality of liberal descriptions? In fact, important books in Islamic political thought are written by others of different backgrounds either in religion or ideology, such as Andrew March, whose book, *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought* sparked a huge debate on the idea of sovereignty in the Muslim world. Nicholas Tampio (editor of *Comparative Political Theory Journal*) for instance, encouraged people to write on how Islamic political philosophy was debated and developed in the Malay world, and how they responded to the liberal ascendancy. Not only is it important to understand the internal dynamics of Islamic political thought and Western political philosophy, but Eastern political philosophy should also be linked, exploring contemporary ideas of Confucius from China, and Kautilya from India on the subject of politics.

Secondly, do the Muslims also have figures of today to refer to like how they had al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā in the past? If yes, who are they and what are their ideas? If the answer is no, why is this the case? From my readings on political philosophy, especially post-1990, nearly all major methodologies of political philosophy were influenced by an analytical

approach versus continental. Contemporary political philosophy was first engineered by John Rawls. On the other hand, continental political philosophy at a certain point was influenced by Jürgen Habermas, who later settled in the USA, and was influenced by analytic philosophers. The influence of these two figures, Rawls and Habermas was seen to be as huge as that of Plato and Aristotle in the past. Hence, we would like to know how they influenced Muslim thinkers. Instead of debating on Aristotelian or Neo-platonic Muslims, we should examine Rawlsian and Habermasian influences among Muslim thinkers, and how the thoughts developed over time.

In line with my comments, it is of great interest to explore contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, Ḥasan al-Turābī, Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, including those of other traditions such as Mohammad Khātamī and ʿAbd al-Karīm Surūsh.

Finally, it is important to explain why Islamic political thought in general was rather muted after Ibn Khaldūn's work. One might wonder why people in the West produce voluminous works on political philosophy, while the Muslims were quiet for many centuries after Khaldūn. However, some analysts such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr mentioned that while it is true that there was no interesting political development to be proud of after Ibn Khaldūn in the Sunni world, in Persia, the tradition of philosophy in general and political philosophy continued to bloom. Mullā Ṣadrā's work was obviously one of the clear examples provided by non-Sunni groups thus signifies the continuation of both philosophy and political philosophy by Muslims.

In short, a lot needs to be done by local Muslim thinkers in Malaysia, and I think such a venture cannot be handled individually. It requires a collective effort from people involved in various disciplines and training. Idris Zakaria's work was a good attempt to open a different side of intellectual debate in the country and it is through this kind of effort that new knowledge and spirit of becoming a greater Muslim can be further enriched.