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Editorial

This June 2024 issue of IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies comprises various topics particularly related to Islamic history and civilisation, as well as Islamic philosophy and political ideas. In addition, a few contemporary issues such as women empowerment, the rights of indigenous people and Covid-19 pandemic are included therein.

The first article, "In the Middle Kingdom: A Historical Survey on the Arabs and Persians' Ventures in China, 600s–1300s" by Aditya Pratama Widodo is a historical survey concerning the ventures made by Arabs and Persians to China during the Tang, Song and Yuan eras via overland and maritime Silk routes. Using primary texts written by various Arab and Persian geographers, sailors, traders and travellers, as well as Chinese and European chroniclers as main sources of references, not only does the work seek to demonstrate the high spirit of adventure and sophisticated knowledge of sea navigation possessed by Arabs and Persians, but also their contributions to the trade relations between West Asia and China, and socio-cultural developments related to Muslim community in China. The work is a good reading for students of ancient and medieval history, in particular, of Middle East and China.

The second article by Fachrizal Halim "Rereading the Biblical Story of Sarah and Hagar: A Note for Interfaith Activists" examines the biblical narrative on the relationship between Sarah and Hagar of the household of Abraham in the book of Genesis chapters 16 and 21. In contrast to the life study of Sarah and Isaac (Isḥāq), the story of Hagar and Ishmael (Ismāʻīl) received very little attention, hence resulting in a biased and prejudiced view towards Hagar, Ishmael and his descendants. The author seeks to present the historical and cultural context of the Sarah-Hagar story and refute its narrow interpretations which can reinforce theological or political supremacy held by Jewish community, exemplified for instance, in the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. The article argues that not only the rereading the story of Sarah and Hagar in its proper social and political context will result in a better understanding of the relationship between Sarah and Hagar, but improve interfaith relations particularly between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Also dealing with the relation between different communal or religious groups, the next article by Muhamad Nor Aiman Bin Mohd Nor Zaidi titled "The Role of *Muwalladun*, *Mozarab* and Jews in Paving the Way for Coexistence in Andalusia 912 CE-1110 CE: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of *La Convivencia*" seeks to explain the unique interaction between *Muwalladun*, *Mozarabs* and Jews, either between themselves or with the Arab ruling class. The author argues that the conditions that the groups lived in had led to a peaceful coexistence era known as "*la Convivencia*" under Muslim rule in Andalusia or modern Spain primarily due to social assimilation and acculturation. Not only does the paper briefly explain the origin of individual groups, but also their traits and roles in the socio-economic and political developments of Andalusia.

To continue with the history of Muslims in Andalusia, Noor Syuhada Binti Shahidan and Nurul Shahirah Binti Majlan discuss the role of women in "Women of Andalusian Court: Kingmakers, Advisors and Regents". In contrast to the common political narrative that

emphasise on the role and contributions of men, the paper aims to shed light on the political roles played by court women as kingmakers, advisors and regents in Andalusia. Although their number was few and far between, the fact they played such important roles and inflicted, in some occasions, serious implications in political realm like power succession, through their acts and decisions, indicates a breakaway from cultural norms and defies general expectations of women of that time. This work showcases the high level of intellect and capability of Andalusian court women in politics, hence presenting another side of the history of Muslims in Spain.

The next article also deals with the issue of women, this time in Nigeria. "A Historical Look at the Transformation Agenda: Patriarchal Structures, Hegemony and the Fate of Nigerian Women" by Dauda I. Jimoh assesses the effects of Nigeria's 5-year development plan implemented during the era of President Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2015), known as the Transformation Agenda pertaining to women's empowerment. The plan, as explained by the author, was hampered by some reasons such as patriarchal structures and hegemonic control, neo-liberal economic system and bureaucratic inefficiencies. As rightly put by the author, to address the issue of women's empowerment, a holistic approach is required. While this may take time, to identify the reasons that impede gender equality in Nigeria and acknowledge them is the first step forward towards improving the state of women in the country.

"The Reformation Encounter: Martin Luther's Assessment of Islam and the Turks in the Aftermath of Constantinople's Fall" by Abdulwahed Jalal Nori and Sarkawt Tawfeeq Sidiq discusses Martin Luther (1483–1546), the founder of Reformation movement in Europe and his views of Islam and Turks (Ottoman Empire), the latter for the reason of being the ones who pushed their way into the 16th century Europe. It was on the basis of his theological and political reasons, coupled with the political developments at that time, that Luther made his comments, which were in general, condemnatory. Interestingly, the Pope and Catholic Church were caught up in his remarks, being viewed to be equally evil and to be opposed as the Turks. In short, Luther's comments and views conform to the medieval European mentality towards Islam and Muslims at that time, an era characterised by an antagonistic relation between the European and Islamic civilisations.

A more contemporary topic next is titled "Challenges of Online Learning Faced by IIUM Malay Undergraduates during COVID-19: A Case Study" by Nur Atiera Binti Yunus and Iyad M. Y. Eid who examine the challenges of online learning encountered by Malay undergraduate students studying at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) during the global pandemic of COVID-19. Using a qualitative research technique and semi-structured interviews for collecting data, several challenges of online learning have been identified. The findings contribute to the accumulation of knowledge pertaining to the pandemic, which can be used as a source of reference by relevant Malaysian agencies to cater for the needs of students of higher learning institutions in the country.

The following article also deals with challenges facing a particular group, in this case, the Ogoni people of Nigeria. "The Challenges of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Nigeria: From Environmental Movement to Movement for Self-Determination" by Adam Umar Musa and Idris Saminu explores the problems encountered by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the country's environmental justice movement founded in 1990 which strives for the economic, cultural and environmental

rights of indigenous Ogoni people. Leadership crisis, MOSOP's ethnic-based nature and recent radical approach of the movement have been pointed out as the obstacles towards achieving the goal. To realise the goal, apart from unwavering commitment by the government, negotiations and peaceful engagements between MOSOP and concerned parties are deemed necessary.

Shifting towards Islamic ideas and views, "Islamic Ethics and Liberal Democracy: A Critical Analysis of Mustafa Akyol's Perspectives" by Mohamed Fouz Mohamed Zacky and Inaz Ilyas focuses on the ideas of Mustafa Akyol, a contemporary Turkish scholar who involved in reforming Islamic political thought, through the examination of his major work, *Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom and Tolerance*. The findings of the paper indicate that while Akyol demonstrates in his work, a clear intellectual framework on how Islam coincides with the idea of liberal democracy and contributes to shaping modern multicultural societies, he fails to critically examine certain related ideas, namely modernity and liberalism. He also fails to provide a conclusive discussion on Islamic theological and political movements. That said, his ideas which also contain the call for a rationalist interpretation of Islam, as put by the authors, paves the way for an honest dialogue on the relation between the religion and liberal democracy in the future.

Another piece of work on the ideas or thoughts of Muslim scholars is by Mehmet Vural titled "Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Traditionalism". The paper highlights the primary problems dealt by the Muslim society today, as viewed by Nasr, a contemporary Iranian-American philosopher. They include the modernist and secular worldview, and the secular view of nature, science and technology which led to anthropocentrism, unprincipledness, reductionism, progressivism and evolutionism with adverse setbacks on humanity. To counter these problems, Nasr advocates the rediscovery of intellectual Tradition which carries eternal wisdom, a measure if taken, would resolve many individual and social problems present in the modern society. Indeed, the paper is an interesting read given the various socio-cultural, economic, and political problems facing the Muslim world today.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all contributors and reviewers who involved in this June issue. It is hoped that the valuable ideas and engaging works of the contributors or authors will enrich the existing knowledge and benefit readers and students of history and civilisation worldwide.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to all members of the Editorial Board, our Editor Dr. Mohd Helmi Mohd Sobri, Associate Editors Dr. Alwi Alatas, Dr. Mohamad Firdaus Mansor Majdin and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rabi'ah Aminudin, 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
June 2024

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In the Middle Kingdom: A Historical Survey on the Arabs and Persians' Ventures in China, 600s–1300s

Aditya Pratama Widodo[1]

Abstracts: This paper presents a historical survey concerning the ventures made by Arabs and Persians to China, both overland and sea, between the 600s and 1300s. As major participants in international trade as well as among the most advanced and literate in the medieval period, Arab and Persian travellers, merchants, and envoys did not fail to leave important accounts in which they recorded details about the situation that allowed their perilous yet intriguing journeys to far-off China, the situation they faced in the Middle Kingdom, as well as the roles they played and the growth of their communities in China. Furthermore, as highly appreciated foreign elements, the presence and undertakings of Arabs and Persians in some important coastal trading cities in the Middle Kingdom are also mentioned in some Chinese sources. Their ventures in China are a testimony to the Arabs' and Persians' spirit of adventure and cosmopolitan nature, as well as helping to explain why they held such a vast influence and played important roles in many developments and changes in the medieval period. This research uses historical methodology, focusing on primary texts inked by numerous Arabs and Persians of different backgrounds, some official Chinese chronicles, the works of other Chinese writers, as well as some accounts left by European travellers.

Keywords: Ventures, travellers, merchants, traders, Arabs, Persians, China

Introduction: Arabs and Persians' Ventures Prior to the Tang China

Medieval world trade played a very important role in the shrinking of the world's map, bringing different parts of the world together, and the mass distribution of countless kinds and varieties of goods and ideas. It was also the major impetus for developments and changes that occurred in numerous lands and communities scattered in all four hemispheres, as well as among the most prominent factors responsible for the migration of people and animals, the spread of the world's religions, plants and even diseases. As far as contact between Arab-Persian world and China and subsequent Arabs and Persians' ventures into China are concerned, it cannot be separated from the context of trade and diplomatic relations which are a consequence of the presence of the Silk Roads, a system that not only involves the exchange of goods and services, but also the exchange of people and their culture (ideas, behavior, materials), including, among other things, technologies and religions. As the name suggests, the quintessential commodity transported through the Silk Roads was silk, which began to produced and developed by the Chinese in 2700 BCE. Thanks to the introduction of silk to the Roman Empire, the land route between the Western World and China was established in the 1st century BCE. As a matter of fact, in the subsequent centuries this land routes, as well

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as maritime routes, connected not only Rome with Chang'an, but also connecting one of the most important trading hub in West Asia at that time, Baghdad, with the capital of China.

The ventures and trades conducted by the Arabs and Persians in China during the medieval period can be properly appreciated by consulting many first-hand sources, which some of them have been translated into English. Accounts, treatises, and travelogues compiled by the Arabs and Persians of different backgrounds—such as Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Mas'ūdī (d. 956), Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir al-Marvazī (d. 1124), Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), Ubaidillah Ibn Khordadbeh (d. 913), Abū Zayd Ḥasan Ibn Yazīd Sīrāfī, Sulaymān the merchant, Buzurg ibn Shahriyār al-Rāmhurmuzī, and Abu 'Abdillah Muḥammad ibn Battutah (d. 1369)—are proven to be very useful sources. Meanwhile, many official Chinese chronicles, notably from the Tang era, also shed some light concerning their ventures and activities in China, not to mention the importance of the information contained in the writings of other Chinese writers, such as Yijing (d. 713) and Zhao Rugua (d. 1228). Furthermore, the writings of some European medieval travellers—Odoric of Pordenone (d. 1331), Marco Polo (d. 1324), and Giovanni de Marignolli (d. 1360)—are simply too precious to be left out, as they can also provide some relevant information concerning the Arabs and Persians undertakings in China. The last but certainly not least, more recent works written by experts on the history of China are also consulted since they often contain readings on other first-hand materials that are inaccessible to the author of this article and since they also contained excellent analysis.

At the beginning of the Common Era, it was reported that the early relationship between West Asia and China was marked by the arrival of a group of ambassadors from Daqin, which included musicians and jugglers, in China in 120. Even though, in the Chinese sources, the name Daqin refers to the Roman Empire, in this case the name Daqin actually refers to present-day Baghdad or Damascus, which at this time was one of the regions of the Roman Empire, under the name of Provincia Mesopotamia (Yule and Cordier, 1915). Apart from that, scholars argued that, in around the 2nd century, maritime trade between Egypt-Persia and India-Far East was controlled by the Arabs from the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, it was also reported that, in the Han era, precisely between 158–167 CE, an ambassador was sent from Baghdad. Travelling by sea and then landed in Ji-Nan (now called Tonkin), this ambassador brought gifts—rhinoceros horn, elephant tusk and tortoise shell—to Emperor Huan of Han (Rugua, 1911). Although the ambassador was not officially sent by Emperor Marcus Aurelius, but departed on his own initiative and led by a Syrian merchant, a Chinese historian, Zhao Rugua (1911), called this event the earliest diplomatic contact between the Arab-Persian world and China.[2] Later, in around 164 CE, an ambassador from Daqin also introduced a treatise on astronomy to philosophers in China (Yule and Cordier, 1915),[3] and it is also estimated that Arab traders already established settlements in Guangzhou around 300 CE (Rugua, 1911).

However, before we proceed with the discussion, it is noteworthy to mention that official Chinese chronicles only began to describe a land named "Bosi" (波斯)," or Persia, during the Western Wei and Northern Zhou dynasty eras in the 6th century. In the *Zhōu Shū* (*Book of Zhou*), it is related that Persian males "cut their hair, wear a white fur hat, a full-length shirt, with the sides open at the bottom, and a scarf with a woven edge; the females

[2] However, Hourani (1975) argues that this group of ambassadors departed from Egypt, given that the gifts they presented were more likely to be the products of East Africa instead of Mediterranean Sea.
[3] Later, in the 8th century, as recorded in the *Old Book of Tang*, Daqin was called Fu Lin, which refers to the Byzantine Empire and its territories.

wear a wide shirt and a wide scarf, with their hair in a bun in front and a quilt at the back, decorated with gold and silver, with five-colour beads covering their arms" (Defen, 636). Not only does this chronicle discuss the geographical and climatic situation of the land, the customs of its people, and the sophistication of its military, but it also mentions that, sometime in the mid-6th century, the king of this land sent envoys to offer gifts to the Emperor of China. As for the country of "Dashi" (大食), i.e. Arab, it is mentioned for the first time during the Tang era in the 7th century CE, in both the *Jiu Tangshu* (*the Old Book of Tang*) and the *Xin Tangshu* (*the New Book of Tang*), and the details about the people of this land will be given later.

In the early years of the Common Era, diplomatic missions from Arab and Persia to China were commonly taken overland routes (Leslie, 1986). The information concerning medieval land routes connecting Arabia and Persia with China provided by an Iraqi historian cum geographer, Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī al-Masʻūdī (896–956), and a Persian scholar, Sharaf al-Zamān Ṭāhir al-Marvazī (1056–1124), perhaps not only adequately lists places passed by diplomatic mission and some merchant caravans in the 9th to 12th centuries CE, but in antiquity as well. In his *Murūj al-Dhahab wa-Maʿādin al-Jawhar* (*Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*), al-Masʻūdī relates that, in an overland journey, before finally reaching China, one who departs from the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula must first cross the desert that stretches along the coast of the Red Sea to Iraq, and then proceed the journey to Sham (Syria), Faris (Persia), Khorasan, and Sogdiana. In Sogdiana, one has to go through a pass in the valley of Mount en-Nushadir (?). During the day, one must not stop for long when passing through the valley, which is 64–80 km long, since the presence of salamonia smoke can affect brain function, yield hot air, as well as spewing fire in the summer, hence can be fatal for travellers. Meanwhile, in winter, this route would be easy for people and animals to pass through, thanks to the snow falls that extinguish the heat (al-Masʻūdī, 1841; Hourani, 1975, p. 9). Al-Marvazī, in *Kitāb Ṭabāʾiʿ al-Ḥayawān al-Baḥrī wa-al-Barrī* (*Nature of Animals*), added that, in ancient times, Sogdia (also known as Transoxiana), with Samarkand as its capital, belonged to the Kingdom of China. Before reaching the capital of China, at his time was Y.NJŪR [Kaifeng], from Samarkand one must first pass Kashghar, Yarkand, Khotan, K.rwyā (Keriya), Sājū (Dunhuang), Qām-jū (Ganzhou, in present-day Gansu Province), and Kocho (Gaochang) (al-Marvazī, 1942).

On the other hand, since the early days of the Common Era, merchants normally took the maritime route—and this route became more and more commonly travelled as early as 1023 CE by both diplomatic and commercial missions that headed to Guangzhou (Leslie, 1986). This argument was supported by the account of an Egyptian merchant, Cosmas Indicopleustes, who estimated that, as early as the 6th century, Arab and Persian ships bound for Tsinistan (China) departed from al-Ubullah (Hourani, 1975). Meanwhile, an Arab scholar, Ibn Habib (d. 860) mentioned that, in the 6th and 7th centuries CE, Dibba, in Musandam Peninsula, was frequented by merchants from India and China (Agius, 2008). Similarly, Arab historian Abu Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid al-Tabari (839–923) mentions in his *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* (*The History of at-Tabari*) that, during his time, al-Ubullah also served as a port of call "for ships from China and from less distant places" (*al-Ṭabarī*, 1992, p. 168). Therefore, all statements above imply that direct shipping between China and Arabia has already existed as early as the 6th century CE. Al-Masʻūdī's account corroborated these information, that the Arabs and Persians often departed from Basrah, Ubullah, Oman, or Siraf, and thenceforth they must sail across seven seas in order to get to the Middle Kingdom: the Faris Sea (Gulf of Persia), the Ladiwa Sea (Lacadive Sea), the Harkond Sea (Bay of

Bengal), the Kilah Bar Sea (Melaka Strait), the Kardebinj/Kerda Sea (Singapore Strait), the es-Sinf Sea (Champa Sea, now called the Gulf of Thailand), and finally the Saihu Sea (China Sea) (al-Mas'ūdī, 1841).

Given that the situations in the seas at certain times were determined by certain zodiacs (or star constellations), Arab-Persian ships that eager to make voyages to China had to pass through these seas at the right time and successively, according to the prevailing zodiac. One can start their journey from Arab-Persian ports first to the Faris Sea which is usually begin to calm down when the sun enters the sign of Gemini (21 May to 20 June), then continue their voyage across the subsequent six seas, and it could take around six months (including stopover time) (al-Mas'ūdī, 1841). When the sea has calmed, Arab-Persian ships could ride the southwest monsoon winds all the way to China between July and September. As a matter of fact, the name "monsoon" itself (from the Arabic word, *mausim*) is a testimony to Arabs' sophisticated knowledge about sea travel, and that Arabian mariners were among the earliest to have the knowledge about this particular wind, and already knew how to harness it even before the 2nd century BCE, preceding the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians (Agius, 2008).

A Persian geographer, Ubaidillah Ibn Khordadbeh (820–912), lists a number of provinces and towns that were traversed on the voyage to the East. Western Asian merchants' ships or travellers often departed from Basrah, Obollah (al-Ubullah—originally called Apologus and Farj al-Hind, a town located on the edge of the mouth of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, which ends in the Persian Gulf), Siraf, and even Aden. The following are some of the important countries and towns passed on the voyage from teh Gulf of Persia to China: Karek (Kharg Island), Kish, Hormuz, Debal, Sindh (now Pakistan), Koul (Kollam), Sendân (?), Mely (Malabar), Sarandib (Ceylon), Likbalous (Nicobar Island), Kalah (Kedah), Djabah and Chelahet (Strait of Singapore), Mabit (?), Koyoumah (Tioman?), Komar (Cambodia), Senf (Champa), el-Wakîn (Tonkin?), before finally reaching Khanfou (Canton, now Guangzhou). From Khanfou, one can also sail to Djanfou (Fuzhou) and Kantou (?) and find all kinds of fruits and vegetables, wheat, barley, rice, and sugar cane (Ibn Khordadbeh, 1865).

Another informative account of the voyages from Arabia-Persia to China was drawn by a 9th century CE Arab merchant, Sulaymān al-Tājir. In *Akhbār al-Ṣīn wa'l-Hind* (*Accounts of China and India*), he relates that, aside from Ubullah, Chinese ships also load their cargo—merchandises from Basra, Oman, and other parts of the Arab world—in Siraf. This information was also confirmed by al-Mas'udi, that "Chinese vessels used to come to Oman, Siraf, to the coasts of Faris, and el-Bahrein, to el-Obollah, and el-Basrah," and that Arab-Persian vessels that departed from these ports can also be found in China (al-Mas'ūdī, 1841, p. 328). According to Sulaymān, ships that departed from Basrah usually call at Siraf to load some goods, then sail to Muscat, and sometimes to Shisr (both located in Oman), to load freshwater and food supplies (cattles). From Oman, the ships make a stop at Kaucammali (Kollam) to reload their freshwater supplies before crossing the Sea of Harkand (Bay of Bengal) and reaching Lajabalus (Nicobar Island); from there, they continue the voyage to Calabar (Kedah). From Calabar, the ships sail to Betuna (Tioman?), then to Kadrange (Panduranga?), Senf (Champa), and Sandarfulat (Cham Islands), where they can find plenty of freshwater. From Sandarfulat, the ships set sails to Sanji Sea (South China Sea), then on the "the Gates of China" (?) before finally throwing their anchor in Canfu (Guangzhou) (Renaudot, 1733, pp. 8–11).

Arabs and Persians' Ventures in Tang and Song China

In general, the trade relations between Arab-Persian and China in the medieval period were prompted by the strong demands in Arab-Persian markets on some Eastern products: silk, porcelain, sandalwood, and blackpepper. In turn, these products, which can be found in China, were exchanged with Arabian products, such as incense and resins, horses, ivory, cotton textiles, metal goods, and arms (Chaudhuri, 1985). After being hampered due to disruptions caused by Perso-Roman wars and intrusions from the Tibetans and Turkic peoples in Central Asia in the 6th to earlier part of the 7th centuries CE, the Silk Roads were revived in the latter part of the 7th century CE, connecting West Asia, Central Asia, and China once again. Among the evidences of the revival of this relationship is the arrival of ambassadors from Fu Lin (Byzantine Empire) in China, in 643 CE, to appear before Emperor Taizong of Tang and presented to him precious stones (Yule and Cordier, 1915; Agius, 2008). When, in the 7th century CE, the Byzantine Empire lost its control over Arabia and Persia, the Rashidun caliphate replaced its role as a superpower in West Asia and managed to bring significant improvements to the economic environment in the region (Chaudhuri, 1985).

As already mentioned in previous section, official Chinese source such as *Zhōu Shū* has relates the existence of Bosi as early as the 6th century CE. Apart from its reference as a geographical entity located 15,300 miles west of Chang'an and inhabited by people of distinctive customs (Defen, 636), Bosi is also an exonym of Chinese and was used by the Chinese to refer to Persian sailors and traders who used to bring precious perfumes from West Asia and various medicinal plants that were very important for the Chinese pharmacopoeia (Guan, 2016). Shortly thereafter, while visiting Guangzhou, the Buddhist priest Yijing referred to Persians (both Magi and Muslims, including Persian Muslims who spoke Arabic (Hourani, 1975) as "*Po-sse*" or "*Bosi*" and in mid-671 CE he also encountered a ship's captain of Persian origin, who was about to take him to Sumatra (Yijing, 1896). In the 7th century CE, the existence of a certain community called the Dashi people, was recorded in Chinese sources for the first time. Dashi refers to the subjects of the Abbasid Caliphate, people from various countries, kingdoms, and khanates. The term Dashi is not a native Chinese term, but derives from the Persian word *Ta-zik*, "man from the Tayy (Banu Tayy) tribe" (Hourani, 1975, p. 66). Meanwhile, the Nestorian Bishop Jesujabus (650–660) referred to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad as "*Tayi*." Interestingly, in his letter to the Persian Metropolitan Simeon, Jesujabus wrote the following words in Latin: "These Tayis, or Arabs—to whom God bestowed world dominion through severe trials—are with us, as you know; but they do not attack Christianity, but praise our faith, honour the priests and God's saints, and contribute benefits to churches and monasteries" (Bretschneider, 1871, p. 6).

In the *Xin Tangshu* (*New Book of Tang*) the Dashi are illustrated as people with big noses and black beards, carrying a silver knife tucked into a silver belt. They do not drink wine and do not know songs. The women are white and wear a veil when traveling. This chronicle also records that on the seventh day the ruler mandated to his people that "'Those who die at the hands of the enemy will rise in heaven.' Therefore, these Arabs were accustomed to fighting bravely" (Xiu and Qi, 1060; Bretschneider, 1871, pp. 6–7; Chaffee, 2018, p. 20). Furthermore, it is reported that, in 651 CE, a Dashi ruler called Ham mi mo mo ni ("Mi mo mo ni" in *Jiu Tangshu*, both refer to *amir al-mu'minin*, probably Uthman ibn Affan) sent an ambassador to China to deliver gifts for the first time. Later, Rugua confirmed this and stated that before the reign of P'ou ni mo huan (Marwan dynasty, Muawiyah Caliphate) the ambassadors were referred to as white-robed Dashi, which indicated their adherence to Sunnism, whereas after A-p 'o-lo-pa (Apu Lopa in *Jiu Tangshu*, refers to Abu

al-Abbas, Abbasid Caliphate) came to power they were called black-robed Dashi, which indicates their adherence to Shiism (Xiu and Qi, 1060; see also, Xu, 945; Rugua, 1911; Bretschneider, 1871).

It was also reported in the *Xin Tangshu* about a visit of a Dashi messenger who, landed in 713 CE, bringing horses and beautiful belts as gifts. On this occasion, the envoy from Dashi refused to offer kowtow (homage) before Emperor Xuanzong of Tang, but he was spared from the death penalty since the emperor understood that the envoy came from a different cultural background (Xiu and Qi, 1060; Xu, 945). Interestingly, al-Ṭabarī recounts another visit by an Arab contingent, which took place in around 714 CE. The contingent of either ten or twelve men was led by Hubayrah ibn al-Mushamraj al-Kilabī and was sent by the governor of Khurasan, Qutaybah ibn Muslim al-Bahilī, to negotiate with the king of China after the latter conquered Kashghar and was about to invade China. This fearless group of fine men was "well equipped with weapons, fine silks, embroidered garments, soft, delicate white clothing, sandals, and perfume." Mounting fine horses to China, this contingent was ready to put their lives on the line in delivering a message to Emperor Xuanzhong as Qutaybah "has sworn an oath that he will not depart until he treads your land, seals your kings, and is given tax." As a response, the king of China gave them some dishes of gold with soil in them, silk and gold, four Chinese young men of noble backgrounds, and some fine gifts to be delivered to Qutaybah. Not long after Qutaybah "accepted the tax, sealed the young men and returned them, and trod on the soil" and cancelled his plan on China (at-Ṭabarī, 1990, pp. 222–230), he launched an ill-fated rebellion against the new caliph of Umayyad and was slained in August 715 CE. Gibb (1923) holds that the missions reported in the *Xin Tangshu* and al-Ṭabarī's were actually the same mission, and it was intended to promote commercial relations between the Umayyad and China rather than as a warning of an impending military invasion.

The news concerning the emergence of Islam must have been spread to China as early as the 7th century CE, as the *Jiu Tangshu* recorded that during the rule of Emperor Wen of the Sui dynasty in the Dashi country, to be precise among the Pot Ni Xi Shen (Bani Hashim) of the Gu Liezhong (the Quraysh), there was a man named Maha Mo (Prophet Muhammad), who was "brave, strong, and wise, and was established as leader. He conquered the east and west, opened up a land of three thousand miles" (Xu, 945). Although some scholars estimate that in the 7th century CE, the foreign settlements in Guangzhou grew larger, it is possible that Islam made its way into the city between 581 CE and 626 CE (Rugua, 1911; Yule and Cordier, 1915). Interestingly, legends and traditions claim that a mosque named Huaisheng was built in around 628–629 CE in Guangzhou, and attribute its founding to Prophet Muhammad's maternal uncle, Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, who allegedly visited China to pay tribute. While there is no reliable evidence of this and it seems unlikely that Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ founded the mosque, art historian Nancy Steinhardt argues that it is possible that "Guangzhou was the first Chinese city to have a mosque, and that a mosque, perhaps Guangzhou's earliest, existed on the site of Huaishengsi in the Tang dynasty" (Steinhardt, 2018, p. 60). However, other experts hold that this mosque was constructed in the Song era, probably by the rich Pu family (Leslie, 1986; Wan, 2016; Chaffee, 2018). Additionally, arguably there are evidences of the presence of Muslim villages in Quanzhou and Yangzhou, and in the Tang era, many Muslims settled in northwest China. Later, in the 11th century CE, the position of Quanzhou—which the Arabs called Zaytun—as an emporium equaled that of Guangzhou (Wan, 2016; Rossabi, 1981; Bretschneider, 1871).

During the Tang era, Arabs and Persians were also referred to as "*shang-hu*," while the shops they owned were called *hu-dian*. As reported by Chinese scholar, Sima Guang (1019–1086), "some of whom had been living [in China] for more than 40 years, and all had

their wives and sons here. They made their profits from mortgages on their land and properties and enjoyed peaceful lives here." However, intermarriage between foreign merchants and Chinese women also took place in the 7th century CE, since there was an edict issued by the Chinese emperor to prohibit the alien merchants (now called *fan-shang*) from bringing their Chinese concubines back to their home countries (Wan, 2016). The presence of Muslims, probably Arabs and/or Persians, in Guangzhou during the early Tang era is also recorded in the 15th century CE account, *Annals of Guangdong*, as people who

> .... worshipped Heaven (Tien) and had no statues, idols, or images in their temple.... They do not eat pork nor drink wine, and regard as impure the flesh of every animal not slain by themselves. They are known at the present time by the name of Hui Hui.... They have a temple called the Temple of Holy Remembrance (old Huaisheng mosque?[4]), which was built at the commencement of the Tang dynasty.... These strangers go every day to their temple to perform their religious ceremonies. Having asked and obtained from the Emperor an authorisation to reside at Canton, they built magnificent houses of an architecture different from that of our country. They were very rich and governed by a chief chosen by themselves. By their good fortune they became so numerous and influential that they were able to maltreat the Chinese with impunity (Broomhall, 1910, pp. 71–72).

During the rule of Xuanzhong of Tang, an Islamic worship complex called Tanmingshi was built. While the foundations of this complex were built in the third month of 742 CE and completed on the twentieth day of the eighth month of the same year, this building was reconstructed in 1392 CE and was renamed the Great Mosque of Xian. Later, a Chinese writer named Zhu Yu mentioned the existence of *fan-fang* in Guangzhou, as "the districts where the alien people from various countries live." These "aliens" were no other than Muslims, and reportedly the *fan-fang* came into being in Guangzhou in around 830 CE (Wan, 2016). Not only in Mainland China, in 748 CE, a Chinese priest named Kan Shin (Kien Zhen) reported the existence of a very large Persian village on Hainan Island (Junjiro in Yule and Cordier, 1915). Aside from Arab merchants, there were Arab soldiers in China, they were sent by the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur, in 756 CE, in order to assist in the suppression of the An Lushan rebellion. While this rebellion played a detrimental role, which resulted in the political instability and decline of overland trade routes, to a certain degree this event also nurtured the establishment of the Arab overseas community as many of those Arab soldiers eventually settled in China and married Chinese women since the law against intermarriage in China was not always upheld at that time (Leslie, 1986).

However, as the Arab-Persian communities grew in number and importance and became well-established in China, the political tension between the Chinese empire and the Arab caliphates, Umayyad and Abbasid, worsened and reached its climax in two military engagements, Battle of Aksu (717 CE) and Battle of Talas (751 CE). As the result of territorial expansions of these two great empires, the former battle saw the defeat of the Arabs and their subsequent expulsion from Transoxiana, while in the latter battle a Chinese army led by Gao Xianzhi "was severely defeated" by the Arabs in Talas (Pu, 961). With their defeat in the Battle of Talas and the devastating effect of An Lushan rebellion, the Tang China

[4] "Huaisheng" mosque means Remembrance of the Prophet's Mosque (Wan, 2016, p. 14) or Cherishing the Saints Mosque (Chaffee, 2018).

apparently lost their grip over Central Asia. During these turbulent times, another commotion arose in China in 758 CE (the first year of Qianyuan) when some Arabs and Persians attacked Guangzhou by looting shops and burning houses and then fled through the sea (Xiu and Qi, 1060; Xu, 945; Bretschneider, 1871; Hourani, 1975). Another tragedy occurred in 760 CE, during the course of An Lushan rebellion, when a Tang military commander arrived in Yangzhou, plundered the properties of local inhabitants, and massacred several thousand of Arab and Persian merchants (*shang-hu*) (Lei, 2017). After these incidents, it seems that the two countries managed to maintain good relations and sent emissaries to each other, even though Guangzhou was closed until 792 CE; and there is no evidence that direct trade between the two has resumed.

By the 9th century, further accounts about Arabs and Persians' ventures in China was recorded by a Persian traveller named Abū Zayd Ḥasan Ibn Yazīd Sīrāfī, or commonly known as Abū Zayd Sīrāfī, who visited China around 851 CE, via overland route. Ibn Yazīd Sīrāfī mentioned that there was chaos in China in 878 CE, which disrupted trade between Siraf and China. The chaos was none other than the rebellion launched by a figure he called Baichu (Huang Chao). Al-Mas'ūdī relates this event at length, from beginning to end, and calls the leader of this rebellion Baishu Shirr. This rebellion also struck Guangzhou, one of the most important cities in China. The rebellion was so brutal that around 120,000–200,000 Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Parsis (Magi) were massacred. Arab-Persian and Chinese trade was greatly disrupted because the rebels cut down many mulberry trees and other trees important for cultivating silkworms (Renaudot, 1733; al-Mas'ūdī, 1841; Xiu and Qi., 1060). Apart from the news from Suleyman and Ibn Yazid Sirafi, there is also a story about a merchant named Ibn Wahab of Basra—who claimed to be a relative of the Prophet Muhammad—who landed in Khaniku (Guangzhou) then visited Cumdan (Nanjing) in 872 CE and was welcomed by the Emperor of China, had a dialogue with him, then returned to Iraq bringing many gifts from the emperor (Renaudot, 1733; al-Mas'ūdī, 1841).

Apparently, al-Mas'udi refers to the same figure (Ibn Wahab) when he recounts the venture of a man named Ibn Habbar, of the Quraysh tribe, to Khaniku and Hamdan (Nanjing) at around the same time when the Zanj leaders launched their attack (Zanj Revolt, 869–883 CE). Departed from Siraf, Ibn Habbar made several stops at some places in India before proceeding with his voyage, by aboarded several vessels, until he landed in China (al-Mas'ūdī, 1841). Furthermore, al-Mas'udi also relates a story about an unnamed merchant from Khurasan who left his home in Samarkand, Khorasan, to trade in China around the latter half of the 10th century CE. Departing from Basrah, then to Oman, this merchant briefly called at Kolah (Kedah), and from there he aboarded a Chinese vessel to Khaniku (Guangzhou). In this city, the merchant was greeted by an eunuch sent by the Chinese Emperor. However, a feud broke out between the merchant and the eunuch, and the former was imprisoned and forced to hand over his merchandise by the latter. Feeling wronged, the merchant braved himself to appear before the Chinese Emperor at his palace in Anku (Nanjing) pleading for justice to be upheld and an investigation to be conducted. Thus, the eunuch was proven guilty of seizing the merchant's possessions, and he was condemned to guard the burial complex of the kings for life, a punishment "harder than death." As for the fate of this merchant, it is related that he returned to Iraq with gifts given by the King of China (al-Mas'ūdī, 1841).

While it is true that trade between Arab-Persia and China was diminished in the 10th century CE due to dynastic struggles in Baghdad, interestingly, around this period a Persian traveller, Buzurg ibn Shahriyār al-Rāmhurmuzī (900–950 CE), shed a comment in his famous *'Ajā'ib al-Hind* (*Marvels of the Indies*) that reaching China then return home safely to Arabia

and not perish on the way in itself is a truly magnificent and unprecedented feat. About this perilous venture to China, he only knew one person who had made seven voyages thither, Captain Abhara. Departed from Siraf, this Persian captain conducted a commercial voyage to China. Al-Rāmhurmuzī also recounts the successful yet sad story of a Jew named Isḥāq who returned home to Oman after conducting some businesses in China, in the course of thirty years, on his own ship, which was laden with "a million dinars worth of musk as well as silks and porcelain of equal value, and quite as much again in jewellery and stones, not counting a whole heap of marvelous objects of Chinese workmanship." Unfortunately, his successful venture prompted many corrupted officials and rulers in Oman to extort and eventually murder him (Al-Rāmhurmuzī, 1928). Another well-known migration that took place in the 10th century CE is that of Ma Yize, who left his hometown of Lumu (Anatolia) and arrived in China in 968 CE to serve as court astronomers (Benite, 2005). Aside from that, as noted by Rugua, in the Song era there were successive arrivals of Dashi ambassadors from 968 CE to 1094 CE (Rugua, 1911). Later, this information was confirmed and complemented, that during the Song era, between 968 CE and 1168 CE, there were recorded 49 visits by ambassadors from the Abbasid dynasty to the Chinese court or, in other words, there was one visit every four years (Wan, 2016).

In general, it is safe to say that, in the 9th and 10th centuries CE, the trade ties between China and Islamic Caliphate in West Asia, which was connected by maritime routes, began to thrive even further. These trade relations were probably the result of the presence of strong political power in Arab-Persia, such as the Umayyad and the Abassid Caliphate, while China was ruled by the Tang dynasty (Hourani, 1974, pp. 61–62). In the 9th century CE, Suleyman recounted his venture to China that, after having landed in Hang chou fu (Hangzhou) in Zhejiang Province, he visited another city called Canfu (Guangzhou), the first port of call in China for traders from Arabia and Persia, as well as one of the most important entrepots in Arab and Chinese trade. In Canfu there was a qadi whose job was to serve the Muslim community living there. This *qadi* was appointed by the Chinese Emperor (Renaudot, 1733; Yule and Cordier, 1915). While Sulaymān's news was confirmed by Ibn Battuta several centuries later, in several Chinese sources it is also stated that, in the future, qadis can also be found in other Dashi villages, such as those in Quanzhou, Hangzhou, and others. Additionally, a modern scholar estimated that the population of Muslims in China was only around 50,000 in the 9th century CE (Chang, 1988). However, as far as Persians are concerned, Muslims were not the only religious group existed in China, as the *Song Shi* (the *Book of Song*) clearly mentioned that, during the Song era, in Gaochang there was a Mani temple and the Persian monks held their own dharma (Xuan *et al*., 1345).

Meanwhile, al-Marvazī (1056–1124) reported that in China, presumably in the early 11th century CE, there were Alid Muslims who were the descendants of Talibid Alids who fled from Umayyad persecution and took refuge in China. In their new home, under the patronage of the "Lord of China", these Alid Muslims acted as middlemen between the Chinese and other merchants and caravans, and "they lived in peace and security, begot children, and multiplied. They learned Chinese and the languages of the other peoples who visit them" (al-Marvazī, 1942, p. 17). As far as Arab-Persian trade in 12th-century CE China is concerned, in the early 1130s CE, an Arab wealthy merchant from Brunei, Pu-ya-li (Abū ʻAlī), came to Guangzhou to trade and presented "two hundred and nine large elephant tusks, thirty-five big rhinoceros horns." So important he was that a high-ranking official named Zeng Li married his younger sister to Pu-ya-li, and that when the latter got robbed in 1134 CE, Emperor Gaozong of Song even personally decreed the demotion of the magistrate on duty and commanded that the robbers must be caught within a month (Wang, 2018, pp. 208–

209). Moreover, Lin Zhiqi (1112 CE–1176 CE) mentions a Dashi man named Pu-xia-xin who proposed the construction of a cemetery for foreign merchants in Zaitun (Quanzhou). This building was located "on the hillside to the east of the city," and was "covered with a roof, enclosed by a wall, and safely locked." The construction of this cemetery was later carried out by a rich merchant from Sriwijaya of Dashi origin, Shi Nuowei, and finished in 1163 CE. In around 1009 CE, another medieval mosque in China was built in Quanzhou, Shengyou Mosque (or al-Ashab); and, in around 1310 CE, this mosque was repaired by Muhammad Quds from Shiraz (Rugua, 1911, pp. 117–119; Chaffee, 2006, p. 408; Wan, 2020, pp. 17–18).

Another famous medieval mosque in Quanzhou would be Qingjing mosque. Located in southern Quanzhou, the construction of this mosque was sponsored by Najib Muzhir al-Din from Siraf, and finished in 1131 CE. Meanwhile, it is also recorded that, in the 12th century CE, Guangzhou there were several thousand graves facing west (Mecca) (Chaffee, 2018; Chaffe, 2006). It is also reported that there are many inscriptions in the gravestones in Quanzhou that date back to the Song era. These inscriptions include the names of the person buried, verses from the Qur'an, and even the date of death, which are given according to the Islamic lunar calendar and the Chinese calendar. Although most of the inscriptions are written using Arabic script, based on the names and titles inscribed on those tombstones, it can be confirmed that the deceased came from Arabia, Persia, and Central Asia. The earliest tombstone can be dated back to 1171 CE, and belongs to the grave of Husayn ibn Muhammad Khalati from Armenia, who died in Quanzhou. Another example are tombstones that belonged to the grave of Khwaja Shimal al-Din, probably was a Persian who died in June 1310 CE. However, many gravestones were later re-used as building materials. From the names inscribed on the tombstones, it is evident that foreign merchants also brought along their wives to stay in Quanzhou (Stocker-Parnian, 2010; Bisterbosch, 2016).

At the end of the Song era, a Chinese scholar, Zhou Qufei, remarked in *Lingwai Daida* (written in 1178) that "among all the alien countries who possess the richest kinds of, and the most treasurable value of, goods, no other country may surpass Dashi," and possibly Dashi Muslims were the largest foreign population in China. In addition, Zhou Qufei also stated that, in his time, most of the trade in the South China Sea was handled by merchants from Arabia, Persia, and other countries. The route taken by the Arab traders was as follows: from the Arab-Persian ports they sailed to Kollam using small ships, then there they transferred their goods to large ships (*sanbuq* or *sunbuq*) and then sailed to San-fo-ts'i (Sriwijaya), from there they headed to China (Rugua, 1911; Wan, 2016).[5] Not only offered lengthy descriptions pertaining to the situation prevailed in Dashi's land as well as the culture and customs of their society, Zhao Rugua also mentioned the merchandises often bought by these followers of a Buddha named "Ma-hia-wu" (Prophet Muhammad) to China in the 12th century CE are: "pearls, ivory, rhinoceros horns, frankincense, ambergris, putchuck, cloves, nutmegs, benzoin (*an-si kiang*), aloes, myrrh, dragon's-blood, asafoetida, wu-na-tsi (castoreum), borax, opaque and transparent glass, *ch'o-ku* shell (?), coral, cat's-eyes (?), gardenia flowers, rose-water, nutgalls, yellow wax, soft gold brocades, camel's-hair cloth, *tou-lo* cottonades and foreign satins" (Rugua, 1911, p. 116).

Furthermore, it is important to note that, during the Song era, many Arab merchants, some of them bore the family name "Pu"—which is commonly believed to be the transliteration of "Abu," which means 'father of' in Arabic and usually refers to Muslims—

[5] *Sanbuq* or *sunbuq* is a versatile medieval craft of people of Hijaz. This vessel is known to have sailed in Indian Ocean, and as far as China, as early as 10th century. For a detailed discussion about this vessel, see Agius (2008, pp. 310–316).

lived in either Sriwijaya or Champa. During this time, either Sriwijaya or Champa, in particular, played an important role as a major hub for trade between the Arab world and China. Meanwhile, in 986 CE, a man named Pu Lo-er came to China and brought along his family of 100 souls from Champa (Leslie, 1986; Rugua, 1911). The Pu family's Southeast Asian connection was corroborated by the *Song Shi (Book of Song)*, in which it is mentioned that the entourage that accompanied the envoys Pu Sina, Mahamo, and Pu Luo, when they paid a visit to the court of China during the early years of Song Taizong's rule (970's), was comprised of individuals of "dark eyes and dark bodies, and are called Kunlun slaves" (Xuan *et al.*, 1345)—these Kunluns are taught to be the adherents of Buddhism from Southeast Asia (Heejung, 2015).

By the 12th century CE, some Chinese coastal cities witnessed the further glory of Arab Pu families, the "white foreigners" who controlled the foreign trade, built and lived extravagantly in luxury houses. Some of those wealthy Muslim merchants not only advocated and funded the construction of the Light Tower of Guangzhou (Guangta of Huaisheng Mosque?) to help the navigation of foreign ships, but also other public buildings such as the city wall. In the mid-13th century CE, a wealthy Arab merchant named Pu Kaizong even built two bridges in Jinjiang, Quanzhou, while Pu Shougeng built a tower in northeast Quanzhou "to look out the seaboats" (Wang, 2018, p. 211; Steinhardt, 2018, pp. 60–61). Moreover, some scholars also attributed the establishment of Huaisheng mosque to the rich Pu family (Leslie, 1986; Wan, 2016; Chaffee, 2018). It is important to note that the *Song Shi* also recorded numerous missions sent from different Arab lands and gift exchanges between Dashi envoys—many of them bore the name "Pu" and had family members who stayed in China—and the Emperor of China. The splendorous receptions and ceremonies arranged by the emperor of China for these envoys may also indicate healthy relationships between Arabs and Chinese during the Song era (Xuan *et al.*, 1345).

Arabs and Persians' Ventures in Yuan China

China's maritime trade networks expanded even further during the Yuan era (1271 CE–1368 CE), especially as early as the 1280s CE. One of the major impetuses was the feud between the Yuan dynasty and the Mongol princes in Central Asia, which forced trade routes to be diverted from land routes to maritime routes. As a result, Quanzhou once again became an international trade centre and often frequented by merchants from the Muslim World (Biran, 2015). It was also reported that, apart from landing in Quanzhou or Changzou, many Muslim traders then stopped in Yangzhou. Located in Quanzhou is the Xianhe Mosque, one of the oldest grand mosques in coastal China. The mosque was founded in 1275 CE by Puhading (or Buhaoding), who claimed to be the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (Dillon, 1999), and this man was also buried near the mosque.

During the Yuan era, there were two known groups of Muslims, those who came from Arab-Persia and Central Asia. The first group being Muslims who voluntarily came to China, which primarily consisted of merchants, tax collectors, and financial officers. The second group were Muslims who were forced by the Mongols to reside in China, and most of them were craftsmen, architects, and other skilled laborers. Apart from that, Muslim armourers, and enslaved women and children were also brought to China, who were employed as servants of the Mongol aristocrats. They were assigned as tax collectors and administrators since the Yuan rulers considered them more loyal than the Han Chinese subjects. While Semu (Central Asian) soldiers were also recruited to man Kublai Khan's multiethnic army, *tanmachi*, and assigned as border guards, Muslim craftsmen reportedly

built mosques in Kublai's summer capital at Sangdu (Xanadu), and that they resided in Dadu (Khanbaliq) (Rossabi, 1981; Dillon, 1999). Muslim migration and settlement in southwestern China were mainly attracted by the trade, due to its strategic location on the trade routes with Burma and India as well as its commercial prosperity.

As far as Muslim settlement in southeastern China are concerned, it was also attracted by trade, just like in the previous era. In fact, at the end of Song's rule, the renowned superintendent of maritime trade at Quanzhou, Pu Shougeng, decided to support the Yuan dynasty in late 1276 CE and provided the Mongols with a navy. As a reward, Kublai Khan appointed him as supervisor of trade in Guangdong and Fujian province. It is also reported that Muslims formed one-third of the thirty superintendents of trading ships in Fujian at that time. In this regard, in Quanzhou, Kublai Khan also allowed the presence of officials such as sheikh al-Islam and qadi from the Muslim community—similar thing also occurred in various cities in southeastern China. Kublai Khan even ordered the establishment of imperial hospitals staffed by Muslim doctors. Meanwhile, in Fuzhou and Guangzhou, Kublai Khan also appointed Muslims as local government officials (Leslie, 1986; Qiqing, 1994; Tan, 2009; Biran, 2015; Rossabi, 1981).

Muslim villages in the early years of the Yuan era—including those in Kanchou (now Ganzhou), Suzhou, and Yenan—had their own markets, hospitals, and mosques, with the Kanchou mosque built by Muslims in 1274 CE. Furthermore, there were no restrictions on Muslims to speak their mother tongue or practice their religion (Rossabi, 1981; Qiqing, 1994; Tan, 2009). However, from the late 1270s CE to the late 1280s CE, Kublai's attitude towards Muslims in general changed. Seemingly dismayed by their growing influence, the Khan began to issue anti-Muslim policies, including prohibiting the Islamic slaughter of sheep, the violation of which was punishable by death. Not long afterward, the Khan also forbade Muslims to have circumcisions, and even assassinated a Muslim finance minister named Ahmad due to the latter's alleged treason. Realising that his policy actually made Muslim traders reluctant to call on China's ports, he later softened and finally cancelled his anti-Muslim policy (Polo, 1907; Leslie, 1986; Dardess, 1994; Rossabi, 1981).

Another important visit was made in around 1322 CE and 1328 CE by an Italian monk named Odoric from Pordenone to China. During his visit to Manzi (South China) he witnessed around two thousand large cities, which were much larger than the large cities that existed in Italy at the time. In Manzi, he visited Censcalan (Guangzhou), which was three times the size of Venice. This coastal city held a special importance in Chinese trade because not only it often frequented by traders from the south, but it was also the first port of call in China for Arab and Persian traders, who called it Khanfu, after their long journey from their homeland. He also visited Zaitun (Quanzhou), which was twice the size of Bologna, where basic goods were abundant and at cheap prices, and was also often frequented by Arab and Persian traders (Yule and Cordier, 1913). Probably, at the time of his travels, China was ruled by Yusun Temur, a khan who had ordered the pouring of state money to build several mosques in Shaanxi Province as well as freed ulama from forced labor. During his reign, Muslim traders also made abundant profits. However, like Kublai, his kindness towards Muslims was based on political considerations (Qiqing, 1994).

At the end of the Yuan era, precisely in 1345 CE, a traveller from the Maghrib, Abū ʻAbdullah Muḥammad ibn Battuta (1304 CE–1369 CE), landed in Zaitun. In his rihlah account, *Tuḥfat an-Nuẓẓār fī Gharāʾib al-Amṣār wa ʿAjāʾib al-Asfār* (*A Gift to Those Who Contemplates the Wonders of Cities and the Marvels of Travelling)*, Ibn Battuta described Zaitun (Quanzhou) as a large and important city, having a port that was one of the largest, if not the largest in the world, which was filled with hundreds of junks. Ibn Battuta also

recounts that when Muslim merchants arrived in China, they could choose to live with other Muslim merchants who had already settled there or live in *funduq* (a kind of caravanserai). In China, Muslim merchants could take concubines, purchase female slaves, and even marry the daughters of local residents. He also stated that, in Zaitun, the Muslim community lived in a village. In this city he was welcomed by an emir from India. There were also several important people who visited him, such as Tāj al-Dīn of Ardabil, and sheikh al-Islam named Kamāl al-Dīn ʻAbdallah of Isfahan. In addition, several important merchants also visited Ibn Battuta, among them was Sharāf al-Dīn of Tabriz, who had lent him money when Ibn Battuta was in India.

In Quanzhou, Ibn Battuta also mentioned the existence of a poor house owned by a pious sheikh named Burhān al-Dīn of Kazerun (Ibn Battuta, 1962). It turned out that this certain Burhān al-Dīn also served as the imam of Qingjing Mosque in 1350 CE (Chaffee, 2006). The existence of Muslim merchants in Manzi (South China) was also witnessed by a Florentine traveller, Giovanni de Marignolli (1290 CE–1360 CE), when he came to this city around 1346 CE, nearly at the same time as Ibn Battuta's visit. In this province, which he said had "30,000 cities," he stopped in Campsay (Hangzhou) and Zaytun (Quanzhou). Illustrating Zaytun as "a wondrous seaport and a city of incredible size," de Marignolli also discovered the existence of a bath and a *fondaco* (from Arabic, *funduq*) in this city. As a Franciscan missionary, he was proud to relate that he had succeeded in establishing two bells at the heart of a Saracen (Muslim) quarter in this city (de Marignolli, 1914).

Subsequently, Ibn Battuta called on Sin Kalan (Guangzhou), a city that, according to him, was one of the largest and had the finest bazaars in the world. In this city, there was a Muslim village complete with a mosque, hospice, and bazaar, complete with religious officials such as qadi and sheikh al-Islam. The next city visited by Ibn Battuta was Qanjanfu (Fuzhou). As in previous cities, at Qanjanfu, Ibn Battuta was welcomed by the qadi, sheikh al-Islam, as well as Muslim merchants. This city has multi-layered city walls, while Muslims live within the third layer of city walls with their sheikh, Ẓāhir al-Dīn al-Qurlanī. And, in this city, Ibn Battuta was also happy because he met his fellow countryman, Mawlānā Qiwām al-Dīn of Ceuta (Ibn Battuta, 1962). After visiting Qanjanfu, Ibn Battuta continued his journey to al-Khansa (Hangzhou) which, according to him, was the largest city on earth, like six cities within one city wall. In this city, Ibn Battuta was welcomed by the *qadi* and sheikh al-Islam named Afkhar al-Dīn. It is said that this qadi was an important merchant descended from ʻUthmān ibn ʻAffān, he fell in love with a woman and settled in this city. In al-Khansa, Ibn Battuta visited a beautiful Muslim village, complete with a courtyard, a mosque and its muezzin, and also a beautiful and blessed house for the poor called "Ottoman." The number of Muslim population in this city was very large, and in this city one can also find Sufi bands (Ibn Battuta, 1962, pp. 900–902).

At the end of his visit to China, Ibn Battuta relates that the Chinese Qan (khan) at that time, Pashay (according to Gibb, this name refers to Toghon Temür), went to fight the rebellion raised by his cousin named Firuz. The rebellion erupted in an area called Khita (Cathay, North China). Subsequently, the "Qan" died while fleeing northward, and Firuz seized his throne. However, Gibb (in Ibn Battuta) believes that there was no real figure named Firuz who became a khan of the Yuan dynasty, so it is unclear who this figure was. Whatever the case, according to historical records, it is evident that Toghon Temür was the last khan of the Yuan dynasty, hence the defeat of this "Qan" at the hands of the "rebels" marked the end of the power of the Yuan dynasty. Apparently, the event that Ibn Battuta calls a "rebellion" was a part of a peasant rebellion which commonly known as the Hongjin Qiyi (Red Turban) Rebellion in North China (Ibn Battuta, 1962), which emergence was closely associated with

the political instability that prevailed prior to the fall of the sovereignty of the Yuan dynasty—which also gave birth to numerous bands of bandits who undermined peace and gave rise to malaise in certain places in China.

The end of Yuan rule in China also witnessed another significant insurgence, the Ispah rebellion, which was orchestrated by the Shiites of Persian origins in Quanzhou. This ill-fated rebellion was harshly subdued by Toghon Temür's force, in which many Muslims of Persian and Semu origins were massacred, many mosques were destroyed; meanwhile, the survivors simply migrated to other cities and assimilated with local population. However, the most devastating political movement for the Mongols at this time was the Red Turban Rebellion, of which one of the most important leaders was Zhu Yuanzhang, who on 24 January 1368 CE, after overthrowing the Yuan dynasty, founded and became the first emperor of the Ming dynasty and proclaimed himself as Hongwu Emperor—in historical records, he is more often referred to as Taizu of the Ming (Ibn Battuta, 1962; Dardess, 1994). During his rule, Taizu adopted an "isolationalist" approach, which deeply affected China's policy on maritime trade. In 1371 CE, Taizu forbade all private maritime activities, including overseas trade. Therefore, trade with China should only be conducted on a small scale and under the state's rigorous control. He even discouraged foreign rulers from sending trade-motivated tribute missions (Schottenhammer, 2023). Without a doubt, his policy stifled Arab-Persian trade in China once again, although reportedly Taizu is also known to have composed the Baizizian (Hundred-Word Eulogy), in which he praises Prophet Muhammad, and perhaps it also reflects his veneration for the Prophet and Islam (Chang, 1988; Sen, 2009; Ma and Newlon, 2023).

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it is evident that the Arabs and Persians have been actively enganged in, thus making them one of the most valuable elements in, Chinese trade since the beginning of the Common Era. They undertook perilous journeys from their home in West Asia, and were highly appreciated in China as either ambassadors or traders who supplied the Middle Kingdom with countless commodities. Not only resided in China, many of them also intermingled, acculturated, and even assimilated with the local population. Some Arab-Persian families held considerable influences and powers, made significant contributions to society and the city, and thus became the priviledged element. Although Arabs and Persians' relations with China and its population are normally marked by peaceful coexistence and cooperation, there were times when their relations turned sour and even led to larger, devastating conflicts. However, trade relations between West Asia and China came to a halt with the rise of the Ming dynasty due to a restriction imposed by its first emperor, Taizu. This restriction was only effective for a relatively short period of time, for his successor eventually abandoned this policy in the early 15th century CE, but the discussion about this lies beyond the scope of this paper. Finally, it is also evident that accounts left by Arab and Persian travellers, traders, and ambassadors are very valuable sources since they can reveal the situation they faced in their venture into medieval China.

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Rereading the Biblical Story of Sarah and Hagar: A Note for Interfaith Activists

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Abstract: This article examines the complex relationship between Sarah and Hagar in the book of Genesis chapters 16 and 21, with a focus on informing Muslim readers and interfaith activists. Drawing on the documentary hypothesis approach and insights from biblical scholars, the article aims to clarify the historical and cultural context of the story and challenge narrow interpretations that can lead to assumptions of theological or political supremacy. The article argues that a deeper understanding of the relationship between Sarah and Hagar in their social and political context can promote theological openness and facilitate the contemporary struggle for justice and interfaith relations.

Keywords: Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac, documentary hypothesis

Introduction

The story of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis chapters 16 and 21 continues to animate theological debates to this day. The narrative highlights the contest between two women who have distinct social status in the household of Abraham; Sarah, who was barren, and her maidservant Hagar, whom Sarah wished to become a surrogate to give Abraham a child. Although Hagar bears a son named Ishmael, Sarah eventually bears her own son Isaac. The passages also reveal that God promised to multiply the descendants of both Ishmael and Isaac and that they would become the fathers of many nations.

Despite both heirs of Abraham being promised to become the fathers of many nations, the story takes a problematic turn, as authors, redactors, and early readers of the texts emphasize the family line of Abraham and Sarah and the covenant that goes exclusively through Isaac, rather than through both Isaac and his older brother Ishmael. As a result, the story of Hagar and Ishmael has been ignored in much of the history of Jewish, and to a certain extent, Christian theology. On the contrary, the narratives of Sarah and Isaac received positive interpretations and represent an enduring theological foundation for Jewish identity. In today's context where family lineage and religious identity continue to shape communal relationships, the story of Sarah and Hagar could be

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used to define the boundaries of the faith, reaffirm a sense of theological supremacy, or consolidate one's struggle against real or perceived oppression (Klein, 2008).

The problem of narrow interpretation in the story of Sarah and Hagar can be traced back to the early Jewish commentaries and Christian apostles, and even contemporary Jewish authors. For example, the commentary *Midrash Esther Rabbah* notes that of ten portions of stupidity in the world, nine were given to the Ishmaelites (descendants of Ishmael), and only one was given to the rest of the world. Additionally, the commentary notes that nine portions of robustness were allotted to the descendants of Ishmael, and the remaining one was allotted to the rest of the world. The characterisation of Ishmael and his descendants as 'stupidity' and as 'robustness' may not necessarily carry any theological implications. However, Jewish writers added that Ishmael is the progenitor of twelve Arab tribes who once occupied the region spanning from the Euphrates to the Red Sea (Feiler, 2002, pp. 75-76). This designation serves to create a clear distinction between "us" (Jews) and "others" (Arab descendants of Ishmael), and could potentially be used to reinforce theological and political boundaries. For example, in the contemporary Arab-Israeli conflict, the way the narrative is understood could manifest in the perpetuation of conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims, making it seem impossible for them to achieve peace and harmony.

In a similar vein, the Apostle Paul, in his letter to the people of Galatia in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) highlights the distinction between the children of Sarah and the children of Hagar, suggesting that those who are born of the flesh (i.e. through Hagar) are not children of the "promise" (Galatians 4:22-31). In this letter, Paul defines Hagar, the slave woman, as "of the flesh" and inferior to Sarah, the free woman, who is of superior stature for having received the "promise." Again, this division creates a hierarchical structure within Abraham's household, with Abraham as the father and two distinct groups of descendants: those of the free woman (i.e. Sarah and Isaac) and those of the slave woman (i.e. Hagar and Ishmael). This hierarchy reinforces the notion of a privileged group (i.e. "us," the descendants of Sarah and Isaac) and an excluded group (i.e. "the others," the descendants of Hagar and Ishmael), perpetuating a problematic division that potentially creates disharmony among different religious communities. The irony is that an interpretation that ignores the plight of the outcasts, slaves, and the poor may contradict the teachings of Jesus, who always stood with the marginalised.

Furthermore, in the recent book that explores the legacies of influential female figures in Jewish history, *The Passion of the Matriarchs* (Tuchman & Rapoport, 2004), Tuchman and Rapoport do not include a full story of Hagar even though she was an integral part of Abraham's household. The authors mention Hagar in passing as a surrogate womb who demeaned Sarah after becoming pregnant and was later demoted to a servant again. By contrast, the life story of Sarah was mentioned in great detail. She was described as a priestess who accompanied Abraham in bringing God to the Canaan world and the first matriarch blessed to witness God's promise to Abraham fulfilled through her lineage before her passing. This decision to elevate Sarah and mention Hagar only in passing may suggest there is no theological insight or moral lesson that Jewish readers can gain from Hagar's narrative.

From an ecumenical perspective, the theological construct that gives preference to Sarah and Isaac over Hagar and Ishmael can create a basis for exclusion and hinder the possibility of accepting that God has blessed Sarah's son and Hagar's son in His own way. It could also lead to the marginalisation of others who, on the basis of the same biblical narrative, are thought to have traced their lineage to Abraham through Hagar and Ishmael. To avoid this privileged narrative and

potential exacerbation of conflict, one scholar attempted to bring back the "lost" story of Hagar in a monograph for contemporary readers who are not familiar with the narrative (Teubal, 1990). Equally concerned with the narrow interpretation that potentially exacerbates communal conflict, others reinterpret the story of Sarah and Hagar with the goal of promoting ecumenical partnership and peacebuilding (Feiler, 2002; Frymer-Kensky, 1996).

For academics or interfaith activists, reinterpreting the biblical story of Sarah and Hagar through the lens of ecumenical partnership and peacebuilding appears promising in the fractured world today, especially after the war broke out between Hamas and the state of Israel on October 7, 2023. However, the same approach poses a challenge to "insiders" either Jews or Christians who view the story as foundational to their belief system. Rereading the story with a humanist and ecumenical vision above undermines a particular theological position that many Jews find significant for their identity, e.g., covenant. While groups or individuals who are traditionally oppressed, excluded from the covenant and identified with Hagar (non-white Christians or Muslims) find attempts to reread the biblical story liberating, the same cannot be said for Jews who may feel that such attempts undermine their traditional beliefs. This effort may suggest that an attempt to build ecumenical partnerships without taking into consideration insiders' perspectives may actually exacerbate the existing divide between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and push them even further apart.

This article aims to examine the story of Sarah and Hagar and explore how it has been interpreted in an exclusive way within Jewish and Christian theological boundaries. I will then assess current efforts to re-read the same story and theological construct above in light of the ecumenical partnerships, but one that can equally reinforce a similar exclusive theological construct that distances Jewish and Christian theologians from their interfaith partners. I shall show that the complex narrative of Sarah and Hagar can serve multiple theological interests. As such, scholars, interfaith activists, and general readers may find it helpful to acknowledge that the biblical narrative can be interpreted in various ways by different readers.

In my experience as an interfaith activist, I have observed that although Abraham is a central figure in Islam, many Muslims are not familiar with the detailed story of Sarah and Hagar as described in Genesis, particularly on how Hagar and Ishmael were banished and how Abraham's covenant with God goes exclusively through his son Isaac. While many Muslims are familiar with the story of Ishmael and Isaac from literature such as *Qisas al-Anbiya* (Stories of the Prophet) by authors such as Ibn Kathir, neither the Qur'an nor the collection of hadith sufficiently narrated the story of the two women in great detail as in Genesis. The implication of not knowing this story is that it could lead to silence and a lack of appreciation for the moral messages conveyed in the biblical narrative. Therefore, another key goal of this article is to introduce the story of Sarah and Hagar to Muslim audiences, to enable them to recognise and appreciate the theological debates within Judaism and Christianity.

The concept of 'recognition' that I refer to here resonates with Charles Taylor's understanding of it as a constitutive element of a multicultural society. According to Taylor, "due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need" (Taylor, 1994, p. 26). Cultivating recognition and appreciation of theological debates within Judaism and Christianity for Muslim audiences and wider interfaith activists could be the missing piece that helps us to rehabilitate the fractured world today and achieve greater understanding and respect between different faith communities.

Research Methodology

In this paper, I will conduct a critical analysis of the story of Sarah and Hagar using the Documentary Hypothesis approach. This approach is known to have been used by biblical historians to explain the origins of the five books of Moses, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). The theory assumes what constitutes the five books of Moses are four literary sources identified as Jehovist (J), also called the Yahwist, the Elohist (E), Deuteronomist (D), and the Priestly (P). Chronologically, J is considered the oldest source, which includes significant portions of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers, and a few segments of Deuteronomy. E and D sources came much later but are assumed to have been redacted before the exile period around 500 BCE. The latest source P also contains the same portions of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, but are redacted during the post-exilic period, which formalised the Torah or Pentateuch at around 450 BCE (King, 2001). Based on the content redaction processes being formalised for approximately four hundred years, this theory suggests that the Torah or Pentateuch was not written by a single author (Moses), but rather by multiple authors. Therefore, what came down to us as the Torah was written by different authorships, which were edited over time and compiled into its final version.

Using the documentary hypothesis in biblical analysis allows us to examine the social and political context in which the story of Sarah and Hagar was written by different authors that make up Genesis chapters 16 and 21. By examining the historical and cultural context, I aim to gain an insight into the story and its historical context, and how it served to construct and solidify Jewish and Christian identities. Taking into consideration how the story is understood by insider Jews or Christians who do not accept the documentary hypothesis approach, I wish to contribute to a more nuanced and inclusive understanding of the story of Sarah and Hagar, without necessarily antagonising the communities.

To ensure consistency throughout the paper, I shall use the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible (NRSV) released by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States. I anticipate that the outcome of this analysis will enable general readers, especially Muslims and interfaith activists, to recognise the theological debates that arise from the story, and how biblical scholars analyse it, and to provide a clear path for them to apply their understanding in practical ways.

Summary of the Story

The story of Sarah and Hagar in the Book of Genesis appears to have been written in two different periods of time by several redactors. The first story appears in Chapter 16:1-16, and the second continues in Chapter 21:8-21. In the first part of the story, it is told that Sarai, Abram's wife, had not given birth since they married (see also Genesis 11:30). This situation saddened Sarai as the wife in Abram's household, and she finally decided to offer her maidservant Hagar as her surrogate to Abram. By offering Hagar to her husband, Sarai wished that through Hagar's womb, she would provide Abram with an heir and save herself from carrying the shame of barrenness in her community. However, her decision to share the status as the only wife in Abram's tent came to a

bitter fruit as Hagar looked with contempt at her after conceiving. Sarai then complained to Abram and put the matter before God: "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me" (Genesis 16:5).

In response to Sarah's complaint, Abram was ambiguous. Instead of offering an immediate solution, he stood between abdicating his responsibility as the would-be father and recognising Sarai's claim over Hagar. Not knowing whether the matter was serious to Hagar or simply being insensitive, Abram said to Sarah: "Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please"(Genesis 16:6). As one might expect, this rather indifferent statement led to a tragedy in Abram's tent as Sarai "dealt harshly" against Hagar and caused her to flee from Abram's tent.

The next verses tell us that the angel of the Lord found Hagar in the wilderness of Shur and asked her to return to Sarai with a promise that God would multiply her offspring that "cannot be counted for multitude" (Genesis 16:10). The angel of the Lord also informed Hagar to name her son Ishmael, "for the Lord has given heed to your affliction" (Genesis 16:11). It is said that Hagar submitted to the request and eventually gave birth to a son in Abram's household who was called Ishmael, at a time when Abram was eighty-six years old.

The second part of the story continued thirteen years later after Abram was ninety-nine years old. Although the conflict between Sarah and Hagar is found in Chapter 21, its introduction begins in Chapter 17. It is said that God appeared to Abram and made a covenant with him: "I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you" (Genesis 17:7). This covenant has a precondition that "every male among you shall be circumcised" (Genesis 17:11). Then, God continues with the promise that He will bless Sarai and from her, Abram would have another son who shall be called Isaac.

The tension between Sarah and Hagar began when Ishmael and Isaac had grown together. Genesis 21:9 portrays that when Sarai, who is now called Sarah, sees that Ishmael teases Isaac, she urges Abram, who is now called Abraham, to cast out Hagar and Ishmael from his tent. Abraham, who had the experience of casting Hagar away from his tent, was reluctant to grant Sarah's request. In a situation where Abraham could not find a solution to calm Sarah down, God once again came to intervene. "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you" (Genesis 21:12). This statement marked the end of the story of the two women.

After the event, Hagar and Ishmael, under Abraham's grievance to please Sarah, had no other choice but to go into the wilderness. However, even as Hagar was no longer in Abraham's tent, she once again found her spiritual momentum to receive the angel of God who calmed her when she and Ishmael desperately needed water. Hagar, who could not bear to see her son crying for water, begged the Lord: "Do not let me look on the death of the child" (Genesis 21:16). It was at this moment that the Lord sent an angel to her: "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him" (Genesis 21:17-18). In the end, Hagar and Ishmael decided to stay in the wilderness of Paran.

After their expulsion from Abraham's tent, the Bible does not provide any more information about the relationship between Hagar and Sarah. However, Ishmael and Isaac are

reported to have maintained contact, and when Abraham died, the two brothers met to bury their father in Machpelah (Genesis 25:9).

Strands and Contexts of the Narrative

Scholars in Biblical studies have argued that the story of the patriarchs in the book of Genesis has different sources that can be traced in the various ways in which the narratives are preserved and presented to us. In the case of the narrative story of Sarah and Hagar in chapters 16 and 21, Biblical scholars have traced a combination of three identifiable sources: the Jehovist (J), also called the Yahwist, the Elohist (E), and the Priestly (P). A German scholar, Karl-Josef Kuschel, identifies that the two sequences of the story in chapters 16 and 21 are, in fact, a combination of J and E sources. However, the P editors have edited the story to make it in line with the purpose of the narrative in chapter 17. Hence, following Kuschel, the story of Sarah and Hagar that we have today is the product of the Priestly writings (P) (Kuschel, 1995).

The evidence of P can be traced from the emphasis on the context to legitimise Sarah's son Isaac as the heir of Abraham. What we read in chapter 16 is an introduction to God's decision to bless Isaac as the progeny of Abraham (Genesis 17:19-21, 21:12). The authors or editors of P have had their own theological agenda to promote and preserve the story, that is, to inform readers that although Abraham had an older son Ishmael, the family line and privileges attached to it, i.e., covenant, went through his younger brother Isaac (Kuschel, 1995).

Robert Davidson, another biblical historian, argues that the narratives in chapter 16 are the product of the Jehovist (J) tradition. However, verses 3, 15, and 16 come from the Priestly (P) authors, with their formal style and fondness for precise chronological detail. The notion of "ten years" in verse 3 and the reference to Abraham being "eighty-six years old" in verse 16, according to Davidson, are clear examples of the P materials (Davidson, 1979, p. 49). Similarly, Savina Teubal, another biblical scholar, argues that the two episodes of the story of Sarah and Hagar consist of two distinct sources: Genesis 16 by the J sources, and Genesis 21 by the E sources. However, although they are different, the two narratives constitute one theme. Hence, according to Teubal, while the rest of chapter 16 is the product of the J materials, verses 1, 3, 15, and 16 are distinctly the product of Priestly writings (Teubal, 1990).

Teubal also argues that chapter 21 is a combination of the J, E, and P source materials. The first verse of chapter 21, "The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised," according to Teubal, is written by the J authors. Then, in the second, third, fourth, and fifth verses, the P editors inserted: "Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to his son whom Sarah bore him. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him" (Genesis 21:2-5). The next verse, when Sarah says; "God (Elohim) has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me," is exclusively the product of the E editors (Teubal, 1990, pp. 38-39).

The arguments presented by Kuscher, Davidson, and Teubal are in line with the earlier analysis proposed by historian Martin Noth, in that he argues that if the P source materials were removed, "the remainder of the Pentateuch would be neither unified nor homogenous" (Noth, 1972,

p. 20). Following this theory, it is highly probable that the J and E sources were written independently during the early periods of the Israeli monarchy. On the other hand, the P narratives were added during the period when the Israelites were living in exile. Based on this theory, it can be inferred that the various sources of the Torah or Pentateuch were written by different authors at different times. One may argue that the story of Sarah and Hagar, in particular, was significant to the Jewish community during their exile in the sixth century BCE. This story helped to establish the community's identity and had special meanings for them. In other words, the story of Sarah and Hagar is a part of the ancient Israelites' story and holds significance for the people at a particular time.

One could argue that during their exile in Babylonia, the Israelites found it necessary to cling to a hierarchical text that emphasised the distinction between slave and master, promised and non-promised progeny. They required more than just moral guidance or archival material; they needed what John Barton (2019, p. 58) referred to as a 'national history' that would provide them with a sense of communal solidarity and hope during difficult times. This hope and communal solidarity may have also been what inspired the Apostle Paul to offer a promise of salvation to the Gentiles in the first century, as seen in his letter to the Galatians. By extending the promise of salvation beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community, Paul may have been seeking to offer hope to those who were struggling, just as the story of Sarah and Hagar had provided hope for the Israelites during their own difficult times.

An Ecumenical Approach to the Story

The story of Sarah and Hagar is a tale of two women who share the responsibility of motherhood in their household with Abraham. Despite coming from different social backgrounds, both women acted in accordance with the norms and traditions of their society. Sarah's decision to offer Hagar to Abraham was a common practice in ancient Near Eastern societies. Similarly, Hagar's decision to flee from Sarah's oppression was a legitimate action in any social relationship throughout human history. The Hebrew people would do the same after their oppression in Egypt a few hundred years later.

The problem with the interpretation of the story of Sarah and Hagar is that theologians often focus solely on the interests of Sarah and her lineage, without considering the other story in the same household of Abraham. Reading the story narrowly to preserve family lineage solely for the promised or the one who received covenant, while excluding non-promised or non-covenantal others can lead Jewish and Christian theologians to overlook the possibility that God may have blessed Hagar and her lineage, albeit for a different reason. In our contemporary context, this model of interpretation could provide a basis for self-fulfilled theological pride and political supremacy in a multicultural society. To avoid the interpretive pitfalls, biblical scholars advocate for rereading the story of Sarah and Hagar in a new light.

J. Gerald Janzen raises this concern, arguing that by limiting the interpretation of the story to a simple slave-master narrative, the possibility of a more nuanced theological understanding, which acknowledges the blessings that Hagar and Ishmael may have received from God, is eliminated. Addressing this tragic memory of exclusion, Janzen continues that “the very community of promise and hope, of redemption and liberation, the community of Abraham and Sarah, is itself

capable of becoming a community of oppression" (Janzen, 1993, p. 46). In other words, the Israelites who were once oppressed and enslaved could potentially oppress others based on the same theological narrative. In place of this mode of interpretation, engaging in a broader interpretation of the story is imperative to fully appreciate its theological implications for communal life.

In a series of dialogues about stories from Genesis, Tikva Frymer-Kensky, has also expressed similar concerns, stating that "The issues raised by the Sarah-Hagar story play themselves out in our contemporary consciousness as we realise that a history of oppression does not guarantee that we cannot become oppressors" (Frymer-Kensky, 1996, p. 97). For her, the story serves as a reminder that even those who have experienced oppression can become oppressors if they do not critically read their traditions. Karen Armstrong who participated in the dialogue adds her thoughts on the issue, stating that "Poor Hagar is caught up in some divine drama and then jettisoned when she has played her part—chucked out into the wilderness with woefully inadequate provisions" (Armstrong, 1996). Like Janzen, both scholars stress the need to critically examine the societal and cultural contexts in which this story was written to fully appreciate its theological implications.

One would be mistaken to assume that the approach above is a product of the modern ecumenical movement. In fact, critically evaluating and examining Biblical stories has been common practice since the 19th century. A prime example is Abraham Geiger, a leading rabbi of the Jewish Reform movement in Germany, who wrote in 1836: "The Talmud and the Bible too, that collection of books, most of them so splendid and uplifting, perhaps the most exalting of all literature of human authorship, can no longer be viewed as of divine origin." He continued:

> For the love of heaven, how much longer can we continue this deceit to expound the stories of the Bible from the pulpit over and over again as actual historical happenings, to accept as supernatural events of world import stories which we ourselves have relegated to the realm of legend and to derive teaching from them or at least to use them as the basis for sermons and texts? How much longer will we continue to pervert the spirit of the child with these tales that distort the natural good sense of tender youth? (Meyer, 1999, p. 195)

This reflection suggests that the critical examination of religious texts is a longstanding tradition. Based on the above ecumenical reflection, contemporary readers, especially those who engage in interfaith dialogue may no longer benefit from approaching the story solely through the lens of the crisis experienced by the Jewish people in the sixth century BCE.

Instead, readers should embrace a broader perspective that takes into account the diversity of human experience and the complexity of God's relationship with humanity. Taking into consideration the earlier documentary hypothesis, if we re-read Genesis 16 and 21 with an ecumenical perspective, we may get the insight that both Ishmael and Isaac were blessed in different ways, with Isaac being blessed in the watered land and Ishmael in the desert. Nowhere in the book of Genesis does God show favouritism towards either Sarah or Hagar. When Sarah banished Hagar from Abraham's tent after she had conceived, God did not intervene or blame Sarah for any wrongdoing. Sarah, in this case, was expressing what a privileged woman had to do in the past. On the other hand, Hagar had a right, according to her society, to feel more worthy than Sarah because

it was from her womb that Abraham would have heirs. Hagar did not need permission to feel superior, just as Abraham and Sarah did not need to ask Hagar's consent, whether she felt oppressed or not when they decided to use her womb to give Abraham heirs.

One could argue that centuries of reading the story of Sarah and Hagar in the context of the exile, not the mention centuries of persecution under the Romans, may cause Jewish commentaries to have forgotten or neglected the biblical narrative of their ancestors' enslavement in Egypt. This neglect has led to a particular interpretation of history that denies God's justice towards both women. In particular, it led to downplaying the moral message of God's command to Hagar to go back to Sarah and submit to her. This is a unique story that is worth a theological reflection on its own. The same narrative that might be understood as subduing Hagar portrays her being the first woman in the Bible to receive God's messenger. When God, through the angel, asks Hagar to return to Sarah, He does not let her go back empty-handed. On the contrary, she returns with God's promise: "I will so greatly multiply your offspring." This shows that Hagar was an important part of God's plan and was given a special status. As Bruce Feiler quotes, "Hagar, who earlier occupied the same place as Sarah, now occupies the same place as Abraham" (Feiler, 2002, p. 66). This demonstrates that God's plan is not limited to a particular group of people and that He cares for all of His creations, regardless of their social status, whether they received covenantal status or not.

Further indication can be seen when Sarah, once again, banished Hagar and Ishmael after Isaac's birth. God did not intervene or blame Sarah for any wrongdoing. Abraham, who had already banished Hagar in chapter 16, hesitated to expel her and their son again. However, God tells him to listen to Sarah and sends them away with some food and water. In Genesis 21, God commands Abraham: "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring" (Genesis 21: 12-13). Hagar, and now with Ishmael, once again received the angel of the Lord when they were desperate without water in the desert. "Fear not," an angel reached out to her. "Lift up the boy and hold him by the hand". With divine intervention, Hagar and Ishmael survived and even thrived in the harsh desert environment. In addition, God promised to make Ishmael into a great nation, just as He promised to make his younger brother and his descendants into a great nation.

Learning from biblical scholars and historians, all the divine drama surrounding Sarah and Hagar should no longer be read as a reason for theological pride and degrade others in a multicultural society. We learn from the story that both Ishmael and Isaac were sons of Abraham and were blessed by God. If in the past this story had been used for the development of Jewish identity or Christian identity, perhaps modern readers could use the same story to embrace others who are neither Jews nor Christians. The biblical narratives that came down to us indeed state that God's covenant came down through Sarah's son, Isaac. However, it is important to recognize that this does not mean that God only cares for Isaac and his descendants. While it is important to respect the foundational story of the Israelites as the recipients of God's covenant with Abraham, it does not diminish the other message that God takes care of all His creations, regardless of their background or status. This recognition is a necessary step to promoting inclusivity and compassion towards all people and achieving harmony and mutual understanding in a multicultural society.

However, rereading the biblical story of Sarah and Hagar through the lens of biblical criticism and ecumenical perspectives could pose a serious challenge to many Jews who view the story as foundational to their belief system. Orthodox Judaism, similar to conservative tendencies

within Protestantism and Catholicism, rejects biblical criticism. Orthodox Jews, whether in the modern world or the medieval, hold steadfastly to a doctrine called “Torah from Heaven" (Meyer, 1999, p. 194). This doctrine asserts that both the Written and the Oral Torah were literally revealed by God to Moses at Sinai and are therefore, wholly of divine origin, though not in the same literalist fashion as the inerrancy believed by some Protestants.

As such, Orthodox Jews reject all modern attempts to suggest that any portion of the Torah was not written by Moses at God’s behest. This position implies that rereading the story of Sarah and Hagar with an ecumenical approach might undermine a particular theological stance that many Orthodox Jews find essential for their identity, such as the covenant. While groups or individuals who are traditionally oppressed or excluded from the covenant, and who identify with Hagar (such as non-white Christians or Muslims), may find attempts to reread the biblical story liberating, the same cannot be said for Jews who may feel that such attempts undermine their religious identity. This perspective also suggests that attempting to build ecumenical partnerships without considering Orthodox views might exacerbate the existing divide between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, pushing them even further apart.

Conclusion

In the contemporary context, our access to history and current scholarship allows us to reflect on the past experiences of Jewish people in exile and the early formation of Christianity during Paul’s life in the first century CE. We can learn from their experiences that the history of oppression does not guarantee that we cannot become oppressors ourselves. The story of Hagar and Sarah should be read critically in a historical context and should not be used to indicate theological superiority over another. As discussed above, God has blessed both Sarah's son and Hagar's son in His own way, and neither woman nor her son was a victor or a loser. While early Jewish and Christian theologians used this story to develop and maintain their identity, contemporary readers should avoid using the same interpretation to reinforce prejudices and perpetuate misunderstandings.

Muslim readers and interfaith activists can benefit from reading the historical context of Sarah and Hagar's story to recognize theological debates and appreciate the moral messages it carries for Jewish and Christian believers. The story of Sarah and Hagar, including Ishmael and Isaac, as presented in Genesis, is very different from the version preserved in Islamic tradition. In the Islamic tradition, Abraham is known to have taken Hagar and Ishmael to Mecca, not to the Negev desert. The tradition also mentions that Abraham visited Ishmael twice, indicating that he never abandoned his son. However, the story from the Islamic tradition can be reconciled with the one from the Jewish and Christian narrative in Genesis, as both traditions acknowledge God's grace towards humanity. By considering the story of Sarah and Hagar as an important component of Jewish communal identity, which has been significant from the time of exile until the present, modern readers can attain valuable insights and inform themselves in current debates on social justice and interfaith relations, avoiding further division among Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

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The Role of *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Jews in Paving the Way for Coexistence in Andalusia 912 CE- 1110 CE: A Socio-Cultural Analysis of *La Convivencia*

Muhamad Nor Aiman Bin Mohd Nor Zaidi[1]

Abstract: This article investigates the unique interaction between three social groups; *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Jews, that lived together during Muslim Spain's era (732 CE-1492 CE) with the focus on unravelling the socio-cultural mechanism behind this interaction which led to the culmination of an interesting period known as "*la Convivencia*". Viewing this topic through socio-cultural lenses, this article considers this approach the best method to understand *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Jews' interaction by assessing them as undergoing the process of acculturation and assimilation. This article aims to address the scholarly gap which, due to the lack of socio-cultural perspective of *La Convivencia,* led to some scholars denying the existence of this period. The presence of diverse communities in *al-Andalus* created multiple variables that pushed for coexistence like the emergence of new social groups, *Muwalladun*, which were affected by the influence of dominant Arabic culture and increased their rapid conversion to Islam due to equal opportunities for social mobility as Muslims. In addition, a similar role was exercised by *Mozarabs*, who built a connection with the brothers in faith in northern Iberia, spreading their tolerant attitude and knowledge gained in the south through trade and immigration. As for Jews, they benefited tremendously from this interaction; with the Muslims as the model and benchmark, their society prospered and flourished to the point of creating the Jewish Golden Age.

Keywords: *Muwalladun*, Mozarab, Jews, La Convivencia, coexistence, tolerance

Introduction

La Convivencia was a Spanish term for coexistence. It was coined by a Spanish cultural historian, *Americo Castro* for a period of religious coexistence and religious-cultural tolerance between three major social groups in *al-Andalus* under Muslim rule: Muslims, Christians and Jews. It was a disputed topic, and much debate existed about its relevancy and practical existence. *Muwalladun* or *Muladi*, by definition, were Muslims of Hispano-Roman descent or the descendants of a mixed marriage between Arab or Berber with Hispano-Roman who lived in *al-Andalus*. At the same time, *Mozarabs* or *Musta'rab* were the Iberian Christians who lived under the rule of Muslim Spain. The Jews in this context refer to Sephardi Jews who lived or migrated to Spain. All these social groups were instrumental in the creation of *Convivencia*. The interaction between *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Jews was extensively discussed by historians but usually under the framework of political and religious history. The old narrative of this particular period was that these three groups clashed throughout the medieval era. However, through the socio-cultural methods, this interaction is much more humane than what has been portrayed by previous historians. This article emphasises the use of the term

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Muwalladun instead of Muslims - usually consisted of Arabs and Berbers due to the size of population, which was the majority of the medieval Iberian population within the period of the studies. Even though Arabs and Berbers indeed contributed towards the realisation of La Convivencia, their role as the elites and rulers will prevent this article from analysing the situation in a socio-cultural perspective. Besides, by the time of Abd-Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE), the term Arabs, Berbers, and *Muwalladun* became loosely interchangeable (Sullivan, 2012). It also has sociological significance in contributing to the flow of discourse with the other two social groups.

The period of *Convivencia* was proposed by historians, starting from the *Umayyad* rule of Andalusia in 732 CE until the fall of the *Nasrid* Kingdom of Granada in 1492 CE. Under the context of the socio-cultural narrative, the Muslim rule of *al-Andalus* can be divided into two periods; the first one was both the *Umayyad* Emirate/Caliphate and the First *Taifa* period, and the second one was the North African Berber dynasties, which were *Almoravid* and *Almohad* period. In the first period, Christians and Jews enjoyed a relative tolerance policy imposed by the *Umayyad* and the *Taifa* kings, which encouraged the development of long-lasting traditions and the impression of both cultures in the later period. However, during the second period, *Almoravid* and *Almohad*'s approaches were conservative in that various restrictions were imposed on them, and the tensions rose to the point of a massacre. This article chose 912 CE- 1110 CE as the specific timeline because it was the peak of *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Jews' interaction and can be considered the "true" period of *Convivencia*. It started from the reign of Caliph Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE) of the *Umayyad* Caliphate of Cordoba until the end of the First *Taifa* period in 1110 CE after *Almoravid*'s complete conquest of southern Iberia. The relevance of this period was when the policies adopted by Abd Rahman III opened the possibility of healthy multi-way conversation within the layer of Andalusian society compared to his predecessors. There was an active period of inter-ethnic interaction during the First *Taifa* period. The period went up to 1110 CE because the treatment done by North African dynasties strained the relationship between these three social groups (Wasserstein, 2019).

The main primary sources used in this article are *al-Bayan al-Mughrib fi Akhbar al-Andalus wal-Maghrib* (Book of the Amazing Story of the History of al-Andalus and Maghrib), shortly known as *Bayan al-Mughrib,* which was one of the surviving records about the history of al-Andalus, North Africa, and their contemporaries of that period. However, this record has many lost chapters, and most of the copies were translated into Spanish and French. This article uses the French translation written by Edmond Fagnan. Another primary source this article refers to is the English translation of *Indicus Luminosus*, written by Paulus Alvarus, one of the Christian chroniclers that described the Christian society at that period. Despite its hostile tone, it became a valuable source for the socio-cultural interpretation of Andalusian society at that time.

The existing literature about this topic such as *Convivencia: Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Medieval Spain* by Mann, Glick and Dodds (1992) proposes an extensive research of the interaction between Muslims, Christians and Jews in general. However, they did not focus on the issue of *Muwalladun* and *Mozarabs* as culturally significant in the process of the inter-ethnic interaction. This article aims to identify the culmination of *La Convivencia* in medieval Iberia due to the role played by *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Jews during their daily interaction rather than to view their interaction through a political top-down approach. The article’s data analysis is done through a socio-cultural approach by assessing a general account of the interaction between the targeted groups through their political or economic functions within the Andalusian society and the biography of several contemporaries of the particular

period. Using socio-cultural historical framework that emphasises history from below, this article discusses the factors that make *Convivencia* practical.

The Emergence of Andalusian Society

Initially, to understand this unique interaction and how these social groups contribute toward coexistence, a background stage needed to be set up with the socio-cultural situation of *al-Andalus* before the reign of Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE). The history of Muslim Spain was not without conflict between these social groups. Since the first arrival of Muslim armies on the Iberian shores, ethnic tension already existed within the Muslim circle between Arabs and Berbers. Some historians viewed this issue as a nuance of political aspirations. Nevertheless, it gave the idea that even Muslims who adhered to egalitarian tenets could not escape ethnic conflict in their history.

After the complete conquest of Andalusia in 732 CE, the social situation of *al-Andalus* was composed of a minority of Arabs and Berbers who governed the majority Hispano-Roman population and some minorities of Jewish and Visigoth descent. The Arab settlers were divided into two subgroups: the *Baladis* (early Arab settlers mainly from Yemen) and the *Shamis* (Arabs of Syrian origin who came in a later period). Both subgroups are also referred to as Kalbites and Qaysites, respectively. These Arabs formed an Arab aristocracy and occupied all the urban settlements in *al-Andalus*. Berbers can also be divided into two subgroups: the *Baranis* (Berber tribes that lived in the area between Algeria and Morocco) and the *Butr* (Berber tribes that lived in the area between Tunisia and Egypt). Most of these Berbers were sedentary, unlike the Nomad Berbers. They formed their aristocracy that occupied the rural settlements of Andalusia. The presence of Berbers was heavily needed by Muslim authority in Andalusia because they formed the bulk of Muslim armies against the Christian Kingdom of Asturias in the north. The Arabs and Berbers always had constant power struggles because both groups feared being influenced by each other through the Arabisation of Berbers and the Berberisation of Arabs (Glick, 2005).

The Christians under the Muslim rule were mainly Hispano-Romans and Visigoths. Both Christians and Jews were treated as *dhimmis* (Protected people) according to Sharia law as they were the *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book). This treatment granted Christians and Jews a relatively autonomous life in which they governed their communities though only limited to religious and legal organisations. Politically, they were still subject to Muslim rule. In general, their social situation improved under the later rule of the *Umayyads* (Collins, 1995). *Umayyad* administration in *al-Andalus* before Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE) practised tribalism and Arabism at its finest and treated *Muwalladun* and *Mozarabs* as inferiors which became among the catalysts of various ethnic tension incidents such as the Berber Revolt (740 CE-743 CE), the collapse of *Umayyad* Caliphate of Damascus in 750 CE, and the Ibn Hafsun Rebellion (883 CE-928 CE).

The Role of *Muwalladun*

As the Andalusian society evolved, so did their socio-cultural situation, according to the political climate of *al-Andalus*. Between the 9th and 11th centuries, a significant shift in Andalusian demography occurred. A new social group, *Muwalladun* or, in some historical writings, Neo-Muslims, emerged due to various period variables such social mobility, religious enlightenment and assimilation. This article highlights *Muwalladun* as a distinct group rather than grouping it with Arabs and Berbers because their unique existence built the bridge between Muslims and Christians in Iberia. After the 10th century, the term *Muwalladun* becomes

insignificant because they were absorbed by Arabs and Berbers culturally, making it difficult to differentiate them as they adopted or assumed the Arab/Berber tribal lineage. This led to the changing of their names and completely erasing their Iberian heritage. The *Muwalladun*'s Iberian heritage was erased because of "Islamic clientage" known as *mawl* -, this means the Arabs and Berbers accepted *Muwalladun* as clients of their tribes and became Muslim automatically (Glick, 2005). This article views this idea as questionable. It does have some truth, where the *Muwalladun* assumed Arab and Berber tribal lineage, yet it was more cultural than religious. To call it "Islamic clientage" implies this process as a systematic conversion to Islam. Two main reasons contributed to the rise of *Muwalladun* as a social group: first, the mass and rapid conversion of Hispano-Romans and Visigoths to Islam and second, the intermarriage between Arab/Berber and Christian women.

The mass and rapid conversion of the Iberian natives to Islam was phenomenal. It can be linked to the benefit of social mobility and the attractiveness of Islamic teachings. The religious motive behind their conversion was in question; however, the *Umayyad* authority was tolerant by not forcing Christians and Jews to convert but rather treated them as *dhimmis* who were entitled to an autonomous status. Consequently, due to their experience with the cruel Visigothic rule, which saw many Hispano-Romans being tortured and mistreated, Islam became the beacon of hope for them to embrace compared to Christianity (Imamuddin, 1981). Conversely, despite Islam treating the people of the Book positively as *dhimmis*, in practice, *Umayyad* administrations imposed certain limitations on their political, legal and social standings (Glick, 2005). The conversion to Islam can be viewed as an opportunity to be treated equally and access many rights accompanying it. This benefit of social mobility can be considered among the reasons behind rapid conversion.

The importance of *Muwalladun* in Andalusian history can be presented with their origin and nature. Since they were Christian at first, they understood the Iberian customs and traditions, and the descendants of Arab-Iberians/Berber-Iberians might also be educated in Iberian culture by their Iberian mothers. Since *Muwalladun* have a close affinity towards the Christian Iberians, it can be concluded that they will always have good interactions and could intermingle with each other well. Besides, *Muwalladun* also preserved their *Mozarabic* languages, making extensive exchanges with *Mozarabs* possible. The problem of certain historians was that they defined the concept of *dhimmis* and the autonomous status of religious groups (Christians and Jews) as being enclosed or isolated within the community. However, it was the opposite. The evidence can be seen in the rise of middle-class people of various religious backgrounds, either Muslim or Christian, or Jews, between the 9th and 11th centuries. The emergence of the middle-class highlighted the existence of literate and skillful people such as merchants, artisans, smiths and others. If the idea of lacking religious, social or cultural cohesion due to being segregated by *dhimmis* status is true, this social class would not emerge because their main occupation depended on being involved in daily interactions with other people. Thus, the *Muwalladun*, as a new social group that encompassed the traits of both Muslims and Christians, became the socio-cultural bridge between these groups and provided a good foundation for inter-ethnic interaction.

The Role of *Mozarabs*

Muwalladun and *Mozarabs* are sometimes used interchangeably because of the conversion to Islam, and their similar cultures can be considered indistinctive unless they pronounce their religion. Much of the history of *Mozarabs* was rather vague and less recorded. However, the popular one came from the individuals who worked under Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961

CE), such as Recemendus (Rabi' Ibn Zayd), while another came from the one who was involved with the Martyrdom of Cordoba in 850 CE, like Paulus Alvarus (800 CE-861 CE) who wrote an account from the Christian perspective in regards to the Emirate of Cordoba. Generally, his account criticised the Muslim authority, which was motivated by his religious fanaticism (Gil, 1973). The role of *Mozarabs* in contributing to *Convivencia* can be assessed during the First *Taifa* period (1009 CE-1110 CE). There were records of *Mozarabs*' trade activities across Iberia, especially to the north. They acted as the intermediaries between Muslims in the south and the Christians in the north. These actions showed an active cultural exchange between Muslims and Christians. The Christians recorded the *Mozarabs* who migrated to the north in the 11th century as having Arabic names, indicating that many of the *Mozarabs* have been acculturated into Arabic culture. *Mozarabs* were also instrumental in spreading knowledge to the northern Christians. Their immigration to the north usually led to the creation of Christian elites. The Taifa rulers also employed some of them as diplomats. The *Mozarab* population experienced a steady decline in the 11th century, but a portion was concentrated in Malaga and Valencia.

The reason behind the emergence of *Mozarabic* culture can be attributed to inspiration drawn from Muslims as they attempted to imitate Muslim culture and behaviours. The inspiration motivated *Mozarabs* to participate in Cordoba's "nearly" cosmopolitan society. Another interesting occurrence were the *Saqaliba*, slaves of Slavic origin who had been imported starting from the reign of Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE). They involved in various occupations, such as eunuchs in the harem, palace guards, artisans and others. Some historians claimed that the backbone of the Andalusian economy was slave labour, but this claim was a generalisation of the complex economic structure of *al-Andalus*. The *Saqaliba* did play some roles in the Andalusian economy but not a major one; if this kind of situation happened, where did the Muslims, *Mozarabs* and Jews (famous as merchants and had extensive trading networks across the Mediterranean Sea) gain their income from? The Caliphate of Cordoba also, at some point in history, had achieved economic prosperity through the contribution of these three social groups, especially the Jews. The introduction of *Saqaliba* into Andalusian politics was a political move to balance the Muslim and Christian influence despite *Saqaliba* being Christians in origin, they were supposedly not to be affiliated with any faction and only answered to the Caliphs (Scales, 1993).

A noteworthy case of unique inter-ethnic interaction was the story of *Rodrigo Diaz "El Campeador" de Vivar* (1043 CE-1099 CE), better known as *El-Cid*. El-Cid was an evolved word of As-Sayyid meaning the Lord. It is an honorific title given by the Muslims to him. He was a notable figure in Muslim and Christian Spanish literature. He was a Christian knight who served Muslim and Christian kings during the First *Taifa* period. His armies were composed of Christians, *Mozarabs* and Muslims. *El-Cid* befriended King al-Mustain II, the ruler of Taifa of Zaragoza, and helped him negotiate peace with various Christian rulers. It did portray that regardless of their religion, the interaction between these social groups was not restricted to their religious domain but went with the flow of the political situation at that time.

The Role of Jews

The article has discussed the role of *Muwalladun* and *Mozarabs* in *Convivencia*. Now, the last social group is the Jews. The foundation of *Convivencia* was due to the achievement and development made by the Jews as a minority under Muslim rule in *al-Andalus*. Some historians viewed the Jews' role as a blessing in disguise on account of the fact that they still faced discrimination in history. However, the Jewish accounts portrayed different expressions of their livelihood under Muslim rule, which was much brighter than under Christian rule. On a societal

level, the Jews always faced suppression during Christian Visigothic rule, not only by the authorities but also the commoners (Cohen, 2021). In general, they were oppressed to the point of forced conversion to Christianity. The coming of Muslims to the Iberian Peninsula provided them with an opportunity to survive and strive, and later, as *dhimmis*, their situation improved.

Interestingly, the interaction between Jews and the other two groups increased dramatically during and after the reign of Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE). Due to their advanced skills and talents in many aspects of economy and politics, many Jews were employed by the *Umayyad* court. These high-position Jews were regarded as their community leaders and voices. The Andalusian Jews at first lacked cultural development as they only relied on the oral transmission of knowledge passed down within their community for centuries. The rise of Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915 CE-970 CE) however, made the Andalusian Jews experienced a widespread cultural revival. The Jews who lived in Andalusia were the most Arabized group compared to the *Mozarabs*. They viewed Arabic culture as rich and an opportunity to be used for cultural advancement. With prominent Jews like Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915 CE-970 CE) being employed in public office, he benefited from his position for the Jewish interest domestically and internationally (Menocal, 2009). In *al-Andalus*, he financed the Jewish cultural institutions (*Yeshiva*) and became the patron for Jewish scholars (*Rabbis*). This situation also led to the patronage of outside Jews, such as Mizrahi Jews who originated from the Middle East and mastered *Rabbinic* knowledge and language to nurture the culture of Andalusian Jews.

Besides these aspects, the Jews also approached their cultural expression through the culture of their overlord, in which much Jewish literature was written in Judeo-Arabic. The Jews were inspired by Arabic poetry and produced many Hebrew literature with the style and standard according to the Hispano-Arabic style. They followed Muslim's intense pursuit of knowledge by incorporating the same spirit in Talmudic studies. Their scholarship in science and literature was written in the Judeo-Arabic language thus, pushed further their Hebrew language boundary. Due to this Jewish cultural revival, some historians call this period the Jewish Golden Age; however, it only materialised during the *Umayyad* and first *Taifa* periods.

During the First *Taifa* period, some educated Jews assumed vizier positions in various *Taifa*. The famous one was Samuel Ibn Naghrela (993 CE-1056 CE), also known as *Samuel Hanagid*, the Prince of Jews who served as vizier in the court of Zirid Granada. They spoke the Judeo-Arabic language and dressed similarly to the Arabs, which, from the outside, usually could not be differentiated from the Muslims. This interaction is not only limited to politics but also to the economy. The Jewish and Muslim merchants treated each other as equals and conducted their business through shipments across the Mediterranean Sea without issues (Goitein, 2015). This treatment occurred because Jewish merchants had a vast trade network in the Mediterranean Sea, which they had built through a high level of trust with other Jewish communities, especially in Cairo, the Levant and Constantinople. Jews were also typically known for having an occupation as money lenders, and Christian records portrayed their activities of lending money to Muslims and Christians as prevalent at that time.

Socio-Cultural Analysis of *la Convivencia*

In general, these three social groups, *Muwalladun*, *Mozarabs* and Jews, have one thing in common: they were Arabized and influenced by Muslims (Arab and Berber) in every aspect of life (social, culture, religion, politics and economy). This similarity was the ultimate tool to create a harmonious interaction between these groups. It was far from the idea of cosmopolitanism or utopia, which was quite impossible and anachronistic because this particular period of Andalusian society was during the medieval era. Medieval Europe was

famously known for its rigidness in the class hierarchy due to feudalism and almost non-existent social mobility. Nevertheless, this worldview of medieval practice was loosely applied in Muslim society at that time. There was evidence of social mobility within their hierarchy, such as a slave (*Saqaliba*) becoming a freeman, and in the case of Mujahid al-Amiri (d.1045 CE), a slave even became a ruler of *Taifa* of Denia (1010 CE-1227 CE) - which existed during First *Taifa* period (Wasserstein, 1985). Some historians might see this slave's ascension to the throne as a person who took advantage of the chaotic time after the disintegration of the Caliphate of Cordoba, which was true in a sense, but for the people of that region to accept this slave as a ruler showed a lenient attitude or a certain degree of social acceptance at that time for this practice to happen.

The religio-socio-cultural shift in their interactions can be explained through two important socio-cultural activities: social assimilation and cultural acculturation. Both socio-cultural activities occurred due to the presence of a dominant culture. As a reminder, the dominant culture here was Arabic, not Islamic. There was a distinction between Arabisation and Islamisation. Western historians interchangeably used these processes as they viewed both as the same. However, it was different and happened simultaneously through a parallel process. The Arabisation of Iberian natives was cultural acculturation in which specific cultural markers within Hispano-Roman culture were still maintained but accommodated with the dominant Arabic culture. The result of this process created *Muwalladun, Mozarabs* and Arabized Jews. Then, Islamisation was a religious transition accompanied by its principles. In some records, *Muwalladun*, despite being Muslims, drank alcohol and celebrated Christian holidays (Collins, 1995). This portrayal led to the belief in a somewhat different version of Islam, which some historians assumed was the synthesization of Islam and local Hispano-Roman culture (*Muwalladism*). The article argued differently for this idea by highlighting the definition of Islamisation proposed by al-Attas (2011): the Islamization of particular cultural groups happened in a slow and steady process. It began with the emancipation from magical, mythical, animistic, and ethnic cultural traditions that were incompatible with Islam, followed by the liberation from secular control over one's intellect and language. Any fundamental and commendable aspects of pre-Islamic civilization that unite people and are deemed compatible with Islam are assimilated into Islamic civilization. Thus, historians should not make misleading academic guesses about Islamization without understanding its essence. Social assimilation referred to the Andalusian society as a whole. All social groups assimilated into a vibrant community of *al-Andalus* where the Muslims (Arab, Berber and *Muwalladun*), Christians (*Mozarabs*), and Jews intermingled in a subtle, harmonious environment.

The dominant Arabic culture contributed to the easiness of conversation between these social groups. Andalusian society might have been a monolingual or bilingual society at some point in history. In the acculturation process, many of the Jews and Christians started to speak in Arabic and also dress like Arabs. Both social groups also assimilated their language with the Arabic language and used Arabic script for daily transactions. The *Muwalladun* and *Mozarabs* (Arabised Christians) spoke *the Mozarab*ic language. This dialect of Romance language borrowed some Arabic vocabulary and used the *Aljamiado* script, while the Arabised Jews used Judeo-Arabic, which they wrote in the Arabic language in Hebrew script. The prominence of the Arabic language as *lingua franca* in Andalusian society encouraged healthy interaction between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. This Arabisation of Christians was expressed negatively by Paulus Alvarus (800 CE-861 CE), a Christian theologian who commented on how his Christian youths were Arabised and forgot their own culture. Alvarus wrote:

> Surely all the Christian youth who are outstanding in appearance, eloquent in tongue, conspicuous in habit and gesture, outstanding in heathen erudition, adorned with Arabic eloquence engage most avidly with the volumes of the Chaldeans, and read them most intently, and discuss them most ardently and bringing them together with huge zeal they spread them through praise with broad and restricted tongue, ignoring the beauty of the church and the rivers of the church, despising the things emanating from Paradise as the cheapest things? Alas, the Christians do not know their law, and the Latins ignore their language. (Al-Tamimi, 2021)

The acculturation and assimilation process happened within the Andalusian society in stages. In the early stages of the First *Umayyad* rule of Andalusia (732 CE-750 CE), most of the population was the Christian Hispano-Romans. The mass conversion to Islam and intermarriage heavily happened from this period and beyond. The intermarriage between Muslims and Christians not only occurred among Arab/Berber aristocracy but was also practised by the commoners. Caliph Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE) was proof of this intermarriage as his mother was a Basque. His physical features were a fair complexion and a reddish beard which he dyed black to look like an Arab (Idhari, 1901). This period was portrayed as a time of constant civil wars between various factions of Arab and Berber.

During this period, the Emirate of Cordoba (756 CE-929 CE) can be viewed as the middle stages in which the majority of the population was the new social group, *Muwalladun*. The major trend of this period was the fight for recognition by *Muwalladun* and *Mozarabs* through rebellions. This event happened due to them being treated as inferior to the Arab/Berbers. The reign of Abd Rahman III (r. 912 CE- 961 CE) was the stage in which the period of high cultural exchange with the caliph enforced several policies that further encouraged the interaction between Muslims, Christians and Jews, such as the abolishment of problematic Arab/Berber aristocracy and the incorporation of several Christians and Jews into public offices, for example, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915 CE-970 CE) was a Jew who was appointed as physician and vizier by Abd Rahman III. At the same time, Recemundus (Rabi' Ibn Zayd) was a *Mozarab* bishop who became Abd Rahman III's secretary and also ambassador to Otto I of the Holy Roman Empire (Wintle, 2003).

The last and continuous stage was the First Taifa period (1009 CE-1110 CE). During this period, the interaction between these three social groups became common and rigorous past the boundary of faith and culture. The distinction still exists; however, their social acceptance was already established, and the Mozarabs and Jews had already integrated within the Andalusian society and pledged their loyalty to their Taifa kings. Different Taifas have different policies toward Mozarabs and Jews, but generally, all of them enjoyed relative freedom and achieved a level of tolerance. Thus, these stages showed a delicate process that built up from resistance towards acculturation and assimilation and later evolved into mild interaction that led to rapid conversion. It ended with the social acceptance and Arabisation of these social groups, which laid the foundation or medium for them to easily interact and function within Andalusian society (Wasserstein, 1985).

The Myth of *la Convivencia?*

In another historical narrative, the *Convivencia* was considered a myth, that there was no such religious coexistence between Muslims, Christians and Jews within Spanish history. Some of the arguments against "*La Convivencia*" expressed by Fernandez-Morera (2016) was that the

successful contribution of *al-Andalus* in culture and learning through the interaction between Muslims, Christians and Jews was only done by the upper echelon of Andalusian society and not the ordinary people. It was confirmed that the upper echelon of Andalusian society achieved culture and learning success, but these contributions were for the well-being of the polity and its ordinary people. If given time and a suitable education medium, it will eventually spread among the commoners.

Cohen (2021) argued that it was a myth created by Jews to condemn the Christians for their harsh treatment of them. A religious coexistence or tolerance could not exist in that particular era (medieval era). For this argument, Cohen (2021) believed that interaction between Muslims, Christians and Jews should be viewed objectively with chronological events. He agreed that the Christian treatment of Jews was harsh compared to Muslim treatment, but it did not produce a religious coexistence where everyone interacted freely. The article agreed that the so-called religious coexistence in practicality was impossible because his idea of coexistence was the same as cosmopolitan or utopian environments, but if this coexistence was toned down and observed through a socio-cultural perspective, the subtle, harmonious interaction did exist, which can be concluded as mild coexistence. Lastly, some historians presented that the Muslim treatment of Christians and Jews throughout Andalusian history was the opposite of the *Convivencia*, which was also true during *the Almoravid* and *Almohad* periods. The historical records cannot deny that these dynasties did oppress both Christians and Jews, but to generalise this treatment as what Islamic teachings condoned was wrong. As the article proposed in the period earlier, at some point in Andalusian history, a version of coexistence did happen and created an everlasting legacy in various historical records.

The strong arguments against *Convivencia* that were constantly being used were the incident of the Martyrdom of Cordoba (850 CE-859 CE) and the Granadan Massacre (1066 CE). Both incidents involved the killing of Christians and Jews. It is undeniable that these events happened. However, their causes were justifiable based on that period. First, the Martyrdoms of Cordoba involved 48 Christians who were charged with apostasy and blasphemy because they insulted Prophet *Muhammad* ﷺ in public (Fierro, 2008). According to *Sharia* law, an insult against the prophet can be punished by death. The punishment was done according to the ruler's law, and the convicted breached their agreement as *dhimmis*. As for the Granadan Massacre, the killing of Joseph Ibn Naghrela (1035 CE-1066 CE), the son of Samuel Hanagid and thousands of Jews due to the consequences of *Joseph*'s political intrigue backfiring. He sent a letter to al-Mu'tasim Ibn Sumadih (1051 CE-1091 CE), Almeria's ruler, stating that he would open Granada for invasion as long as al-Mu'tasim Ibn Sumadih appointed him as the Granadan ruler. However, Muslims discovered this plot, and it caused an uproar, which led to the massacre under the pretext that the Jews also breached the agreement as *dhimmis* (Fernández-Morera, 2016).

Based on these descriptions, the religious fervour during that period was high, and there was tension among social groups. Any antagonistic move by Christians and Jews could cause an unexpected reaction. The religious fanaticism of Christians at that time who felt that their religion was being threatened by Muslim rule caused them to publicly express their dissatisfaction by insulting the Muslim prophet, which led to their execution under the *Sharia* law. In contrast, the political miscalculation of Joseph Ibn Naghrela, who was ambitious and already despised by the masses due to his incompetence, led to dissent among Muslims and caused the massacre when his plan backfired.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the political overview of *Convivencia* always portrayed Muslims' cruelty when it comes to the treatment of non-Muslims, Christians and Jews, especially in the context of *al-Andalus*. However, not all the time throughout history saw this happen; a more focused approach and period should be used to analyse the actual identification of the "*Convivencia*". Through the social-cultural historical framework, there were pros and cons in reconstructing the narrative of a "religious coexistence utopia". However, a new narrative can be made with the assumption that socio-cultural interaction and tolerance did exist to a certain extent. The historical records and biographies did mention a positive outlook on several prominent figures due to this coexistence in *al-Andalus*. The role of *Muwalladun*, *Mozarabs* and Jews contributed to this idea. *Muwalladun*, as a new social group, was a product of Muslim and Christian interaction and created a new perspective with this shared connection. *Mozarabs* and Jews who have been Arabised throughout Andalusian history also benefited from this connection of a vibrant community in *al-Andalus*.

Convivencia cannot be perceived through the clash of civilisation paradigms that emphasise the dichotomy of Islam and the West. However, it has to be constructed through the accounts of contemporary Andalusians of that period, such as Ibn al-Qutiyya (d. 977), Hasdai Ibn Shaprut (915 CE-970 CE) and Paulus Alvarus (800 CE-861 CE). Besides, the period of *Convivencia* should be narrowed to the period proposed by this article, which was 912 CE-1110 CE. This period was the peak of these three social groups interacting, and it provided a general understanding of coexistence. In addition, the approach should be a socio-cultural method in order to gain a better impression of the social environment of that particular period. With this guideline, a *Convivencia* did happen in a short period, but the effect lasted until the end of the *Reconquista*.

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Women of Andalusian Court: Kingmakers, Advisors and Regents

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Abstract: This research paper explores the often overlooked yet significant political roles played by women in the Islamic Civilization of *al-Andalus*. Despite the predominance of men in administrative positions, women from the Andalusian court exercised authority as kingmakers, advisors, and, in rare cases, regents. It began by establishing the historical context of *al-Andalus* and the presence of women in politics whilst emphasizing the societal loss resulting from their exclusion in the three main roles examined. Furthermore, the paper addresses how these women wielded political influence, their strategies, and the cultural contexts that shaped their roles. The paper would also briefly explore the challenges and lack of societal recognition faced by the women. Despite limited translated sources, it highlights the importance of studying the political contributions of Andalusian court women for a deeper understanding of Islamic history in Spain.

Keywords: *Al-Andalus*, Andalusian women, Andalusian Court, kingmakers, advisors, regents

Introduction

Like other civilisations, women in the Islamic Civilisation of *al-Andalus* had their fair share of representation and roles in the local societal outlook. After the advent of Islam to *al-Andalus*, local women played significant roles in various aspects of Andalusian society, including the political structure. Despite the predominance of men in *al-Andalus*' political landscape, women were able to assert their influence and make their presence felt in politics.

Through various sources, it is evident that women in *al-Andalus* played political roles, gaining influence and authority in state affairs. While no women ruled any dynasty or kingdom in *al-Andalus*, women of the court played significant roles in the Andalusian politics. From the establishment of the Emirate of Cordoba to the decline of the Nasrids of Granada, various court women played some political roles providing intelligence, advice and support to individuals in power. This aligns with the proverbial phrase, 'a man with dreams needs a woman with a vision'.

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While the literal sense of 'advice' and 'support' provided by women may have been downplayed as trivial, the political roles played by the women of the Andalusian court not only influenced the fate of the state but also shaped Andalusian political dynamics. This perspective was discussed by Ibn Rushd in his commentaries on Plato's *Republic*. According to Melkebeek (2021), Ibn Rushd shared similar view with that of Plato on women and politics despite the former's critiques against the latter's work. In the translated version of Ibn Rushd's commentary on Plato's *Republic* by Erwin Rosenthal, it is stated that:

> … whether women possess natures similar to the natures of every single class of citizens – and in particular the Guardians – or whether the feminine natures are different from the masculine.
>
> If the former is the case, then women are essentially on the same level as men in respect of civic activities in the same classes, so that there are among them warriors, philosophers, rulers, and the like. Otherwise, women are only fitted for such activities in the State as the whole male population is not qualified {to discharge} such as upbringing, procreation and the like. (Rosental, 1969, p. 164)

This indicates that, like men, women had the potential for administrative positions and roles. However, Ibn Rushd's statements however, should not be seen in favor of feminism, instead, they underscore the importance of utilising the full spectrum of human potential in the societal structure of a state (Melkebeek, 2021). Hence, disregarding certain human potentials, including women's, could be detrimental to the state.

In the case of *al-Andalus*, certain women had their fair share of political influence and roles in the court. Most commonly, women of the court, as mentioned earlier, were relied upon for their advice and views. However, there were instances where court women had full authority over decision-making in the administration, surpassing the roles and influence of other court members. With that in mind, this article will explore the political roles of Andalusian women in three main capacities: kingmakers, advisors, and regents. The central focus of this article will revolve around the following questions:

a) How did the women of the Andalusian court exercise their political influence and roles?
b) How did they manage to gain their influence and roles?

To address these questions, the article will delve into the historical backgrounds of court women through an analysis of various secondary documents. Other than the scarcity of primary sources, the researchers' lack of fluency in the Arabic language has hindered the paper's utilisation of available resources. Thus, secondary sources would be largely used in the paper's discussion. It will be divided into subtopics based on these roles as the main themes of each subtopic. Each role will be explored through in-depth discussions of selected court women, covering their backgrounds and how they assumed their political roles based on the aforementioned themes.

Kingmakers

One of the common political roles of Andalusian court women was that of kingmakers. Typically, a kingmaker's role is understood as the power to 'make' an individual into a king or, in a more nuanced explanation, to hold authority over the succession process within a state. However, the role of kingmakers can be somewhat contentious due to the question of the eligibility of these

individuals who wield such power. It has been asserted that "…kingmakers across the globe were not usually eligible for the supreme honor they could confer on others," suggesting that some kingmakers may not have been as reliable as they appeared to be (Duindam, 2016, p. 146). Thus, it can be affirmed that the Andalusian court women were eligible kingmakers.

As kingmakers, women of the court possessed the authority to select the next successor after the death of a king. In some cases, they could transfer power to a new ruler if they deemed the current ruler unfit or unqualified. However, it is worth noting that women of the court also had the opportunity to choose their own sons as the new ruler. This raises the question of whether their actions were driven by self-interest or the view of what was best for the state. Regardless of their motivations, it is undeniable that women as kingmakers played a significant role in shaping the political landscape of *al-Andalus*. To delve deeper into the discussion of women as kingmakers in *al-Andalus*, this article will analyse two specific cases.

Tarub

Tarub was known as one of the favorite wives of 'Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822-852 CE) of the Emirate of Cordoba. Tarub had elevated her status as the emir's favorite and the two wedded soon after. Originally, Tarub was a *jāriyah* or a slave girl brought in as one of the emir's concubines (Mourtada-Sabbah and Gully, 2003). Tarub was described as "…a woman of extraordinary beauty held him (Abd al-Rahman II) in thrall all his life" (Rahman, 2001, p. 109). Due to the emir's deep affection for his favorite wife, Tarub had a tight grip over the emir as well as his court. On one occasion, it was mentioned that:

> Once an angry Tarub shut herself in boudoir and would not talk to 'Abd ar-Rahman. Royal messages failed to thaw the haughty beauty. At last, 'Abd ar-Rahman ordered that a pile of gold be placed at the closed door. The magic worked, and the door opened. (Rahman, 2001, p. 572)

The account proves the emir's concern over his favorite wife's outburst and tantrums. Due to the emir's focus on the patronage of arts, he delegated his political duties to Tarub and her Spanish *mawla*, Nasr (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003). This resulted in the dominance of both Tarub and Nasr in the administrative affairs of the emirate which many of the members of the court disapproved of and were discontent with. However, it seemed that the emir's favorite wife realised that her influence and authority would not last long. Subsequently, to maintain her power and influence, Tarub had to take a step further by using her son, 'Abd Allah. She persuaded 'Abd al-Rahman to name their son, 'Abd Allah as his successor, and to make sure that she achieved that goal, Tarub had influenced other members of the court, including the ladies-in-waiting, servants, eunuchs and advisors to persuade the emir as well (James, 2009). The question remains: was her son just a tool or was it her way to secure his right to the throne? Was her kingmaker role just a ploy to gain dominance over *al-Andalus*? Nevertheless, she eventually succeeded in making her son the next heir to the Cordoban throne. But was this the perfect ending to the tale of Tarub and her son?

Initially, 'Abd Allah was named as the next successor of 'Abd al-Rahman II (r. 822-852 CE). Yet, while Tarub's beauty and persuasion gained her distinguished status, her lack of patience eventually caused her to fall from grace. To secure her son's throne, Tarub and Nasr had conspired

to assassinate the emir through poison. However, James (2009) had mentioned that the emir was aware of their scheme and when Nasr intended to give him the poison, he ordered the *mawla* to drink it first. Thence, what appeared to be a plot to poison the king turned into the tragic – some might say, comical – end of Nasr by his own hands. It was safe to say that Nasr got a taste of his own medicine. When 'Abd al-Rahman II eventually died in 852, his other son, Muhammad I (r. 852-886 CE) pledged an oath and ascended the throne as the next emir of Cordoba (James, 2009). One might question: if Tarub was patient, would her son become the emir? It was difficult to tell whether ‘Abd Allah stood a chance in ascending the throne if his mother had been patient. Yet, it can be implied that while Tarub’s hunger for power had motivated her to persuade the emir to name her son the next emir, it was her same trait that destroyed her plan. Nonetheless, her role as kingmaker was significant to analyse.

Aisha al-Hurra

Traditionally, the Nasrid mother queen was known as Aisha al-Hurra or her Spanish name, Aixa, but some sources addressed the mother queen as Fatima due to findings from certain primary sources (Collins & Goodman, 2002). On the other hand, the name *‘al-Hurra’* – or in some sources, *La Horra*, was a noble title given to the queen which means ‘the Honored’ (El-Azhari, 2019). This denoted Aisha's position within the Andalusian court. According to Mourtada-Sabbah and Gully (2003), the queen was also referred to in some Spanish texts as *La Sultana Madre de Boabdil*, which directly meant the sultana, mother of Boabdil. Though little was known about her life before becoming queen due to scarce information, it has been suggested that Aisha was of royal blood and was already part of the Nasrid Dynasty before her marriage to Boabdil’s father. As mentioned by Echevarría (2009), she was said to be the daughter of the Nasrid ruler, Muhammad IX El Zurdo (the Left-Handed). This implied that Aisha may have possessed some administrative skills and knowledge due to her childhood within the court. Aisha’s royal lineage and status as the daughter of one of the most powerful Nasrid rulers had resulted in her gaining support from the members of the court including an influential faction of Granada known as the Abencerrajes (Echevarría, 2009). This would later be her edge in gaining influence over the court of Granada. Yet, her political presence would not be felt till after many years of her marriage to Abu-I-Hasan (r. 1464-1484 CE).

During the short second reign of Abu Nasr Sa’d, he had arranged the marriage between Aisha al-Hurra and his son, Abu I-Hasan Ali or Muley Hacén. This arrangement was not based on passion but rather, political interest. The marriage was intended to overcome the obstacles to the dynasty's sovereignty during the reign of Sa’d. However, in a twist of events, Sa’d was betrayed and overthrown by his son, Abu I-Hasan (Kennedy, 2014). The cycle would later be repeated when the latter was overthrown by his son, Boabdil. Like his father, Abu I-Hasan must ensure that he gained all the support he could to secure his throne and authority over Granada. It was mentioned, “This marriage brought him a measure of political support as the perceived continuer of his father-in-law’s general policies, among these supporters there were no doubt several members of the Abenccerraje lines” (Echevarría, 2009, p. 38). Thus, following through with his father's strategy, he utilized his marriage to gain support from the political factions of the court, especially from the Abencerrajes. From this marriage, they had two sons; Muhammad Abu ‘Abd Allah (Boabdil) and Yusuf. It seemed that this marriage had also borne potential heirs for the Nasrid throne. However, how long could Abu I-Hasan depend on his wife’s influence to maintain his political position? Regardless of how he had greatly benefitted from the marriage, the situation would later take a

drastic turn. While some historians had depicted the later reign of Abu I-Hasan as some form of an epic-romantic tale, some have noted the following events as the turning point in the history of *al-Andalus.*

During a series of catastrophic military expeditions and attacks, Abu I-Hasan had fallen in love and married a Spanish war prisoner by the name of Isabel de Solis – after her conversion to Islam, she had taken the name Zoraya (Mernissi, 2006). According to Hitti (1984), it was depicted that Aisha was jealous of Abu I-Hasan's devotion and infatuation toward his new Spanish wife. Yet, it seemed that 'infatuation' was the least of her concern. As Zoraya's influence over Abu I-Hasan grew, she did not shy away from influencing his decision-making in the court's administrative affairs. Many of Abu I-Hasan's policies had outraged the members of the court as they had affected Granada's economy and the well-being of the people. Yet, situations escalated when Abu I-Hasan, who was persuaded by Zoraya, named one of their sons as his successor (Pamele, 2006). If Zoraya's son, a ruler of Spanish blood, were to ascend the throne, the primary concern would be the possible usurpation of the Spanish into the Nasrid court. In retrospect of the vigorous annexation of the petty Muslim kingdoms into the hands of Christian Spanish kingdoms, the trepidation and paranoia of the members of the court were justified. This had driven them to call for the assistance of Aisha al-Hurra but before Aisha could act, she and her son, Muhammad were imprisoned (Pamele, 2006). Still, the queen did not give in and orchestrated her strategies to overthrow her husband. It was mentioned that "…Ayesha (Aisha) lowered Boabdil in a basket, telling him to come back with an army and assert his rights" (Pamele, 2006, p. 105). This can be viewed as the start of Aisha's kingmaking process for her son. While Boabdil may not be regarded as a strong prince, his mother's advice motivated him to overthrow his aging father. Also, the timing had played out in Aisha's plan as the Nasrids were facing threats from the Christian kingdoms. It seemed that while his Spanish wife may have greatly influenced his decisions in domestic affairs, Abu I-Hasan was on his own in facing the threats of his enemies. As if fighting a war against the Christian kingdom was not enough, he now had to face the army of his son and first wife. This had led to a civil war in 1482 between Abu I-Hasan and Muhammad, with Aisha as his right-hand. In between the internal conflicts, Aisha had transferred the power to the throne from her husband to her son, Muhammad XII or Boabdil (r. 1487-1492 CE) thus, marking the reign of the last ruler of the Nasrids of Granada (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003).

While some may perceive Aisha's kingmaking moment as a gesture of jealousy or revenge for the scorned wife, the political means behind her actions overweighed those assumptions. Other than situations before her imprisonment, justifications for her role as kingmaker can also be related to her continuous political role till the end of her son's reign – and the end of the Nasrids of Granada.

Advisors

Apart from their roles as kingmakers, women in the Andalusian court also served as advisors to the rulers. As advisors, these women significantly influenced decision-making and policy development within the court. While they often lacked an official title signifying their position as advisors to the rulers, their opinions sometimes carried more weight than those of other court members. Consequently, women were at times perceived as a threat when they assumed the role of an advisor, as evidenced in the case of Boabdil's mother, Aisha al-Hurra, whose position as her son's confidante

was labeled or described as that of an ‘evil genius’ in some sources (Hitti, 1984). However, the characterization of Aisha as 'evil' was perhaps an exaggeration, as it failed to recognize her as a ‘genius’. Furthermore, there were numerous Andalusian court women, aside from Aisha al-Hurra, who showcased their intelligence and sophistication through their roles as political advisors. Therefore, in this section of the article, we will analyze two prominent figures in their roles as political advisors within the court.

Al-Zahra

During the pinnacle of the Emirate of Cordoba, al-Zahra was regarded as one of the most influential women in the court. Other than being the wife of one of the most powerful emirs of Cordoba, she had played a significant role in the political structure of *al-Andalus*.

Despite the popularity of al-Zahra in many of the Andalusian sources, information about her early life was recondite. Al-Zahra, which meant ‘blossom’, was the favorite concubine or, as stated in some sources, wife of ‘Abd al-Rahman III (r. 912-961 CE). As the favorite, al-Zahra had great influence over the emir, thus allowing her role to be extended beyond personal companionship, as she also served as a trusted advisor on political and administrative matters. As stated by Mourtada-Sabbah and Gully (2003), ‘Abd al-Rahman III would consult her in regards to any administrative issues and the emir would act according to her advice. One of the most significant moments of al-Zahra’s influence over the emir was the construction of Madinat al-Zahra. While many sources highlighted the monument as the testament of the emir’s dedication towards his beloved wife, it was mentioned in some sources that al-Zahra had played a role in its construction. Additionally, whilst some have mentioned that ‘Abd al-Rahman III used his fortune to build the city in honor of his favorite wife, others suggested that al-Zahra had used some of her own funding for the project (Sajadian, 1984; Martin, 2012). Yet, to what extent the emir’s favorite had financially contributed to the project was undisclosed. Still, it is most likely that the emir's fortune may have been used for most of the project's expenses due to his deep admiration and adulation for his wife. It would be nonsensical if the emir – a person of great wealth and power, would let his wife fund the entire project. Nonetheless, the infamous city of Madinat al-Zahra was built in 926. Named after his wife which in translation means ‘the City of Flowers’, the city was decorated to level with the prestige of his wife (Migeon & Saladin, 2012). The interior of the city was described as following:

> The magnificent residence could accommodate the caliph’s court and a guard of 12,000 horsemen. It had a fountain decorated with a golden swan in the caliph’s pavilion. He set up a statue of al-Zahra, his concubine, over the palace’s entrance. (Migeon & Saladin, 2012, p. 33)

While the city was built to demonstrate his love, he also had a lot to gain from the city. It elevated the Emirate of Cordoba into a metropolitan of *al-Andalus*. Also, it paved the inspiration for future architectural monuments not only in *al-Andalus* but also in other parts of the medieval world. Through al-Zahra's advice, it did not only aid in symbolizing her status as the emir's favorite, but it also ultimately elevated the status of Cordoba and its architectural standards.

Other than the construction of Madinat al-Zahra, another key moment to be discussed was her role in the undoing of ‘Abd Allah, the son of ‘Abd al-Rahman III. Al-Zahra's loyalty and political acumen were further demonstrated through her intervention in a critical succession crisis. At one point, al-Zahra had got wind of ‘Abd Allah’s plot to assassinate his father and his brother, al-Hakam, who had been chosen the next successor to the throne. Due to her interference, the prince was executed on the emir’s order after he refused to stop with the plan when being confronted (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003). This scenario distinguished al-Zahra from other corrupted advisors. As she knew of the prince's treason, she did not act on her own; instead, she let the emir have the final say in punishing his son. This decisive action led to the execution of the rebellious prince, thereby averting a potential crisis and securing the stability of the Caliphate.

Al-Zahra emerged as a powerful and influential figure in the court of Cordoba, wielding considerable influence while demonstrating unwavering loyalty to Abd al-Rahman III. Her advisory role, involvement in significant political events, and the lasting legacy of Madinat al-Zahra all attest to her significant impact on the Emirate of Cordoba. Despite the lack of detailed information about her early life and the ambiguity surrounding her financial contributions to the city, al-Zahra's legacy as a prominent advisor of the caliph in 10th-century *al-Andalus* remains undeniable.

Regent

In Islamic history, the role of regent is quite rare and unfamiliar, particularly due to the common practice of selecting child successors. The idea of a queen mother serving as a regent in early Islamic kingdoms was virtually nonexistent. This however, changed when one of the queens during the Caliphate of Cordoba made history as the first to become a regent for her son.

Subh

The only instance that can be narrated under this subtopic was Subh, the wife of al-Hakam II (r. 916-976 CE). As the women of the Andalusian court, she was well regarded for pushing the boundaries in selecting herself as the regent of her son (r. 976-998 CE) – which was unorthodox in the traditions of Islamic kingdoms. Like other women, Subh had great influence over the court due to her husband's adulation for her beauty and intelligence. Before becoming queen, Subh or Aurora was a Basque slave who climbed the social ladder as the caliph’s concubine and subsequently his wife (Perry et al., 2021).

Subh always had the ambition to secure her son's position as the next caliph. At first, she had hoped for her eldest child, 'Abd al-Rahman, to become the ruler. Unfortunately, this ambition was thwarted as the child died in infancy (Catlos, 2018). It is unclear whether the queen mourned this loss or stayed determined in her pursuit of her goal. Nevertheless, she ultimately accomplished what she sought for with her second child. After the death of al-Hakam II, his 9-year-old son, Hisham II, became the ruler, and Subh was chosen as his regent (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003). Amidst this crucial period of power transfer, a new individual surfaced in the political arena, referred to as Ibn Abi Amir, who would eventually assume the name Almanzor. He strategically

used his intelligence and charisma to enter the political arena, which helped him to earn a position in Cordoba's administrative apparatus and gain the attention of Vizier Al-Mushafi (Barry, 2018). Consequently, he took on the post of Subh's secretary, which marked his first entry into a position of considerable power in the realm of palace politics. In the complex web of political manipulation, there were numerous rumors and guesses regarding his personal relationship with Subh. He continued to rise through a series of assignments, including a crucial position managing the distribution of funds for a military expedition.

With the backing of Ibn Abi Amir and Al-Mushtafi, Subh took steps to strengthen the assurance of her son's rightful claim to the throne. In Andalusian tradition, the transfer of power or succession was usually given to the eldest, known as *al-arshad*. Therefore, the original heir to the throne was Al-Hakam's brother, Al-Mughira, rather than his son (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003). In order to prevent this, Subh and her accomplices, namely Ibn Abi Amir and Al-Mushafi, devised a plot to eliminate the danger. Both the men and their army had then confronted Al-Mughira at his residence. Despite Al-Mughira's disavowal of any interest towards the throne, he was strangled to death, thus leaving Subh's son as the only living heir to the throne (Barry, 2018). The nine-year-old Hisham II (r. 976-1008 CE) was declared as Caliph and the ceremony, which took place the next day, had been led by Al-Mushtafi (Barry, 2018).

With her son's ascension, Subh acquired the ability to exert her influence through her son's regency. On a water foundation in Écija, Subh had been mentioned in the plague of the inscription as the queen-mother of his caliph son (*sayyida al-walada umm amir al-mu'minin*) (Martin, 2012). This signified the Andalusian society's acknowledgment of Subh's position as queen-mother or regent. According to Martin (2012), the title '*sayyida*' would later be used for other queen-mothers or regents after the 10th century. Hisham II may assume the title of Caliph but the true controller of the state's affairs would be his mother. In her reign of regency, Subh had also ensured to be surrounded by her closest allies. Due to their alliance – ultimately their main role in al-Mughira's demise – al-Mushafi and Ibn Abi Amir had climbed into the court's high ranks being elected as *hajib* (chief minister) and the state's counselor respectively (O'Callaghan, 1975). On the other hand, Subh had taken more drastic measures to ensure her total control over the Caliphate. As such, the mother queen had taken it upon herself to tutor the boy and following Ibn Abi Amir's advice, the boy was confined within the palace grounds of Alcázar (Mourtada-Sabbah & Gully, 2003; Barry, 2018). Yet, was her plan successful? Even as it seemed that Subh's vision of gaining control was fulfilled, the ambitious queen failed to anticipate any long-term possibilities or problems of her plans. Most significantly, Subh's trust in her closest allies would cost her fate in the Andalusian court.

Subsequently, Abi Ibn Amir's influence and control gradually increased. After deposing al-Mushtafi, he assumed the role of *hajib* (Mernissi, 2006). With al-Mushtafi no longer in the picture, Ibn Abi Amir became the queen's closest and most trusted ally, which further solidified his access to and influence over the state's decision-making. It took over twenty years for Subh to be aware of Ibn Abi Amir's true intentions but by that time, it was a little too late. In her last resort, Subh tried to recruit other officials to rival Ibn Abi Amir but this proved to be fruitless as his influence was too powerful for her to topple (Mernissi, 2006). In 997, Subh's regency met its eventual end as Ibn Abi Amir consolidated his power. He was later famously known as Almanzor from his self-proclaimed title, *al-Manṣūr bi-Allah* which meant 'made victorious for God' and he continued to

control the Caliphate until his death (Barry, 2018). Though still holding the title as caliph, Subh's son remained powerless and remained to be confined by Ibn Abi Amir.

Though her control subsequently ended by her own ally, Subh's failure was not due to her lack of intelligence but simply due to the regular norms of politics. As such, in every political game, there would be a winner and a loser. Subh, who had her fair chance of winning, lost the game in her battle against Abi Ibn Amir. Even so, her ability and intelligence had resulted in the expansion of the Caliphate's sovereignty and domains. She was able to identify the strengths and potential through alliances to strengthen the state's position under her regency. Yet, like many other successful historical events, betrayal and over-dominance ended of the regent's influence.

Conclusion

The participation of women in the Islamic Civilization of *al-Andalus*, particularly in politics as influential figures who played key roles in selecting kings, providing counsel, and acting as regents, was remarkable and captivating. These women challenged traditional standards and made a significant impact on the political sphere of their era. Women such as Aisha al-Hurra and Tarub, who held the power to determine the next ruler, exerted substantial influence in the process of succession, underscoring their strategic importance in defining the future of their dynasties. Their acts and decisions had significant and wide-ranging implications, indicating that they were not passive observers in political matters. In addition, women like al-Zahra showed their intelligence and sagacity as counselors, providing guidance to kings in navigating intricate administrative and military obstacles. Their counsel frequently surpassed that of other court members, emphasizing their crucial involvement in shaping policy and decision-making. One of the most revolutionary roles performed by a woman in *al-Andalus* was that of a regent, as demonstrated by Subh's extraordinary rise to power as the regent for her son. Subh's adeptness at maneuvering through the intricate political terrain of the day defies conventional expectations and demonstrates her unwavering resolve to ensure her son's ascension to power.

Essentially, the women of *al-Andalus* challenged and surpassed cultural standards and expectations by actively engaging in politics, thereby making a lasting impact on the history of this exceptional culture. Their contributions warrant acknowledgment and deeper investigation as integral components of *al-Andalus*' intricate historical fabric. Although certain instances have characterized these women as malevolent or opportunistic, it is crucial not to overlook their roles and the impact they had on the Andalusian court. The various positions and levels of participation of these women, whether as power brokers, counselors, or temporary rulers, had a significant impact on the political landscape of *al-Andalus*. Their actions demonstrated their intellect, sway and ability to overcome obstacles, thereby challenging traditional beliefs about the limited role of women in politics. The study of the political influence of Andalusian court women was crucial in understanding the history of Islamic Spain, regardless of the specific conclusions of the study. An obstacle that researchers may have when investigating this subject is the absence of translated sources. Nevertheless, with the increasing body of literature on the historical context of Islamic Spain, it is probable that the examination of women in *al-Andalus* will also experience future growth.

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A Historical Look at the Transformation Agenda: Patriarchal Structures, Hegemony and the Fate of Nigerian Women

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Abstract: Development plans and economic manifestoes have become common for setting the goals and pace of administration in modern Africa. There are differences between plans and the realities of executing them. Many reasons mark the failures of such development agendas, especially when they involve women's empowerment. Nigeria adopted a 5-year development plan under the presidency of President Goodluck Jonathan, known as the Transformation Agenda. The extent to which the Agenda affected Nigerian women and the attendant weaknesses of the project in the context of Nigeria's status as a developing economy and patriarchal structures and hegemonic control is the main focus of the study. The paper relied on both primary and secondary sources in a chronological and thematic analysis of the subject matter. It was realised that the patriarchy and the attendant political instability, neo-liberal economic system, mismanagement and corruption, which dogged the Administration of President Jonathan and cultural influences were crucial to the persistence of gender inequalities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Transformation agenda, Nigeria, women development, economic plan, Patriarchy and Gender inequality

Introduction

Throughout history, Nigerian women have played pivotal roles in both the private and public spheres to advance their country's development before and after independence in 1960. Their participation in modern development has been hampered by colonial and post-colonial administrations in Nigeria. The realities of existence within a developing Sub-Saharan region with limited economic and political progress also weighed heavily against the rapid actualisation of gender equality despite Nigeria's commitment through its signatory to related United Nations conventions. Furthermore, Nigerian women have often faced limitations and discriminatory practices entrenched within the patriarchal society. As the country embarked on a transformative journey through various governmental strategies and policies during 2010-2015, an analysis of the impact on women's lives became essential. This historical discourse delves into President Goodluck Jonathan's administrative framework from 2010-2015, the Transformation Agenda, as a defining era in Nigeria's history that illuminated Nigerian women's fate while uncovering strides toward empowerment. Globally, the political

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marginalisation of women remains an issue impacting gender equality ("Global Gender Gap Report," 2024). Despite this fact, incremental achievements were made for Nigerian women under President Goodluck Jonathan's leadership; however, challenges beyond administrative interventions continue to impede progress.

In pursuit of development, Nigeria has implemented several National Development Plans (NDPs). The initial plan was introduced in 1962-68 (World Bank, n.d.), followed by the second NDP that covered 1970-74 (Nigeria, 1970; Bhatia & Engstrom, 1972) and the third plan from 1975-80 (Nigeria, 1975). The Fourth NDP (1981-1985) adopted the objectives of earlier plans as observed by Iheanacho, (2014), Okojie, (2002) and Oladapo (2004). In 1994, Nigeria adopted Vision 2010. Under President Olusegun Obasanjo's administration in 2003, deregulation and liberalisation processes were revived through the NEEDS strategy which had its origin in the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). In addition to that initiative, Vision 20: 2020 inspired Yar' Adua's Vision 2020 Seven Point Agenda (SPA) in Nigeria. Following Umaru Yar'Adua's death on May 5th, 2010, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was sworn into office as his successor, becoming Nigeria's fourteenth Head of State a day later (Smith, 2010). He won re-election after completing his predecessor's tenure.

Before Goodluck Jonathan's presidency began there had been interventions from Nigerian government agencies for women's development. Since 2006, the National Gender Policy (NGP) has been formulated to promote affirmative action for women at a rate of thirty-five per cent. This policy requires that thirty-five per cent of representations be granted to women across all governance processes within Nigeria. The NGP is recognised but lacks effective structures and processes within Nigeria.

Literature Review

In dealing with the topic on women's development under the former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's Transformation Agenda, this paper went through the introduction of the reform programmes and then followed by the focus and impact of the Agenda on women's empowerment. In this regard, the underrepresentation of Nigerian women in politics has received attention from scholars concerned about gender equality despite modernising trends within society. Female political representation through elections has remained poor in Nigeria due to natural and societal barriers (Okoronkwo-Chukwu, 2013). Between years spanning from 1960 till 1999, only three-point one per cent (3.1%) and five per cent females were elected into political offices. Since the return to democracy in 1999, females holding elected or appointed positions have increased, but they still experienced severe marginalisation due to male dominance over politics (Ngara & Ayabam, 2013). Even with these gains, female candidates performed poorly during the general election in 2011, where out of 469 members only 32 women were elected to the National Assembly representing barely 8% representation (Akpan, 2018).

According to a school of thought, it is a common trend in Africa that women, particularly those from the elite class, have not fully addressed gender inequality through activism and NGO activities (Fasoro, 2012). It has been argued, however, that the Nigerian government has not completely overlooked the critical issue of women's empowerment since returning to democratic administration in 1999. There were some notable successes in advancing women's empowerment during Olusegun Obasanjo's presidency (1999-2007). The

gap identified was in successive governments' inability to achieve real development for the country, which could have had a considerable impact on women's empowerment. In another context, Jaja (2015) argued that increased access to Western education and empowerment initiatives allowed women to play a significant role in shaping Nigeria's development under Jonathan's administration.

Regarding female political participation in Nigeria specifically, Ikeh (2021) observed that two successive administrations appointed female ministers into governance without commensurate benefits for Nigerian women as a whole. This view was shared by Adeline (2014), as it concerned Goodluck Jonathan's Administration. President Goodluck Jonathan aimed at achieving 35% representation of women in governance during his tenure (Obuh, 2014). Gado and Abdulwasiu (2017) identified setbacks to overall women's empowerment as failures associated with implementing numerous economic policies and reforms since Nigeria gained independence in 1960. Poor administration practices along with inefficient public service delivery created dismal growth while insecurity persisted due to lack of coordination between political office holders and bureaucrats. Gyong's analysis of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's Transformation Agenda emphasised creating jobs, reducing poverty, and reorienting citizen values towards strong inclusive non-inflationary growth goals over five years; however, the execution was hampered by incompetent leaders' development goals, corruption accountability issues along with a lack of sync energy between public &private sectors (Gyong, 2012).

The limited existing literature on President Jonathan's administration, as observed in this paper, fails to address the underlying causes of Nigerian women's marginalisation and gender inequality despite the administration's purported commitment. Therefore, this paper will focus on a historical analysis of President Goodluck Jonathan's tenure from 2010-2015, specifically examining his efforts towards Nigerian women's development and the reasons behind their failure to bring about significant change. The significance of this study lies in its ability to facilitate a deeper understanding of why Nigerian women continue to be marginalised despite successive governments' attempts at redress. The study highlights cultural and traditional belief systems that resist modernising trends concerning gender equality and women's empowerment. It underscores how these factors have affected progress towards empowering women within Nigeria's diverse religious society as demonstrated by their experiences under the Transformation Agenda led by President Goodluck Jonathan.

Transformation Agenda and Women's Development

Nigeria, with an estimated population of 159,608,173 in 2010 when President Jonathan assumed office, is the most populous country in Africa. By the end of his administration, the population had increased to 187,301,926 (“National Population Estimates,” n.d.). Of particular interest to this analysis is the significant increase in female demography from a total population of 78,208,005 in 2010 to 91,777,944 by 2015 (“National Population Estimates,” n.d.). This implies that any genuine intention to close development gaps between Nigerian men and women must take into account the rapid increase in their numbers annually.

The new president took oath on May 29th, 2011, and introduced the developmental plan, termed as Transformation Agenda (Stearns, 2011). The agenda aimed at strong inclusive non-inflationary growth; employment and poverty alleviation; and re-orientation of national

values across thirteen key areas including improving economy as the a whole along with the lives of white men among other things. This paper examines how the Transformation Agenda impacted Nigerian women within existing patriarchal structures and masculine hegemonic tendencies. Although it was understood that every Nigerian would benefit from this plan for clarity's sake, we focus on aspects affecting Nigerian women.

The Transformation Agenda proposed repositioning of the economy by addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, and insecurity, as well as diversifying the entire economy from total reliance on oil to a significant reliance on non-oil-driven economies. The Agenda also revolved around good governance, power, security, the development of non-oil sector manufacturing and solid minerals, investment in infrastructure, education, and an anti-corruption crusade. It also sought to transform the Nigerian people into a catalyst for growth and national development. There was an emphasis on good governance, the provision of infrastructure and industry. Also, human capital development, such as education, healthcare delivery, skills acquisition, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were prioritised. To realise the goals set, efforts were made to fast-track policies and constitutional reforms to provide the needed framework for the policy packages (Gyong, 2012). The aim was to transform Nigeria to meet its future needs. The policies, programmes, and projects of the Transformation Agenda were scrutinised by a Presidential Committee inaugurated on Thursday, 17 February 2011, under the chairmanship of the honourable Minister of the National Planning Commission (NPC). In pursuance of the main goals of the Transformation Agenda, several reforms and initiatives were pursued in key sectors of the economy to consolidate growth. It sought to transform Nigeria into one of the world's 20 largest economies by 2020.

On the question of women's development, unprecedented changes have been witnessed in Nigeria since 1985, when the military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida and his wife separately initiated notable women's development policies and projects respectively. President Jonathan from 2010 to 2015 showed a personal commitment to women's development through their appointment into cabinet positions and increased representation at various levels of governance, except the Legislature, meant for elected members only. The government moved closer to the 35 per cent Affirmative Action goal through the appointment of 13 female ministers out of 42 and four special advisers out of 18. To further underline his commitment, women were appointed as ministers in some of the most important ministries and positions.

Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar was appointed as Chief Justice of Nigeria; Dr. (Mrs.) Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was the Coordinating Minister for the Economy and Minister of Finance; Diezani Alison-Madueke was the Minister of Petroleum Resources and Mrs. Omobola Johnson was the Minister of Communication Technology. Furthermore, Mrs. Hadiza Ibrahim Mailafa became Minister of Environment; Hajia Zainab Maina handled the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development; Sarah Reng Ochekpe was appointed Minister of Water Resources, Princess Stella Oduah as Minister of Aviation and Aerospace, and Lady Amal Pepple as Minister of Land, Housing and Urban Development. Others included Professor Ruqayyatu Ahmed Rufa'i at the Ministry of Education; Professor Viola Onwuliri at the Ministry of State (1) for Foreign Affairs. Oloye Olajumoke Akinjide at the Ministry of State for Federal Capital Territory (FCT); Erelu (Dr.) Olusola Obada headed the Ministry of State for Defence and Hajia Zainab Ibrahim Kuchi at the Ministry of State for

Power. Moreover, there were eleven Nigerian female Ambassadors/High Commissioners and seven female special advisers to the president (Ajani, 2013; Akande, 2022).

President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, for the first time in the country, ensured the recruitment of females interested in becoming combatant officers for the Nigerian armed forces at the Nigeria Defence Academy, Kaduna, Nigeria. Before then, the Nigerian army had female armoured tank drivers, female para-troopers, jumpers, and so on ("Jonathan orders admission", 2011). Moreover, the federal government initiated skills acquisition centres nationwide for the economic empowerment of women. Many of such centres were completed by the end of 2012. Moreover, N261 million was invested in the Women's Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFEE), being implemented in partnership with the Bank of Agriculture (BOA) as guaranteed credit for small and micro enterprises. The Business Development Fund for Women (BUDFOW) was established as another funding window for women entrepreneurs. The sum of N89 million was disbursed to several women entrepreneurs in the 6 geopolitical zones (Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Research, Documentation, and Strategy, Abuja, 2012).

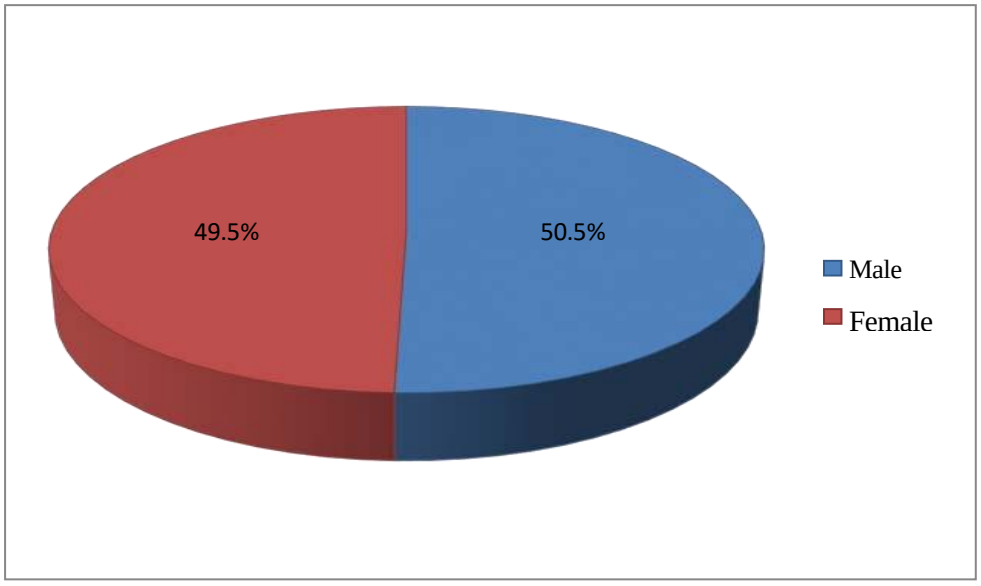

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of the Population by Sex 2015

Note. From Figure 2, Percentage Distribution of the Population by Sex 2015; National Bureau of Statistics (2016). 2015 Statistical Report on Women. p. 2.

In the education sector, Goodluck Jonathan established 9 new federal universities and strengthened existing ones to increase access to tertiary education, fulfilling the target of having at least one Federal University in each state of the federation (Ibekwe, 2015). The Government established 125 Almajiri schools across 13 northern states to improve literacy in the north and introduced Girls Education Programmes with 27 special girl schools ("The Almajiri and girl-child school", 2013; Adesulu, 2015). As indicated in Figure 1, an extract from the National Bureau of Statistics (2016), women had relatively a population close to that of men in Nigeria during the period under study, as they constituted 49.5 per cent and men 50.5 per cent of the population.

Despite the close gender demography, as shown above, parity was absent from the entire social and economic indices auspicious for gender equality, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below, capturing the situation in the field of Nigerian education.

Zone	Female	Male
North west	38.0	57.5
North east	41.9	53.1
North central	62.0	76.4
South west	92.6	93.7
South south	94.8	95.0
South east	95.4	94.3

Table 1. Percentage of Women and Men age 15-24 years who are literate (2016-17)

Note. Sourced from Table 3.1: Percentage of Women and Men age 15-24 years who are literate (2016-17) National Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2017 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria, p. 14.

University	F	M	% F	% M
Federal	273,657	487706	35.94	64.06
State	171,942	243384	41.40	58.60
Private	33,750	39,203	46.26	53.74
Total	479,349	770.293	38.36	61.64

Table 2. Student's Enrolment in Nigeria Universities by Sex (2012/13)

Note. Sourced from Table 3.9: Student's Enrolment in Nigeria Universities by Sex (2012/13), National Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2017 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria, p. 21.

It is important to make some important observations from both Tables. President Jonathan made impact on girls' education at the national level, as earlier observed, but it was not adequate to be termed revolutionary. Therefore, other explanation would suffice on the momentum towards gender parity in Nigerian education. Generally, there had been decades of development of the Nigerian educational system since 1960 when the country attained independence from Britain, and part of that growth was the movement toward gender parity. That was majorly a result of greater awareness of the importance of Western education as a vehicle for the overall progress of both the individual and society at large. In spite of that positive development, as indicated on Table 1, a huge gulf still existed between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria, in the context of Western educational impact. A consequence was the comparative economic backwardness of the Muslim dominated Northern states, which to date continually affect women's lower standards of living in that region. Moreover, Table 2 further revealed that female enrolment was higher in Nigerian private tertiary institutions. This unprecedented development was an indication of a major positive shift in the Nigerian society's attitude toward female education, especially among the educated elite, who could afford the high cost of private university education.

Persistence of Gender Inequality

One of the primary factors hindering women's development in Nigeria under successive Heads of State is patriarchy, which pervades all aspects of Nigerian society. Patriarchy refers to a social arrangement where men monopolise high-status positions in important institutions such as social, economic, legal and religious ones (Glick &Fiske, 2000; Walby, 1989). In this context, male dominance is perpetuated by their access to privileged positions at the expense of most women who lack such access themselves. Biological determinism and culture have also aided patriarchal rule by justifying male advantages across various sectors including politics, economics, military service and religion. All these structures embody male privileges and hegemonic hierarchical order that have perpetuated male dominance since Nigeria's inception.

Patriarchal structures wield an even stronger influence in public spheres like government institutions due to mostly male politicians' domination over the political system. Patriarchy embodied authority, control and domination and functions to create a culture of women's dependency on men. Women were further constrained by their burden for procreation and childcare while cultural norms exacerbated gender inequality. It is necessary to understand the background of the Nigerian patriarchal structures. It began during colonial times when British policies undermined African female participation in public services through institutionalised discrimination. In modern-day Nigeria, since independence, both elected male politicians and senior public servants who dominated politics and the bureaucracy formed part of state patriarchy that continually hindered the actualisation of gender equality due to power struggle for wealth accumulation rather than policy-making aimed towards promoting equality between genders. The perpetuation of state patriarchy in Nigeria hindered President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda that aimed to prioritise women's empowerment.

The unstable complexion of Nigerian politics left women with little chance of gender parity from independence in 1960 to the violent collapse of the First Republic in 1966, to a long period of military dictatorship from July 1966 to 1979. The Second Republic 1979-1983 was truncated by another military junta that was led by the General Muhammadu Buhari from 1983 to 1985, when General Ibrahim Babangida seized power. He had to step aside in 1993 because of the political chaos that resulted from the annulment of the June 12 presidential elections. The succeeding Interim Government of Ernest Shonekan from 1993 did not survive the ambition of another military General, in person of Sanni Abacha by November of that year. Abacha was in office until his demise in 1998. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, was in office till May 1999 when the current 4th Republic began. This long history of political instability was not palatable for women's participation due to the social, economic and political upheavals (Soyinka, 2012; Suleiman, 2012; Adekunbi, 2012; British Council, Nigeria, 2012).

Moreover, the unending *Boko Haram* insurgency was a menace to peace and economic development, especially in the North of the country. Religious violence is not new. The *Maitatsine* sectarian group attempted it in 1981, leading to large-scale uprisings. Since 2009, the country has been stormed by large-scale and unimaginable violent attacks and kidnappings by the *Boko Haram* movement (Bagaji & Ogbadu, 2012; Adekunbi, 2012; Falode, 2016). Consequently, the gender gap in development was widened by long history of

both military and violent prone-civil rule to the extent that the Jonathan's tenure was unable to change the tide. Therefore, during the period 2010-2015, President Jonathan's Transformation Agenda did not affect any real positive change in the elective offices as it did in the appointive positions he initiated for Nigerian women as shown in Table 3, 4, and 5 at the three tiers of government in the country.

LEGISLATORS	2007		2011		2015	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Senate						
Male	100	91.7	101	92.7	100	91.7
Female	9	8.3	8	7.3	9	8.3
TOTAL	**109**	**100**	**109**	**100**	**109**	**100**
House of Reps.						
Male	334	92.8	338	93.9	337	92.8
Female	26	7.2	22	6.1	23	7.2
TOTAL	**360**	**100**	**360**	**100**	**360**	**100**
Both Houses						
Male	434	92.5	439	93.6	437	92.5
Female	35	7.5	30	6.4	32	7.5
TOTAL	**469**	**100**	**469**	**100**	**469**	**100**

Table 3. Summary of Seats held in the National Assembly by Type, Sex and Year

Note. From Table 10: Summary of Seats Held in National Assembly by Type, Sex and Year "National Bureau of Statistics (2016)." 2015 Statistical Report on Men and Women in Nigeria p. 22.

TYPE	2007		2011		2015	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Hon. Members						
Male	933	94.2	835	94.1	935	94.4
Female	57	5.8	52	5.9	55	5.6
TOTAL	**990**	**100.0**	**887**	**100.0**	**990**	**100.0**
Committee Chairpersons						
Male	933	94.2	626	90.2	935	94.4
Female	57	5.8	68	9.8	55	5.6
TOTAL	**990**	**100.0**	**694**	**100.0**	**990**	**100.0**

Table 4. Seats Held in State Assemblies by Type, Year and Sex

Note. From Table 11: Seats Held in State Assemblies by Type, Year and Sex in National Bureau of Statistics (2016). 2015 Statistical Report on Men and Women in Nigeria p. 23.

LEGISLATORS	2007		2011		2015	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
LGA Chairpersons						
Male	510	90.1	738	96.1	740	95.6
Female	56	9.9	30	3.9	34	4.4
TOTAL	**566**	**100.0**	**768**	**100.0**	**774**	**100.0**
Counsellors						
Male	5828	89.8	5175	87.5	6828	90.2
Female	665	10.2	738	12.5	740	9.8
TOTAL	**6,493**	**100.0**	**5,913**	**100.0**	**7,568**	**100.0**

Table 5. Summary of Seats Held in Local Government by Type, Sex and Year

Note. Table 12, Summary of Seats Held in Local Government by Type, Sex and Year "National Bureau of Statistics (2016)." 2015 Statistical Report on Men and Women in Nigeria p. 24.

Political reforms could facilitate considerable increase in women's Representation in politics as exemplified in both Rwanda and Senegal. Before President Jonathan's Administration, in Rwanda, through liberal reforms, gender mainstreaming was achieved from 2003, when Rwanda approved a new constitution that included quotas for women at all levels of government. This reform resulted to over thirty percent elected women representatives (Rwanda Constitution, n.d.; UN Women, 2018). Senegal also gained international recognition through its Gender Parity Law enacted in 2010 aimed towards promoting political participation by women leading towards increased numbers held by them over time. (UN Women, n.d.) Both experiences revealed affirmative action policies' effectiveness, ensuring more females assumed leadership roles with power to change the collective destiny of women.

The problem was not just a top-down scenario, as women's relative backwardness also resulted from the society itself. At the micro level, individuals in Nigeria, despite the diversity of cultures, were generally socialised by cultural norms and values. In this regard, the two global religions of Islam and Christianity were crucial and encouraged the belief in male headship of the home and their role as breadwinners. One tradition that strengthened the patriarchal structure and the attendant subordinate role of women was the gerontocratic order of the traditional family in which the husband was usually older than the wife. Women occupied an unequal position in matrimony, with the men folk having greater leverage in decision-making. Disrespect from the wife was not tolerated and if it persisted could rupture the marriage. In order of priority, marriage and the resultant children were higher than careers and most women in Nigeria chose to be passive to save their marital lives. This was a fundamental reason most women in Nigeria stayed away from any activity, especially politics and activism that could jeopardise their family values.

Without the presence of women in large numbers at Nigeria's National Assembly, where laws were made, male domination persisted in robbing the country of valuable laws that can enhance women's empowerment. Political apathy had been a general problem in Nigeria. This negative trend had been due to fear of becoming victims of political violence, intrigues, persecution and corruption that characterise politics in the country. A considerable

number of Nigerians even abstain from voting during elections on this account. Moreover, most Nigerians who are conservative Muslims and Christians avoid politics because it is prone to corruption, intrigues and violence. This factor extends to the belief among many Nigerians that females are not supposed to rule or occupy elective political posts. Therefore, women's low participation in political context in the period 2010 and 2015 had low political success. Also, the relatively few interested women are stigmatised as prostitutes, who associate with males other than their husbands and relatives.

Similarly, female politicians are not looked upon as responsible citizens because of the perception that Nigerians in government, either under military rule or democratic dispensation, were fraudulent and unworthy of people's trust. Proven cases of misconduct against several bureaucrats and political office holders, female officials included, abound. Finally, female politicians had a weak political structure in most of the political parties because of the influence of 'money' and the attendant control by very wealthy political patrons that sponsored mostly male political contestants, considered more promising to deliver victory at the polls. Additionally, women faced greater difficulty reconciling political obligations with those of their families and homes due to traditional gender roles that place care giving responsibilities solely upon them. This is known as the "economy of care," which influences social attitudes worldwide and presented an actual barrier to female aspirations generally. The gender divide in power relations was also evident through the sexual division of labour, where the ability of a wife to bear male children was of utmost importance as they were more highly valued due to their potential perpetuation of family names and legacies. These social norms, among the Nigerian populace were considered to have greater significance than government prioritisation of women's empowerment initiatives. There were, of course regional variations to note. Some Nigerian societies in Muslim dominated Northern Nigeria regarded men who focused on their careers as good providers, while condemning mothers who did likewise as bad wives and mothers. Although caring for children at home is an important role, unless it also comes with status or power attached to it, women would remain marginalised.

At the federal level, women's empowerment has received prioritisation; however, state and local governments - equally significant players in Nigeria's federal structure - have not made it a priority. Running for political office incurred costs, which disproportionately affected women who were economically dependent on others, such as their spouses, fathers or brothers. In essence, most women lack the financial foundation to even consider pursuing a career in politics. Nigeria's political structure comprises three levels of government: central or federal government; 36 states plus a federal capital territory; and seventy-seven local governments sharing powers according to Nigeria's constitution. The exclusive list covers broad powers reserved for the federal government while concurrent lists include shared responsibilities between states and the states; residual lists assign duties specifically to local government authorities. Reformative policies, like the Transformation Agenda, especially when they conflict with religious and cultural values often fail in Nigeria due partly to the federal arrangement which makes domestication of new reforms by states a necessity before they can be enforced at the local levels. In this regard, moreover, male-dominated federal legislators through their constituencies were cultural gatekeepers and were instrumental in maintaining the patriarchal wall of defence against bills on gender equality to date.

Gender equality is a critical component of Sustainable Development Goals adopted globally by countries such as Nigeria. Achieving this objective under President Goodluck Jonathan's administration was challenging due to the neoliberal economic policies that had adverse effects. These policies emphasised market deregulation while reducing government intervention leading to predominantly disadvantageous job losses among women, but favouring powerful or wealthy individuals. The foundation for these more market-oriented policy-making approaches began when fiscal challenges prompted austerity measures during the early 1980s. The resultant marginalisation of Nigerian women under the Transformation Agenda can also be linked to the country's economic problems, which have resulted in a significant number of unemployed people, particularly females. Job losses have occurred daily in both the public and private sectors due to economic reforms, numerous mergers and acquisitions since 2009, and increased dependence on technology in the banking sector as a result of "cashless economies". Moreover, poverty and other socioeconomic disruptions have forced many Nigerian women into prostitution within or outside Nigeria. According to UNICRI, there were about 20,000 Nigerian prostitutes in Italy alone (Gosh, 2012).

Another general problem with the inability of the Federal Government to fulfil the promises of the Transformation Agenda was the huge infrastructural deficits that have remained a stumbling block against development under every government to date. Commenting in this regard, the current World Bank's Country Director for Nigeria, Shubham Chaudhuri, expressed his dismay at the Nigerian government's low public spending levels. Development since independence in 1960 remains stunted with countless abandoned projects in the country. Public refineries, to date, are not working, while railroads, roads, airports and seaports are grossly inadequate (The Editorial Board, 2023). Electricity supply remained miserably low at only 50 per cent (Ugwueze 2020), which prompted President Jonathan to declare a state of emergency regarding power supply. Experts projected that it would take approximately N464 trillion to provide uninterrupted electricity throughout the country ("Nigeria requires N464 trillion", 2014). Jonathan played a key role in privatising and reforming the power sector (Adeoye, 2010). In any case, it was not enough since the country is still groping in the dark, as at the time of writing this paper.

Furthermore, the national debt was a huge burden for the Jonathan’s Government as it has been for any Federal Administration since the 1980s. The implication it had on women's empowerment was that balancing debt management with more developmental goals was difficult due to its adverse impact on fiscal sustainability and economic stability. As of June 2015, when Jonathan left office, Nigeria's debt profile reached $63.8 billion, representing its highest level since 2007 (Kadiri, 2021). Corruption has made matters worse for the empowerment of women. In this context, it has become a tradition at both national and sub-national levels to allocate more resources towards recurrent expenditures instead of capital expenditure due to endemic corruption and mismanagement; an independent report by the Department for International Development (DFID, 2017) estimated that up to $32 billion was lost to corruption under the Jonathan Administration. Jonathan, himself noted that corruption was a common problem in Nigeria because "people do not know what will happen tomorrow...There is no welfare system that can manage people" (Shuaibu, 2022). A National Bureau of Statistics (2019) survey indicated that out of all Nigerian citizens who had at least one contact with a public official, 30.2 per cent paid a bribe or were asked to pay a bribe by a public official. Transparency International (2015) observed corruption is not abating in Nigeria, along with some other countries in Africa, with the implication of worsening

especially, poor women's marginalisation and existing inequalities (Transparency International, 2022).

The inability of successive governments in Nigeria to solve the economic and social problems, with a long history, did not abate when President Jonathan assumed the Presidency. Consequently, the need to focus on the policy of gender equality was sidelined as the country grappled with urban congestion, excessive debt burden, high incidence of diseases and increased maternal mortality, which marked Nigeria as a developing country (Iheanacho, 2014). The overall effect at the end of the tenure of President Goodluck Jonathan was the shortening of life expectancy rates as indicated in figure 2 below.

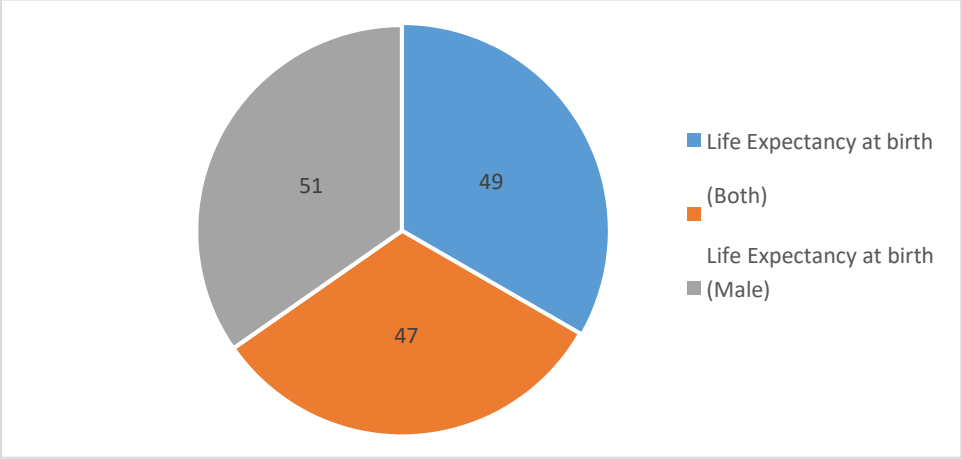

Figure 2. Distribution of life Expectancy by sex, 2016

Note. From Figure 2.1: Distribution of Life Expectancy by Sex, 2016: National Bureau of Statistics (2018). 2017 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria, p. 4.

For Nigerian women, neo-liberal economic policies emphasised privatisation, which created unhealthy economic competition that marginalised women further; caused higher costs and disproportionately affected low-income households, where women were often the primary caregivers. Infrastructural deficits limited education and healthcare access, while water scarcity took away time that could be spent by women on education or income-generating activities. A huge debt burden was one major reason Nigeria had no major welfare programme that could adequately cater for the needy, such as the unemployed, the aged and the widows. Corruption diverted resources from social programmes that ought to benefit women and created barriers to business ownership for women entrepreneurs. Lack of electricity hindered businesses run by women, decreasing productivity and competitiveness. These factors created a complex web of challenges hindering the development of Nigerian women. Therefore, it is important to comprehensively address these issues through gender equality promotion policies, infrastructure improvements, investment in social programmes as well and tackling corruption.

Conclusion

Development planning has consistently been present within Nigeria's administrative system since independence as noted in the paper. It is concerning that these plans have yet to yield the expected results in Nigeria. Using the implementation of the Transformation Agenda as the basis for measuring President Jonathan's efforts on women's development, the paper provided an in-depth analysis of the achievements of the Programme and the weaknesses in the following contexts. The study sheds light on the minimal gains achieved, which were attributable to Jonathan's interest and efforts in women's empowerment. In the first place, it was realised that the Nigerian state was beset by myriads of economic problems evident by dilapidated infrastructural facilities, mismanagement, and intermittent economic depressions resulting from the adopted neo-liberal economic policies of liberalisation privatisation and corruption. As a result, women, as well as their families suffered from massive unemployment and poverty. This situation that began in the 1980s got worse under the Administration of President Jonathan.

Women's empowerment was also impeded by a combination of administrative, cultural, and systemic factors of Male dominance and constraints resulting from the extant patriarchal structures that upheld male advantages. Therefore, a holistic approach is required to address the barriers to women's empowerment in the country. There is a need to tackle ingrained cultural norms, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and structural inequalities to facilitate meaningful progress in advancing gender equality and women's rights in the country. Only then can Nigeria achieve the goals of its development plans and manifestoes and pave the way for a more equitable and prosperous future for all its citizens.

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The Reformation Encounter: Martin Luther's Assessment of Islam and the Turks in the Aftermath of Constantinople's Fall

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Abstract: After Muhammad II captured Constantinople in 1453 and ended the Byzantine Empire, Islam began to spread to Europe over the next century. It was this constant threat that led Martin Luther (1483–1546) to become acquainted with Islam and acquire information about the Turks and Muslims. Luther was the pioneer of the 16th century's Reformation in Europe and the founder of the Protestant movement. Luther's assessment of Islam and the Turks are investigated in this article with the questions of main themes and subsequent theses. It was observed that Luther used an exclusionary, judgmental, and reactive language on Islam and Turks. His assessments are in compliance with the thesis that was constructed by Christians in Medieval Europe, with the exception of picturing Turks as papist, and his opposite attitudes against the Crusades. The article found conclusively that Luther was highly affected by his own theological and political positions, as well as the political developments of his period.

Keywords: Martin Luther, Islam, Turks, Protestant, Pope

Introduction

Due to their geographical location and having ruled the Islamic world for many years, the Turks served as both object and subject in the formation of this historical consciousness. The Ottoman Empire, which advanced in the Balkans after the conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul) and came to the gates of Vienna during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent or Suleiman I (1494–1566), became an important actor in the formation of the European identity (Delanty, 2005). Martin Luther[3] (1483-1546), the reformer who pioneered the emergence of Protestantism (1517) against the Catholic Church and the authority of Pope Leo X (henceforth, referred to as "the Pope") in this period, did not neglect to write about Islam and the Turks. Moreover, he played an important role in the formation of the historical myths mentioned in his works.

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[3] Martin Luther (November 10, 1483 - February 18, 1546) was a German priest, theologian, author, hymn writer, professor and Augustinian friar. He was the seminal figure of the Protestant Reformation, and gave his name to Lutheranism. Luther was ordained to the priesthood in 1507. He came to reject several teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, particularly the latter's view on indulgences. Luther proposed an academic discussion of the practice and efficacy of indulgences in his *Ninety-five Theses* (1517). For more information, refer to (Hendricks, 2014).

Martin Luther was influential in laying the foundations of anti-Islamic and anti-Turkish ideas and attitudes that are still prevailed in the Western world today (Oberman, 2006). This stance of Luther regarding Islam and Muslims ("the Turks") is sufficiently well known. It began in the 16th century when Luther received a short book detailing the religious rituals and customs of the Ottoman Turks. He was so impressed with the tract that he decided to reprint it with a new introduction that he wrote. This is not surprising because, given the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, Luther had much to say about the Turks. He repeatedly expressed criticism and hostility towards them. He was a man of his time, and his language reflected the roughness of that time (Canveren, 2014).

Luther's Views on Islam and the Turks

To properly understand Martin Luther's relationship with the Turks, it is essential to consider the historical context in which he published his writings on the latter. It goes back to the historical writings that he wrote about Muslims and Islam, whereby he used the word "Turks" in all his writings to refer to Muslims, or he used the phrase "Muhammad's religion" to refer to Islam (Gürsoy, 2018).

Throughout Luther's public life as a pastor, scholar, and Biblical theologian, he had neither met a Turk nor a Muslim from any other country. However, in most of his writings, the Turks were always present in the background as he consistently described them in a negative light (Grafton, 2017).

The use of the word "Turk" in Luther's treatises have nothing to do with the actual Turks as a race but, instead, is a reference to Muslims as a whole. Luther rarely used the term "Muslim" in his treatises and mostly preferred the word "Turk" instead. Similarly, instead of the word "Islam," he preferred the phrase "Muhammad's religion," or "Turk's faith." Therefore, this part of the explanation of Luther and the Turks does not refer to the Turks as a nation (Canveren, 2014). Since the Ottoman Empire, which comprised Turkish leadership ruling the Islamic world at that time, Luther regarded the Turks as the representatives of Muslims.

Relations between Martin Luther and the Ottoman Turks

Luther's time and the European religious climate

After Muhammad II captured Constantinople and ended the Byzantine Empire in 1453, the Ottoman Empire continued its expansion into Europe over the next century. It was this relentless threat that accounted for the fact that much of Luther's knowledge of the Islamic religion and customs came primarily from second-hand reports of the Turks' enemies (Sarah & James, 1996). Protestantism emerged at a time when the Ottoman Empire had advanced into Europe. On the one hand, they feared the Ottomans, while, on the other hand, they feared the exploitation of the Catholic Christian rulers. During this time, Luther and many other important figures warned Christians about the fair administration of the law (Lutheran, 2015).

Martin Luther's position as a theologian and his Biblical statements were generally welcomed by the Ottoman Empire. In particular, anti-papal discourses were supported by the Ottoman sultans. Luther's way of thinking and acting was sensible, given his circumstances. The Ottoman Empire entered Europe at that time and ventured as far as Vienna, threatening the whole Christian world. Protestants and Catholics also claimed to be true Christians in opposition to the Ottoman Empire and Islam. Despite this, the Ottoman state prevented the papacy and the Habsburg kingdom from marching to destroy the Protestants (Hüseyin, 2017).

Therefore, the reformers chose to take advantage of the Turks' actions without entering into any alliance with them. Similarly, Luther thought of using them beyond cooperation (Carrasco, 2020).

The significance of the Ottoman Turks in the European Reformation

Due to the doctrinal similarities, many Protestants saw the Ottoman Empire as a useful ally against the Catholic Church. Istanbul became a haven for Protestants fleeing Catholic persecution, where they were tolerated and allowed to establish their churches under Suleiman I (Butt, 2017). Also, the theme of Ottoman Muslim tolerance was a constant theme in Protestant writings of the time. This was usually contrasted with the intolerance of Catholic Spain towards the movement, which persecuted the Protestant reformers and even Muslims in Spain.

At one time, Martin Luther was informed by a member of an imperial mission to Suleiman I that the latter was very interested in Luther and his movement, and asked the ambassadors for Luther's age. When told that Luther was 48 years old, he said, "I wish he were even younger, he would find in me a generous protector." However, upon hearing this, Luther, not being a realistic politician, made the sign of the cross and said, "God protect me from such a generous protector." Although the letters expressing this request are not available today, a name was sent in response. With this name, the support and assistance promised to the Protestants by the Ottoman Empire are clearly described. In addition, the Ottoman Empire's intention to divide the European Christian Union and its political support of the Protestants can be seen in this maneuver.

That said, it must be noted that there is still insufficient information and evidence for the claims that Luther was an ally of the Ottoman state and that an agreement was reached between Suleiman I and Luther (Hüseyin, 2017). While it is claimed that the Ottoman Empire played a role in the rise and support of Protestantism, the Empire presented no theological influence. Politically, it was natural for the Ottoman Empire to support Protestantism and the creation of this new sect; thus, they implemented a policy that led to a rift between Spain, Germany, and other Catholic countries. The Reformation was effective in separating relations between the Western and Turkish worlds (Hüseyin, 2017). Also, historians have argued that the Ottoman Empire supported Luther against the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Germany Charles V (henceforth, referred to as "the Emperor"), and without this support, Protestantism would not have emerged and spread. It was emphasised that the Protestants owed their existence to Suleiman I and the Ottoman Empire. Luther had every reason to be grateful to the Turks instead of fearing them because the Ottoman Empire did not let the Emperor take permanent measures against the Protestants (Choi, 2003).

The Emperor could not suppress the Protestants because he needed the power of other European princes in the war he was waging against the Turks, thus he had to postpone his plans to destroy Luther. From the perspective of real power policy, the safety of reform depended on the strength of the Ottoman army. In many ways, if Suleiman I and Luther were political allies, the Emperor would have worried that the Protestantism could not be destroyed. In any case, the Emperor was unable to deal with reform because of the Turks' threat (Grafton, 2017). The Ottoman Empire treated the Protestants well; Suleiman I wrote an open letter to the Lutherans of Flanders, in which he declared his closeness to them "since they did not worship idols, believed in one God, and fought against the Pope and the Emperor." Throughout the Reformation, several alliances were forged between the Ottoman Empire and Protestant rulers.

Nevertheless, despite claims of similarity, this does not mean that the Ottoman Empire was exclusively pro-Protestant in terms of foreign policy—they worked with Catholic powers when their interests demanded it (Butt, 2017).

Luther believed that a holy war against the Ottoman Empire would be "utterly contrary to the doctrine of Christ and the name of Christ." However, Christian defeats in the hands of the Turks and the siege of Vienna in 1529, and the pressure from the papacy led Luther to disseminate his views on the need to fight the Turks. Luther felt great pressure due to the victory of the Ottoman Empire and the difficult situation in which Christian world fell. Although the strategy and laws of the regime emphasised the need for cooperation between the Turks and Protestants, Luther defended the need to fight the Turks. He encouraged war against the Turks, but declared that this resistance should be on the side of the Emperor, not the papacy (Rutler, 2016).

Luther's Early Views

Luther's initial perceptions of the Turks when they first appeared in Europe

Martin Luther was well aware of the expansion of Islam into central Europe, especially as the Ottoman army appeared on Germany's doorstep. He even suggested that his writings are a "treasure chest" of knowledge on the Turks and Islam in the first half of the 16th century (Francisco, 2007).

In the 16th century, Luther became so impressed with a short book titled *Tract on the Religion and Customs of the Turks* that he reprinted it with his own introduction. Given the expansion of the Ottoman Empire then, it was not surprising that Luther wrote extensively on the Turkish people, culture and religion. However, it is noted that this particular writing was not as polemic as his other writings.

The book *Tract on the Religion and Customs of the Turks* was first published in 1481 in Latin. It was likely written by Georgius of Hungary (Castor, 2011), who, at age 16, was captured and imprisoned by the Turks for 20 years. His time in prison gave him access to Turkish religious rituals and customs. It was Georgius' rare favorable writing of Islam and the Ottoman Turks, and his juxtaposed unfavorable writing of the Catholic religious rites in the same tract that interested Luther.

Early in his writings, Luther viewed the Turks positively and criticised the way of life of Christians and Germans until the Ottoman Empire laid siege to Vienna. He said that Germans wandered about like light pigeons without work, eating and drinking like animals, fulfilling all kinds of evil intentions and desires, and taking nothing seriously. Meanwhile, poor German soldiers were put in a very pitiful position and suffered a great defeat (Luther, 2017). On the contrary, when Luther explained his position about the Turks, he stated, "We see that the religion of the Turks or Mohammed is far greater in rituals — and I might almost say in customs — than ours, including even the religion of the religious or of all clergy" (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

> The modesty and simplicity of food, clothing, shelter, and everything else, as well as the fasting, prayer, and common assemblies of the people that this book reveals are nowhere to be found among us—. Our religions are but shadows when compared to them, and our people are filthy when compared to theirs for this book shows that the Turks are far superior to our Christians in these things as well.

In other words, if Christianity is a religion of works, then, according to Luther, Muslims have a better religion (Castor, 2011).

Luther's description of the Turks as "the staff of God"

In his early years, Martin Luther, based on his claim of the Bible, believed that God had sent the Turks, who were on Satan's side, to punish the Christians. (Canveren, 2014). Thus, according to Luther, anyone who fights against the Turks is fighting the devil himself. A soldier is called God's executioner. If killed, he goes straight to heaven and dead Turks go to hell (Gürsoy, 2018).

Luther also viewed the Turks from a different perspective. To him, they were not only the knives of God's wrath, but also the servants and saints of Satan. What he meant by mixing the knives of God's wrath with Satan's servants and saints was that Satan has always been God's enemy in his efforts to counter God, but ultimately serves God anyway. Therefore, Luther considered the Turks to be servants and saints of Satan (Clark, 1984). In this context, he reminded readers that "the devil can put on a spiritual face, fast, perform counterfeit miracles, and present his servants with mystical bearings." Such practices and experiences are the common property of all religions; they do not portray religion as true. Even the Satanic religion itself can be accompanied by such experiences and practices. In this sense, the Turks were saints and servants of Satan (Forell, 1946).

When describing the political, military, and social characteristics of the Turks that Luther viewed as "demonic", he also sometimes appreciated them as the last theme. The following description in the text entitled "Turks Life and Tradition" are noteworthy at this point: "The most essential characteristic of Turks is that their priests (clergymen and scholars) lead glorious, brave and sophisticated lives. Then we can call them angels. On the other hand, you will find that they often meet for worship in their church (mosque) and have a thorough upbringing, quietness, and pleasant behavior. There is no such discipline or silence in any of our churches ("Reformation and Islam," 2016).

Luther's Changing Perspective

The evolution of Luther's views on the Turks

Luther explained his views on the Ottoman threat as God's punishment in 1520. In his 34th sermon, he wrote that fighting against the Turks is nothing but an attempt against God who punishes Christians for their sins. He then opined that the Church deserves the punishment of an angry God when led by the Pope into a religious war of their own making (Grafton, 2017). In doing so, Luther, as usual, distinguished one's duties as a Christian from one's duties as a citizen. He felt that as Christians, all men were called to repentance and prayer. He was also aware of the guilt of so-called Christian nations and knew that sin and guilt were not limited to German territories under Roman rule and Roman Catholic princes (Forell, 1946). They were guilty of grave sin because they openly persecuted the Word of God. However, Evangelicals did not have enough respect for God's Word either, as they had often used it to serve their lust. Therefore, both the Roman Catholics and the Evangelicals deserved God's punishment (Sensenig, 2016).

Luther felt that Germany had taken the deserts to ensure a successful defense against the Turks. Everyone needed to repent and confess their transgressions so that the Turks could be destroyed (Meer, 2013). He stated, "This struggle must begin with repentance, and we must change our very existence, otherwise we will fight in vain." He later elaborated, "If we are to

receive help and advice, we must, first of all, repent and change all such evil deeds" (Lexutt, 2011).

Luther's shift from viewing Turks as God's instrument to viewing them as a threat

Martin Luther portrayed the Turks as a nurturing tree of God and a sign of the apocalypse. However, with the siege of Vienna in 1529, he changed his view of them as the military struggle appeared on the real political side (Luther, 1520). Luther realised that defense was not enough as he saw the advancement of the Turks as a threat to Europe. He also realised that he had to propose the means to defend Christianity against this encroaching danger (Forell, 1946).

Contrary to the views in his 1529 treatise "On the Turks War", Luther wrote about this new threat to German geography. He called on the Germans to fight the Turks—they should try to protect and save their people by blocking the Turks and keeping them away from the people. The Emperor should be induced to do so not merely out of duty, responsibility, or divine command, but also out of the non-Christian and corrupt Turks administration and the misery that has befallen his people (Dodgers, 2017). According to Luther, to achieve victory in the war against the Turks, certain conditions must first be fulfilled. The first condition was the qualities that soldiers who are engaged in this war must possess. Luther listed these characteristics as honesty, uprightness, humility, and the absence of lust for fame and the spoils of success. Next, Luther stipulated as a second condition that the German principalities, which were divided in his day, must act as a whole. To that end, he maintained that he would not be shocked and would have good hope if German kings and princes would agree with each other and stand up for each other, and if all Christians also prayed for them (Canveren, 2014). Finally, as a clergyman, Luther brought the dimension of prayer to the forefront of the struggle in preaching. He expressed the following: "Anyone can pray that these abominations Turks do not overpower us who are the wrath of God." According to this context, the Word of God must be heeded and prayed for justice to prevail on earth. These prayers will cause Christians to turn to God in sincerity and even convince God that the Turks are the enemies of Jesus Christ. According to Luther, with these two possible outcomes of prayer and God's blessing, the harm done to Christians by the Turks and Satan would end (Francisco, 2007).

According to Luther, a double war should be waged against the Turks. The first of these was repentance and forgiveness as a good Christian. The other was that the European armies fighting against the Turks must be genuine Christian armies. In fact, in Luther's opinion, if these Christian armies fought the Turks without repentance, the victory of the Turks would be better than theirs. Moreover, the unrepentant Christian armies were no different from the Turkish army (Hüseyin, 2017). Luther attacked the Turks very unscientifically, stating that they were also destroyers of Christian morality. Besides all the alleged Turks' heretical laws and religious practices, Luther considered them as murderers and whores. The Turks did not fight for necessity or to protect their territory. As highwaymen, they sought to plunder and damage other lands whose people have done nothing to them because, according to their religion, it is good to attack and kill (Lutheran, 2015). Moreover, the Turks were the enemy of the institution of marriage. Luther knew that it was customary among the Turks for a man to have several wives. He had heard news that Muslims buy and sell women like cattle. This turned the Turks, in his mind, into whores that went against fundamental Christian morality. Luther saw the punishment of God and the servants and saints of Satan in the Turks. He believed the Turks led their lives in depravity and that they were possessed by the spirit of lies and murder (Forell, 1946).

Luther proposed that Christian Europe must first stand against the Turks' imperialism in a defensive war led by secular officials and, second, Germans must not be deceived by reports

of supposed intolerance among Turks (Francisco, 2007). Luther wanted all soldiers who had to fight the Turks to know their special connection to the forces of evil. He stated: "If you go to war with the Turks, make sure you are not fighting a war of flesh and blood that is the army of the Turks is the army of Satan." The Turks' special connection to the realm of Satan proved to Luther the renewed power of the Muslim armies during the Reformation (Lexutt, 2011).

Luther's main goal here was to persuade Christians to organise themselves by emphasising the strengths of the "enemy." According to him, the precondition for supremacy over the Turks was the accomplishment of true repentance and conversion to true religion. Luther also criticised Christian (Catholic) Europe by "praising" the Turks in some ways (Luther, 1883).

What is interesting about Luther's views on the Turks is that they were ambiguous, because when the Turks came to Europe, Luther was engaged in religious reform against the Pope and the Emperor. He described the Turks as the staff of God and insisted that they not be fought". Rather, he considered their arrival as a form of punishment for the wickedness of the Pope and a means to reduce the pressure on the Pope and the Emperor on his religious reform movement. However, after the Turks reached the heart of Europe, which was Vienna, they became a threat to the whole continent and even to its religious reform. As a result, he changed his attitude towards the Turks and described them as devils, thieves, robbers, and murderers—whoever fought the Turks was fighting against the devil. Such a soldier would be called the Executioner of God who would go straight to heaven if he were killed, while the dead Turks would go to hell. This proves the fact that Luther changed his attitude towards the Turks according to his personal interests.

Comparison of the Pope and the Turks

An examination of Luther's comparisons between the Papacy and the Turks

Both the papacy and Turks appear as key aspects of Luther's readings because his thought is essentially based on criticisms of the teachings and practices of the papacy and the Catholic Church. That Luther compared the Turks with the Pope and defined them both as enemies of the Christian world distinguishes him from other medieval readings (Canveren, 2014). He claimed that the papacy had done more harm to Christianity than the Turks. Based on end-time prophecies and Biblical references, he developed the jurisprudence that not only the Turks but also the papacy were signs of the apocalypse. He described the Pope as a "cunning internal enemy" and the Turks as a "dreadful external enemy" and labelled both as two "anti-Christs." He also frequently used the adjectives "liar" for the Pope and "murderer" for the Turks (Castor, 2011).

Luther stated that the Turks believed they kept everyone free. The Pope did not do this—on the contrary, he imposed his satanic lies on the whole Christian world. In this case, the material and moral damage of the papal army was ten times greater than that of the Turks. In addition, worldly damage was done to the Christians by the Pope and the Turks, hence Luther accused both actors of harm and of being terrible parallels. While the Pope commanded armies and brazen immorality in Rome (as stated in Luther's essay on the war against the Turks), and forbade and condemned sinful marriage on the grounds of chastity, the Turks separated women from their husbands and sold them as cattle. In short, the Turks, and the papacy did nothing but ruin the reputation of the house, city and church (Lee, 2000). Fearful that the decline of Christian doctrine in Europe would result in mass conversion, Luther identified two ways in which Christianity was threatened: the Pope in the West and Islam in the East. These two ways

were distinct, as Luther considered Muhammad as a figure who falsely presented himself as a pure saint. Nonetheless, he referred to the Pope as the anti-Christ in spirit and the Turks as anti-Christ in flesh (Castor, 2011).

Luther's portrayal of the Pope and Turks as enemies of Christianity

Luther stated that the Turks were, on one hand, an instrument of God sent to punish a wayward Christianity and, on the other hand, an instrument of Satan to scourge the world. Similarly, he viewed the Pope and his minions as instruments of Satan sent to impose spiritual warfare on Christianity. This juxtaposition meant that the Pope and the Turks often came together as those who blasphemed Christ in the spiritual and worldly realm (Grafton, 2017). It is perhaps not so surprising then that Luther rarely spoke of the Turks in this regard without mentioning the papacy. His colleagues recorded him suggesting that they were both anti-Christs—the soul of the anti-Christ was the Pope, while his flesh was the Turks. Moreover, one attacked the church physically, while the other attacked spiritually (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). Since the Christian prayer is against both, and will descend them into hell, Luther ended up interpreting both the papal and the Turks' religious worldviews in the same way, that is, each persecuted Christ in their respective way (Rutler, 2016).

According to Luther's interpretation, it was as follows: The kingdom of the Turks (the Beast) reigned in the East. And the Papacy (False Prophet or Anti-Christ) reigned in the West. Both were present under Satan's command and were waiting for orders to launch the final assault on the church. Because the end of the world is near, he wrote, 'Satan must attack Christianity with both his forces. But interestingly, and perhaps because of his proximity, Luther almost always viewed the papacy as a greater threat than the Turks. He often remarked that relative to Pope, "The Turks appear to the world as pure saints" (Francisco, 2007). He summoned the Pope and saw him as the true main enemy (anti-Christ). In his view, the Turks were mere plagues sent to punish the Christians for their sins. It is no coincidence then that the two major writings were written in 1529, when the Ottoman troops were besieging Vienna (Luther, 1997).

Luther's Apocalyptic Beliefs

Luther's beliefs about the end of the world and the role of the Turks

Luther believed in the end of the world and that the Ottoman threat was one of its signs, so it became crucial for him to recognise the ultimate enemy, acting both outside and inside the church. In this sense, the external enemy was represented by the Ottoman Turks, while the internal enemy, which was more complex to see, was represented by the papacy (Carrasco, 2020). Luther also noted the similarities between Islam and Protestantism in their rejection of idols, though the Turks were much more stringent in their total rejection of images. In the war against the Turks, Luther was less critical of them than he was of the Pope, whom he called the anti-Christ (following the sentiments of Protestantism and Islam). Such statements came dangerously close to crusading ideology. Furthermore, he placed the war against the Turks on par with his religious struggle against the papacy. Luther argued that, historically, there have been two intertwined images of the Protestant enemy: the Pope and the Turks. Hence, even if the Catholic Church and Luther as a Protestant looked upon the Turks as a common enemy, in the eyes of Luther, the papacy and the Turks were two equal enemies. This hostility was so deep that it even found its way into church hymnals (Gürsoy, 2018).

Luther's view that the Pope and the Turks were signs of the apocalypse

Luther criticised the Turks and he compared Turks to the Pope, and his actions were to break and attack the Pope in order to create equality between them in front of the people and make the Christian community aware that the Pope was their enemy, not their father. Thus, in some sense, he criticised the Pope using Islam, but also used the latter to reform his religion (Francisco, 2007).

When the reason for this comparison is questioned, it becomes understandable that Islam and the Turks were used as tools to criticise the papacy and the Catholic Church. Using these comparisons, Luther explained that the Catholics were corrupting "true" Christianity—he specifically asserted that the Pope and the Church had perverted sacred religion for their worldly interests.

Based on the above texts, Luther, in drawing parallels between the Pope and the Turks, aimed to use the great threat posed by the Ottoman invasion to support the reforms he had declared in religion and the Christian world. Here, he wisely published messages in both Latin and German languages to the Christian community because he knew how the community viewed Islam, given their long history of confrontation that started with their first contact in Andalusia to their confrontation in the Crusades. They had a negative and aggressive image of Islam, though Islam was not like that. However, all these images were presented by many orientalists to the Christian community for the former's own interests and goals.

Conclusion

Martin Luther's discourses and theses on Islam and the Turks (Muslim) were, as in all other medieval European writings, exceptional, judgmental, and reactive. Despite being a figure who created significant change in Europe in both religious and political terms, he was essentially unable to divorce himself from the medieval mentality in his assessments of Islam and the Turks. He portrayed the Turks as an enemy to be fought, as savages, and as lustful human beings. Considering the conclusions he reached in his assessments and the attitudes he adopted, it is understandable that Luther fitted the period he criticised.

Although he often compared Islam and the Ottoman Empire with the Pope and the Catholic Church, Luther also opposed all of them. He sometimes criticised the papacy by using the Turks in his texts and sometimes did the reverse, all the while calling Christians to repentance and sincere prayer in the name of fighting the Turks. This was clearly an invitation to purge Europeans of Catholic teachings and practices. His criticisms of the teachings and practices of his day also created a split in the method of combating the Turks, as he was strongly opposed to the "crusader" strategy.

Finally, there are points in Martin Luther's assessments that could be described as paradoxical and severe confusion, the most significant being that he considered the war with the Turks, who were God's wrath, to be the equivalent of God's war.

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Challenges of Online Learning Faced by IIUM Malay Undergraduates during COVID-19: A Case Study

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Abstract: This study examined the challenges of online learning faced by Malay undergraduate students studying at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) during the global pandemic of COVID-19. The study used a qualitative research technique and face-to-face semi-structured interviews for collecting data. The interview includes details about the participants' demographics, backgrounds, and the key study-related questions. Furthermore, the research employed open-ended questions to prompt participants to openly discuss their experiences without being restricted by predetermined responses. Participants were provided with information sheets and email consent forms before the interview session. Ten IIUM undergraduates were chosen using the purposive sample approach. Six females and four males participated in the research, and they were Malay students from Malaysia. The data was transcribed word for word into a Microsoft Word document and then classified into themes, analysed, interpreted, and validated. The results of the study showed that the students faced challenges in terms of internet connection, technological devices, social interaction, learning environment, and physical and mental health. The paper highlights the challenges of online learning encountered by Malay undergraduates studying at IIUM during COVID-19 pandemic. The new learning method was implemented in unprecedented global circumstances. Students remained at home, which became an alternative learning environment. Meanwhile, they went through some negative situations affecting the learning process. This paper presents and discusses five challenges and supports the findings by citing previous studies. The research results provide concerned agencies, like the Malaysian Ministry of Education, with a sociological understanding of the challenges involved in e-learning. They identify to what extent the available infrastructure for information and communication needs expansions and improvements to overcome internet access limitations in rural and urban areas. Furthermore, the research offers insight into the necessary initiatives that the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia should undertake to help in reducing the challenges facing higher education students.

Keywords: Online learning challenges, internet connection, social interaction, devices, distracting environments, physical and mental issues

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Background of the Study

Education is valuable for human societies because it promotes knowledge and instils good conduct. The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education seeks to develop students who are cognitively, emotionally, spiritually, and physically healthy and balanced, with a strong faith in God (Ministry of Higher Education, 2019). Accountable personnel in the educational sector were concerned about sustaining the learning process throughout the critical time of COVID-19 pandemic.

The coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, has caused a fatal pandemic that began spreading worldwide in December 2019, forcing educational institutions of all levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary, to shut down and shift to online education. Online learning was introduced before COVID-19 also, but not as a full teaching and learning method. Hybrid learning was also introduced as a combination of physical and online education (Gaol & Hutagalung, 2020), but most universities were not focusing on online methods, especially in developing countries.

Online learning has two forms: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning is "live, real-time (and usually scheduled), facilitated instruction and learning-oriented interaction" (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015, p. 131). Asynchronous learning is "an interactive learning community unrestricted by time, place, or classroom constraints" (Mayadas, 1997, p. 2). However, changes in educational efforts raised questions about the quality of online learning, and whether the knowledge or skills obtained were similar to face-to-face education. There is a common belief that since most online learning is theoretical, it is difficult for students to effectively apply what they learn to their daily lives (Dhawan, 2020).

Before COVID-19, teaching and learning took place in physical settings where students and instructors interacted directly. The change in learning methods became a concern among educators and learners who were unprepared for the change and realised that adapting to online learning might take time. There is a consensus that the new learning environment was significantly difficult for students to adapt to (Kapasia et al., 2020). The following section reviews the literature to show various challenges that hindered the learning process, resulting in decreasing or low academic performance and affecting the quality of students' learning (Barrot et al., 2021). Therefore, the present research delved into the difficulties of online learning experienced by IIUM Malay undergraduates during the global COVID-19 pandemic by utilising semi-structured interviews.

Internet Connection

The most important requirement for online learning is a stable internet connection to connect students with lecturers and friends, download learning materials of several forms, and utilise educational platforms and resources. According to Chung et al. (2020), Ismail et al. (2020), and

Mustapha et al. (2021), unstable and poor internet access remains the biggest obstacle for students around the world and hinders receiving good learning. In a study conducted by Rizvi and Nabi (2021), poor network and slow data were reported as a challenge that led to frozen screens and unclear audio and made students unable to understand the lecture or perhaps lag behind their counterparts (Ferri et al., 2020; Ilias et al., 2020; Ramli et al., 2020; Rashid et al., 2021).

There are several reasons for poor internet access, such as geographical location. Rural areas in Malaysia have an underdeveloped technological infrastructure (Ismail et al., 2020). A study by Farooq et al. (2020) argued that students living in rural areas had difficulty downloading large files and streaming video lectures. In another study, students expressed concern about not being able to submit their assignments on time (Tanveer et al., 2020).

This study shows that issues related to the internet connection were one of the challenges during online learning. Dam, one of the participants, mentioned that internet connection problems affected his study, especially when his device's screen froze or the audio was unclear. In this regard, he said, *"When there was a connection problem, the screen froze, and I sometimes missed the whole lecture."*

Similarly, Izz struggled with internet connection problems, which made her miss important lecture notes, even if the interruption lasted for a few minutes. She also stated that a poor internet connection affected her assignment submission leading to the deduction of marks.

> *Poor internet connection affected the submission of my assignments. Unfortunately, once the internet was very slow and stopped working while I was sending an assignment. I ran out of time, and the submission time expired. When I contacted the lecturer to justify, I was told that it was my fault. I was allowed to submit it again but with a deducted mark.*

When there was a complete lockdown to curb the spread of the pandemic, cybercafes were not open, and this situation prevented the students from overcoming the problem by finding an alternative.

For Khai, when the internet connection problem occurred, he could not search or download necessary learning materials. He described his struggle with the internet connection as follows:

> *When I studied online, it was hard to find the required resources and materials I needed to complete my assignments. Finding authentic references took time while the internet was so slow or unstable. Sometimes I had to look for a place with a better connection, even if it was far away from home. I went to a library four days a week, which was approximately 10 km away from my house. I just needed to search for resources for my assignments.*

Thus, an unstable internet connection represented one of the challenges during e-learning period. The participants faced problems attending online classes smoothly and searching for learning resources and materials effectively. They missed some parts of the online lessons because poor internet connection made the audio unclear or kicked them out of the class meeting.

Besides, overcoming the problem required extra time and cost, as some participants stated that they had to find another place for better internet access.

Technological Devices

Having good internet coverage is insufficient without possessing a technological device. These two elements are complementary to effective online learning. In this sense, in the absence of technological devices, such as computers, laptops, or mobile phones, students lose their learning opportunities (Dhawan, 2020; Jaradat & Aljouni, 2021; Xhelili et al., 2021). It is important to mention that not all students had a device when online education first started (Khobragade et al., 2021). Nor were they competent in ICT; as a result, when a device malfunctioned, they were unable to continue attending classes or completing tasks (Cabual & Cabual, 2022).

In addition, some students had old devices that needed updates or technical support to receive or download learning materials. In one study, students pointed out that having unsupported devices was one of the difficulties in online learning. Some of the students were unable to access their final exam papers because their devices needed technical support to access the required documents (Mahyoob, 2020).

Students residing in rural areas had to travel great distances to the city to have their laptops repaired because there were no technical services in their place. Furthermore, low-income families could not afford to provide a device for each child or purchase devices with higher technical features. For this reason, many school students in the same family shared one device (Zainol et al., 2021).

Similarly, in this study, participants identified several problems related to technological devices. Some of them shared a device with their siblings since they did not have their own. They also struggled with technical issues or failures, such as jamming devices. Khai, for example, crashed his laptop, causing him to lose his assignment, which he had to re-do from scratch. He described his experience in the following excerpt.

> *My laptop used to jam or shut down by itself. Sometimes, I was fortunate to retrieve my documents, but it happened that I re-did one assignment from scratch because my laptop suddenly stopped working.*

Riff, another participant, used his mobile to join class meetings, but the mobile often jammed and lacked the necessary technical features to upload or download learning materials of different forms.

> *I used my mobile phone to join class meetings, but it did not help in sending or receiving learning resources. The worst situation was when the mobile's temperature went high. Then, it jammed, and sometimes it froze.*

E-learning requires students to deal with a significant number of electronic documents, which take up a lot of space on the device's memory. In this study, limited memory capacity was mentioned as a barrier to quick and easy access to the necessary learning resources.

Thus, issues related to technological devices affected the online learning process. Sharing a computer or laptop with others can create further problems. For example, students cannot access learning materials at any time or place. They would miss some class sessions if their siblings were required to attend a class for an exam. Furthermore, learning on a mobile phone is ineffective due to the small screen size, and some mobiles lack the technical features necessary for electronic documents or materials.

Limited Social Interaction

The learning process entails student-student and student-instructor interaction which enhances the understanding of learning material. However, this interaction dramatically decreased with online learning due to physical distance. In a study by Adarkwah (2021), most university students in Ghana described online learning as ineffective due to the lack of interaction with instructors, which hindered them from receiving timely feedback. Furthermore, due to the absence of interaction, students were hesitant to raise questions and get feedback from the teacher (Azmat & Ahmad, 2022). According to Subedi et al. (2020), students did not interact well and could not understand the content presented by teachers online. The situations made it difficult for pupils to acquire excellent educational chances.

Previous research confirmed that students had difficulty communicating online since most participants stated there was no direct supervision or interaction. When they were given a group assignment, engagement with group members remained ineffective, especially for students who resided in different time zones (Wildman et al., 2021). Wut and Xu (2021) discovered in their research that students were uncomfortable communicating with groupmates to accomplish group assignments since they did not know each other (Azmat & Ahmad, 2022; Jha and Indiran, 2021). According to Nassr et al. (2020), completing group assignments was difficult because students found it hard to get to know their group members to coordinate and divide tasks. Moreover, inconsistent internet connection for some members created further challenge to engage online.

Qurr, one of the participants, described that online interaction with classmates or group members was not easy. She commented, *"Based on my experience, doing group work online with students I did not know opened the door for them to be free riders."*

As the participants did not reside in the same geographical area, they agreed that the interaction with friends was further restricted by the difference in time zones, particularly while working on a group project. Dam, one of the participants, experienced difficulties interacting with his group members since some were staying in China. In this regard, he commented:

> *During the pandemic, I organized discussion meetings through Google Meet, Zoom, or WhatsApp video calls, but I had to consider the difference in time zone.*

> *Working with local groupmates would be easier to interact with, as we would be residing in the same time zone. Based on my experience, communicating with international students, especially from China, was difficult because we had different time frames. Besides, students in China did not access certain websites or apps; they had to use a VPN. When I sent them a message to ask a question, they replied very late.*

It was also found that getting a late response from instructors hampered assignment progress. Students stated that they required permission from their lecturers to continue with a given topic. Nat, one of the participants, did not receive a response from the instructor. He called him to respond to an email requesting permission for a chosen topic to progress with his project, but he did not receive a response, so he was forced to begin the assignment late. The same thing happened to Khai.

> *I could not speak to the lecturer during the class meeting since I was experiencing sound issues on my device due to a poor internet connection. Then I wrote an email and a WhatsApp message asking for clarification. Unfortunately, the instructor responded 30 minutes later, which disrupted my work on my assignment.*

Thus, online learning reduces interaction between students and instructors, as well as between students and their peers. Time zone differences further limited the necessary communication. Free riders were involved when working on a group task. Late feedback or reply from instructors affected the progress of learning and doing assignments.

Distracting Learning Environment

To combat the spread of COVID-19, the Malaysian government imposed a Movement Control Order (MCO), which restricted individuals from leaving their houses. Meanwhile, pupils, as well as their parents and siblings, remained at home. As a result, they were exposed to a variety of environmental disturbances.

A distracting environment impairs students' ability to concentrate in online classes (Cabual & Cabual, 2022). A study conducted by Ismail et al. (2020) found that many students from low-income households lived in low-cost areas with limited rooms. Thus, they shared a room with other family members. Lack of a private place or suitable setting for studying made some students lose interest in continuing their online education (Nassr et al., 2020).

Parents play a significant role in the family, but sometimes they are unaware of their responsibilities during online education (Al-Kumaim et al., 2021). According to Baticulon et al. (2021), the house environment emerged as one of the biggest challenges during online learning, and students needed to understand their responsibilities as children and students. However, home-related issues could be unavoidable due to task conflicts caused by daily household activities,

family obligations, or personal responsibilities (Idris et al., 2021). Thus, environmental disturbances can threaten online learning (Barrot et al., 2021; Mustapha et al., 2021).

In the present study, struggling with a distracting environment during online learning was reported as a challenge. The students described household noise as disturbing and it made them lose focus. Not every student had private rooms in which to attend classes. The disturbance occurred when they shared rooms. Liah talked about her experience in the following excerpt.

> *My siblings and I had to attend online classes at the same time. I could hear the voice of my sister's teacher, but my sister did not like wearing earphones. A loud voice disturbed me, and I could hardly listen to my lecture. In such situations, I literally could not focus.*

Izz had a big family, but she did not have her own room. She described her situation in the following excerpt:

> *I have six siblings, so it would be impossible to have a private room. It was very difficult to exist in a quiet place as my brothers and sisters kept going in and out while I was attending online classes. I was surrounded by direct and indirect noise.*

Some students expressed that they could not distinguish between their roles at home, as children and as students. Their home environment and its typical routine always dragged them to household tasks. For example, their parents asked them to help with housework even during class hours. Most of the participants pointed out that they were requested to leave the class meeting to attend to household responsibilities, such as cooking, doing laundry, or entertaining their siblings. For them, the clash in roles was annoying and distracting. Nat said that she had to juggle between family and online learning.

> *My parents, I believe, were unable to understand the real situation. They assumed that as long as I was at home, I had free time and could do anything they wanted, even if I was taking an online class. I was requested to do a variety of tasks and assist others. Then I had to leave the class meeting and return after I performed the task. I was struggling at the time since I needed to adjust to online study, and I was required to help around the house. I felt that I had to meet my responsibilities as a child and a student.*

In summary, online education requires a comfortable learning environment. The circumstances of COVID-19 made "home" the most common learning destination for students all over the world. The findings of this study revealed that home involved various distractions, which affected the quality of learning. According to the participants, it was challenging to carry out their dual roles as students and children at the same time. It was clear that their parents did not take online learning seriously. The family atmosphere and daily activities were distracting factors. The participants were sometimes forced to give priority to family rather than online classes.

Physical and Mental Health

The sudden spread of COVID-19 around the world resulted in a hasty transition from face-to-face classes to online instruction. According to Mustapha et al. (2021), a lack of meticulous preparation and tactics for online learning made students less engaged and excited. Demotivation was also caused by limited social connection, a mismatch between reality and expectation, and organizational challenges (Esra & Sevilen, 2021). A study highlighted that study load increased with online learning (Irawan et al., 2020). Long-time exposure to screens negatively affected students' physical and mental health. Headaches, migraines, and deteriorating eyesight problems were among the cited health problems (Hashish et al., 2022; Subedi et al., 2020). Also, prolonged sitting and screen time led to back pain (Idris et al., 2021).

Students usually face unpredictable obstacles during online learning, leading to stress and anxiety. A study revealed that more than half of the participating students experienced stress (Al-Kumaim et al., 2021), which eventually made their interest in studying decline (Irawan et al., 2020). Students' stress increased because they struggled to concentrate and comprehend information (Xhelili et al., 2021), and when they thought about the future of their education (Clabaugh et al., 2021). Eventually, negative psychological status affected their final exam performance (Xhelili et al., 2021).

The results of this research also showed that the students' problems with online learning affected their physical and mental health. They suffered from fatigue, stress, and frustration. Dam, for instance, described his experience as follows:

> *My online classes continued from morning to evening, so I became tired easily. My head and eye hurt because of looking at the screen for a long time. I had a headache and sometimes a migraine. My back pain also developed because of prolonged sitting. Such a situation frustrated me and made me less focused. I also suffered from stress when the workload increased, especially when the subject was not a core course.*

Fia also suffered from some health issues. As she said, *"Online learning affected my vision. I am farsighted, but online learning forced me to look at the screen for such a long time that it worsened my vision."*

Thus, the study investigated the challenges IIUM undergraduates faced during online learning and identified that inefficient internet access, outdated gadgets, limited social interaction, distracting learning environment, and physical and mental health issues negatively affected their online education. The main problem noted by all participants was the unstable internet connection, as online learning cannot function properly without stable internet access.

Discussion

This study investigated the challenges of online learning, which were lived realities among IIUM Malay undergraduates who believed that the shift to online learning mode happened too fast that

they were not able to prepare for it. Figure 1 shows the challenges discussed in the paper. The following section discusses the research findings considering previous studies.

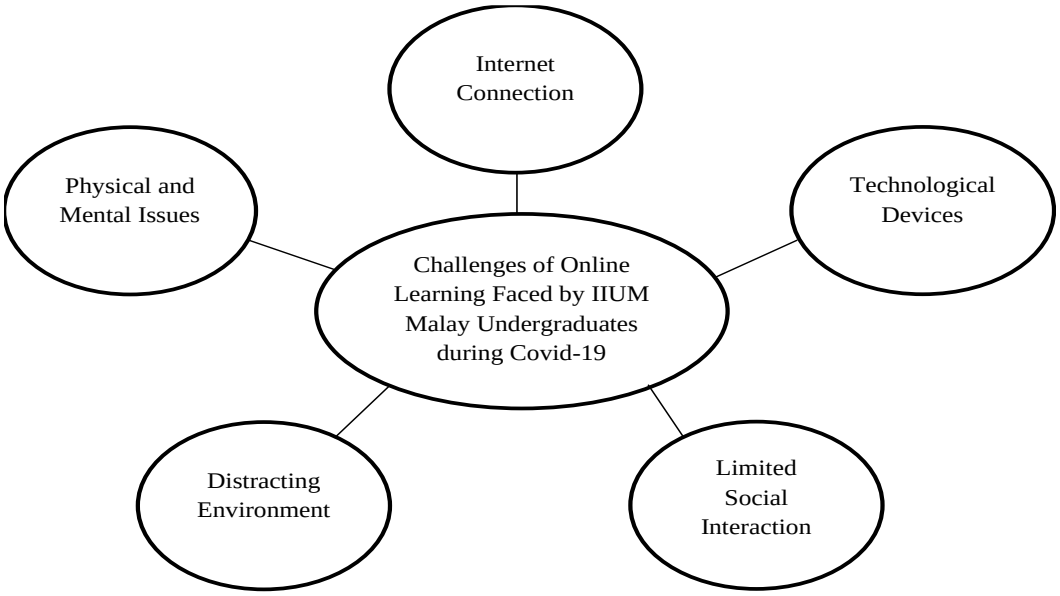

***Figure 1**:* Research Design of the Challenges of Online Learning Faced by IIUM Malay Undergraduates during Covid-19

One of the challenges was the slow or limited internet connection. This condition is similar to previous research that identified internet access as an issue in various countries, including India (Chung et al., 20201; Ismail et al., 2020; Rizvi & Nabi, 2021). Class meetings require fast internet; otherwise, issues such as frozen screens and broken sounds interrupt students' learning.

The study also showed that accessing a good internet network depends on geographical location. Rural areas lack efficient communication infrastructure. Consequently, the students were left behind in terms of education. Similarly, several studies claimed that internet problems occurred in rural areas (Farooq et al., 2020; Ismail et al., 2020; Ramli et al., 2020). On the other hand, the findings from the current study showed that even the participants who lived in Kuala Lumpur, an urban area in Malaysia, experienced connection problems. In the new era of education, the Malaysian government should play a significant role in improving the infrastructure and facilities of information and communication technology in rural areas.

The study also found that the students had to handle difficulties with the devices they used for online learning. According to Khobragade et al. (2021), technological issues in online learning can be explained in terms of the availability and non-availability of devices. Students cannot participate in online education without a device. In addition, devices should function properly because using old devices may cause problems related to memory capacity or lack of technical support. This is similar to the conclusion of a study by Mahyoob (2020) that said unsupported devices were an obstacle to students during online learning. Dhawan (2020) also suggested that having a proper device is crucial during online learning; otherwise, students will lose the opportunity to learn, especially during the pandemic that shifted the learning medium.

Besides the problems related to internet connection and devices, the study discussed the impact of limited social interaction. Student-student interaction was found difficult among local students and international students who lived in different time zones. This finding is consistent with the research of Wildman et al. (2021), which showed that students living in different time zones found it challenging to interact with their classmates during online classes.

Lack of interaction with instructors prevented the students from getting the necessary feedback to receive a clear understanding of certain instructions, affecting students' progress in doing assignments. According to Adarkwah (2021), a lack of interaction between lecturers affected the effectiveness of online learning (Adarkwah, 2021).

When the students talked about interaction, they did not consider communication with their peer students only. They also reflected on their interaction with instructors, which is a requirement for a better online learning experience. Since online learning interrupted face-to-face interactions, it was one of the reasons affecting academic performance. For example, a late response from an instructor could delay the progress of a student's work. There is a need for further research to comprehend the pattern of communication between students and instructors during online learning to highlight the gaps that need to be filled in the future. There is also a need to consider the perspectives of educators on students' interaction during online learning.

When the students stayed home, the learning environment was confused with the family atmosphere, leading to further physical and psychological challenges. Physically, securing a private, quiet place for studying was difficult because some belonged to large families. Also, the economic status of some families did not help in overcoming this issue. As a result, the students suffered from small space, noise, and clash of roles.

Research has shown that family noise affects online learning (Barrot et al., 2021). Malay families are typically large, so it is common for them to share rooms. According to the participants, they had to share rooms with their siblings and attend classes at the same time. As mentioned earlier, students suffered from the clash in their roles while attending classes from home. According to Baticulon et al. (2021) and Mustapha et al. (2021), a child's responsibilities at home were a barrier to an effective online learning experience. The participants in this study struggled to balance their responsibilities as students and children. Some admitted that they had to leave the class meeting to carry out some household chores. Taking the structure of the Malay family into consideration, children are expected to help around the house and its part of carrying out Islamic values as respect and helping their parents.

Some parents did not have a full understanding of the requirements of online learning so did not take it seriously. They thought that as long as their children were at home, they would provide help at any time. Further research is needed to investigate parents' roles during online learning.

Furthermore, participants in the current study were found to be struggling physically and mentally. Online learning causes back pain due to prolonged sitting and eyesore due to excessive screening time. Esra and Sevilen (2021) found that students found themselves unmotivated with online learning due to the mismatch between reality and expectation. At the beginning of

COVID-19 changes from physical learning to online learning, students thought the new online teaching and learning method would be simpler and more comfortable than physically attending the class because they do not need to walk far to attend class since they could sit in their room and attend the class directly. However, the findings from the current study showed the reality students face in online learning is challenging for them because facing a screen for a longer time and prolonged sitting causes backpain.

Besides that, Al-Kumaim et al. (2021) also found that students tend to develop stress due to the increasing workload and longer screen time. In sequence with the current study, students developed stress due to the increase in workload that is not even one of the core subjects in students' fields. Overall, online learning is not simple since it challenges students physically and mentally, making the journey of online learning harder. Among IIUM students, it has become a habit during the physical learning time where students will do morning walk exercises, visit the library, or swim at the facilities areas after a long learning period. But during online learning, students stayed at home and were hindered from going outside since it was during the lockdown period. Due to this, students lost all these facilities which played an important role in keeping them healthy and fit.

This study is also built upon a previous investigation conducted by Yunus and Eid (2022) into how undergraduates cope with online learning. Research indicates that controlling the surroundings by moving students can aid their concentration in class and address environmental issues. In addition to that, by conversing with others about their problems, students can lessen the weight of workload stress, and engaging in activities like watching a movie or going for a walk can provide a much-needed respite from academic stress, benefiting them both physically and mentally.

Conclusion

This research investigated the difficulties the Malay undergraduate students at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) encountered while studying via online learning during the global outbreak of COVID-19. The rapid changes in learning mode exposed students to challenges related to the basic elements of online learning, including internet connection, technological devices, social interaction, learning environment, and physical and mental health. This paper discussed these issues taking into consideration the student, family, instructors, and the Malaysian Ministry of Education. It presented the experiences of learners, and concludes that further research is needed to investigate the experiences of families and accountable individuals, such as instructors. The challenges created uncertainties among the students in terms of the quality of the education they received online. The paper attempted to provide a sociological understanding of their experiences. However, it had several restrictions. The participants were Malay students from Malaysia, so there is a need for further research, including the international students who were stranded in their home countries. In addition, the sample size is small and this limits data collection.

E-learning has been experienced by a large number of students all over the world, and it appears to be a widely accepted and maybe preferred mode of learning. Presenting the challenges does not mean a call for suspending this learning method. Rather, there is an urgent need to address possible issues because universities in various countries have amended their policies to make physical and online learning available options. Online learning may become more popular among students in Malaysia universities, which have long served as educational centers.

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The Challenges of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Nigeria: From Environmental Movement to Movement for Self-Determination

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Abstract: The Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) is Nigeria's most impactful environmental justice movement founded in 1990 to advocate for the indigenous Ogoni people's economic, cultural, and environmental rights. Despite years of pressure, their demands have seen limited success, prompting a need to assess their strategies and obstacles. Thus, this article aims to examine the mobilisation strategies and the challenges or barriers hindering MOSOP's success over the years. Through the lens of political opportunity structure theory, the article focuses on how political opportunities affected MOSOP's mobilisation and outcome. Methodologically, qualitative content analysis of scholarly articles, speeches, and relevant documents was utilised. The findings indicated that the leadership crisis was a major obstacle, and MOSOP's ethnic-based nature hindered its progress. Its shift towards more radical and violent strategies also proved to be another barrier to success. It also faced a major setback with the execution of its leader due to a shift in ideology and strategy. Despite previous successes, its violent approach was less effective than peaceful negotiation in achieving its goals. However, MOSOP deserves credit for its role in government interventions, such as the Niger Delta Clean-up programme and the UNEP environmental assessment report.

Keywords: Environmental movement, MOSOP, Niger-Delta, political opportunity structure, self-determination

Introduction

In the history of Nigeria, the hitherto strongest environmental justice movement has been the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (henceforth MOSOP), especially during its heyday in the 1990s. Established in 1990, MOSOP is a social movement organisation primarily campaigning for social, economic, and cultural rights, as well as environmental justice for the indigenous Ogoni people of Central Niger Delta. The Niger Delta is strategically located in one of the largest mangrove forests in Africa and the third largest of its kind on earth. It is endowed with an ecosystem rich in biodiversity and abundant in natural resources comprising fertile

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arable land, extensive forests, rivers, fishery sites, and, most importantly, a large deposit of oil and gas (Mbikan & Israel, 2022).

Following the discovery of a significant amount of crude oil by the Anglo-Dutch Shell group in this area, Nigeria has emerged as a prominent global producer of crude oil. By 1970, Nigeria produced two million barrels per day of Bonny Light crude oil as the fifth largest producer in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Duru & Uno, 2007). Since then, Nigeria has largely relied on the revenues of crude oil proceeds, contributing to at least 80% of the GDP and 90% of the federal budget (Mckague, 2017).

The Ogoni land is found within the Rivers State Niger Delta, spread across four of the 23 Local Government Areas, namely Gokana, Khana, Tai, and Eleme. It occupies only about 2% of the Niger Delta (404 out of 27,027 square miles). The Ogoni people are divided into six clans with their respective Gbenemene (King/Chief) and are roughly spread across 111 villages. According to 2006 national population estimates, the Ogoni people totalled approximately 830,000. Their major occupation is farming and fishing (Duru & Uno, 2007; Mmom & Igbuku, 2015; Osaghae, 1995).

The Ogoni territory spans an impressive 404 square miles and boasts a population of over 530,000. As one of Africa's most densely populated regions, the Ogoni land has seen significant changes over the years, with forests being cleared or altered for agricultural purposes (N-Ue, 2020). Given this reality, it is unsurprising that land holds tremendous significance for the Ogoni people (Osha, 2006).

For years, MOSOP has pressured the Federal Government of Nigeria (henceforth FGN) to respond to its demand, albeit with little success. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand the mobilisation strategies and challenges hindering MOSOP's success over the years. This is also essential for comprehending the complexities of environmental activism in Nigeria and beyond. This article examines the historical context, mobilisation strategies, and persistent barriers that MOSOP has faced in its pursuit of environmental and social justice. Accordingly, this article seeks to answer two fundamental questions: To what extent did political opportunities influence the mobilisation and outcome of the famous MOSOP protest in 1990? What challenges does MOSOP face in achieving its goals and objectives?

The significance of studying MOSOP lies in its role as a catalyst for change and its resilience in the face of formidable challenges. By examining the mobilisation tactics employed by MOSOP, as well as the obstacles encountered along the way, we can gain valuable insights into the dynamics of grassroots activism, coalition building, and resistance to environmental exploitation. Through a comprehensive analysis of MOSOP's mobilisation strategies and challenges, this article seeks to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of environmental activism and grassroots movements in Nigeria and beyond. By analysing the achievements and failures of MOSOP, we can obtain useful knowledge about the intricacies of advocating for environmental justice and community rights in the face of significant challenges.

This article is structured into five sections, beginning with the introduction section. The following section reviews relevant literature on environmental movements, focusing on Africa. The third section presents the theoretical framework for analysing the mobilisation and outcome of the MOSOP. The fourth section explains the background of the MOSOP protest and an analysis of the challenges faced by MOSOP. Finally, the article concludes with a summary of the findings.

Literature Review

Environmental Movement: Overview

According to several scholars of social movements, there has yet to be a consensus on the definition of environmental movement. However, Diani (1992) defined environmental movement as:

> a loose, noninstitutionalised network of informal interactions that may include, as well as individuals and groups who have no organisational affiliation, organisations of varying degrees of formality, that are engaged in collective action motivated by shared identity or concern about environmental issues. (p. 5)

Environmental movements encompass diverse individuals, groups, and organisations that come together to address environmental issues, ranging from local pollution to global climate change (Hu, 2023). Typically, these movements aim to influence governments and companies to adopt sustainable practices and promote environmental conservation (Nelson & King, 2020). Scholars have increased interest in studying environmental movements, resulting in a surge of sociological research over the past few decades (Johnson & Burke, 2021). Numerous environmental movements have gained recognition globally, each with unique goals and attributes. The Chipko Movement in India began in the 1970s and is renowned for its grassroots activism in forest conservation and community empowerment (Bandyopadhyay & Shiva, 1989). The anti-nuclear movement, characterised by protests against nuclear testing and power plants, gained traction during the Cold War era and remains active today (Harvey, 2016). Additionally, the global climate justice movement, exemplified by campaigns such as Fridays for Future, led by Greta Thunberg, has mobilised millions worldwide to demand urgent action on climate change (Spini, 2023).

The influence of environmental movements on policy-making has been noteworthy at all levels, be it local, national, or international. Through advocacy, lobbying, and direct action, these movements have successfully created environmental regulations, protected areas, and international accords, including the Paris Agreement on climate change (Falkner, 2016). In addition, these movements have been instrumental in raising public consciousness and engagement on environmental issues, which has led to shifts in consumer behaviour, corporate practices, and public discourse (Lele, 2023).

Mapping the Areas of Environmental Activism

O'Neil (2012) succinctly mapped out the areas of environmental activism into four broad areas. The first is wilderness and species prevention, which includes biodiversity conservation, park movements, and deep ecology. The forefront of activism is expanding to encompass the fight for access to natural resources and their responsible usage. The second area involves advocating for fair usage of land, water, forests, plants, and animals, as well as defending property rights and common pool resources. Additionally, it includes ensuring food security and promoting conservation practices based on community involvement. Lastly, it involves encouraging participation from multiple stakeholders. The third area of environmental activism is addressing

industrial and technological hazards. These hazards include mining and resource extraction, and constructing large-scale infrastructure such as dams, roads, power plants, factories, and waste disposal sites. It also includes handling nuclear weapons and power, genetically modified organisms, biotechnology, and the consequences of climate change. The fourth area of environmental activism is communitarian green movements, which focus on criticising free market capitalism, state socialism, and neoliberal globalisation. It is also concerned with the promotion of alternative lifestyles within the predominant system, as well as the promotion of alternative economic systems.

In his work, Dalton et al. (2003) outlined 13 types of activities done by 248 environmental groups across 50 countries to map out the pattern of action that green movements have adopted globally to influence government policy on environmental issues. Their research findings suggest that these movements primarily engage in activities such as contacting the media, mobilising public opinion, contacting other environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and holding informal meetings with civil servants or ministers. On the other hand, they rarely engage in activities such as contacting officials of political parties and social unions and associations, resorting to legal action via the courts and other judicial institutions, and participating in demonstrations, protests, or direct actions. Additionally, these green movements tend to contact local government authorities and international environmental NGOs, participate in government advisory committees and commissions, and have formal meetings with civil servants or ministers. Finally, on average, they also tend to contact Members of Parliament or parliamentary committees.

Environmental Movements in Africa: Characteristics, Key Issues, and Impact

Environmental movements in Africa have emerged in response to several environmental challenges, ranging from deforestation and land degradation to water scarcity and pollution.

Before contact between Africa and Europe, the inhabitants of Africa revered the environment with some sacredness. Only a reasonable utilisation of the environment for subsistence farming, fishing, and wood for domestic energy was allowed for use. However, the industrial revolution in Europe necessitated contact with Africa in search of raw materials. Hence, the ecosystem in Africa was used to extract raw materials through mining, plantations, and even the dumping of toxic wastes. Currently, the continuous exploitation of environmental resources is being disregarded, leading to increasing degradation of the environment, thereby exacerbating conflicts over limited resources (Obi, 2005). Consequently, the conflict between the Imperial States, which had control over the environment, and the indigenous people, whose survival was endangered because they lacked control over the environment, intensified the cycle of repression, resistance, and conflict. Due to this inconsistency, marginalised communities were compelled to form environmental movements such as MOSOP, GBM, Niger Delta Women for Justice (NDWJ), and the Squatter Settlement Movement in South Africa (Obi, 2005).

Most environmental movements in developing countries have objectives that extend beyond environmental concerns. They often manifest a wider concern, typically of a political nature. Such movements tend to attract minority or marginalised communities who cannot often address their problems more conventionally. Such examples include India's Chipko movement,

Kenya's Green Belt Movement, the National Council of Rubber Tappers (NCRT) of Brazil, and MOSOP.

Haynes (1999) has aptly articulated six main characteristics of an environmental organisation in the Third World, as follows:

> First, they aim to mobilise local people to defend the environment against outside interests, usually the state or big business. Second, environmental action groups are usually rurally-based. Third, women often form the core of their memberships. Fourth, while some groups have a narrow conservation focus, others have wider socio-economic and political concerns. Fifth, environmental groups are more likely to achieve their objectives when they can utilize democratic and legal channels. Sixth, it helps to enlist important foreign allies, such as Greenpeace International, although more is needed to ensure success. Finally, environmental groups often need to win their struggles; failures outweigh successes. (Haynes, 1999, p. 223)

African environmental movements exhibit diverse characteristics shaped by local contexts, socio-economic conditions, and historical legacies. Many of these movements are rooted in indigenous knowledge systems and traditional practices that emphasise the interconnectedness of humans and nature (Fairhead & Leach, 2003). They often employ a combination of traditional methods, such as community-based conservation and agroecology, alongside modern advocacy and activism strategies. Furthermore, African environmental movements frequently intersect with broader social justice and anti-colonial struggles, reflecting the intertwined nature of environmental and socio-political issues on the continent (Beinart, 2000).

Several key environmental issues drive activism and mobilisation within African environmental movements. These include deforestation and land degradation, exacerbated by unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation for logging and mining activities (Beinart, 2000). Water scarcity and pollution, intensified by industrialisation and urbanisation, equally form a significant part of the agenda of many African environmental groups (Hussain et al., 2020). Moreover, the impacts of climate change, including droughts, floods, and desertification, pose existential threats to communities across the continent, fuelling calls for climate justice and adaptation (Adger & Pulhin, 2014).

African environmental movements have made significant strides in raising awareness, mobilising communities, and influencing local, national, and international policy-making. Grassroots initiatives such as the Green Belt Movement in Kenya, founded by Wangari Maathai, have empowered women, restored ecosystems, and advocated for sustainable development (Death, 2014). Similarly, movements such as Friends of the Earth Africa and the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance have amplified African voices in global climate negotiations and campaigned for climate action and environmental justice (Benkenstein et al., 2020). Furthermore, indigenous and local community-led conservation efforts, such as community-based natural resource management initiatives, have demonstrated the efficacy of bottom-up approaches to environmental stewardship (Hotakainen & Rytkönen, 2020).

Environmental Movements in Nigeria

Just as anywhere in the world, several environmental organisations in Nigeria have different areas of interest. Among them include: the famous Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) founded in 1980; the Environmental Right Action (ERA) established in 1993; the Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility and Stakeholder Democratic Movement; the Nigerian Environmental Society (NES); the Nigerian Environmental Study and Action Team (NEST); the Green Environmental Movement of Nigeria (GEMINI); the Nigerian Society for the Protection of the Environment; the Niger-Delta Conservation Committee (NDCC); and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) (Agbonifo, 2013).

Most of these environmental movements in Nigeria are largely oriented towards promoting environmental awareness, management, and advocacy, as observed by Agbonifo (2013). He further categorised them into four groups based on their orientation. The first is conservative-oriented groups, which are mostly concerned with identifying environmental problems and suggesting solutions and policy advocacy. Groups of such orientation are peaceful and do not engage in protests or direct actions. The second is environmental and social justice groups, which largely focus on protecting minorities and vulnerable communities against environmental pollution. The third is peace-building environmental groups, which focus on identifying those who are harmed and those who can remedy the identified harms using a restorative approach to environmental issues. Such groups include the Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility and the Stakeholder Democratic Movement. Lastly, local community groups protesting environmental degradation mostly connect between their environmental situation and national or global situations. They utilise the opportunity of a single case to establish the need for structural causes of socio-economic marginalisation and environmental degradation. MOSOP is exemplary in this regard.

Theoretical Framework

Social theories entail a wide range of theoretical literature that "seeks to explain the emergence, organisation, and impacts of collective action by civil society groups, including environmental movements" (O'Neil, 2012, p. 116). In other words, social theories have primarily "generated strong claims about the role of collective identity in movements' emergence, trajectories, and outcomes" (Pollettal & Jasper, 2001, p. 284). Different social movement scholars have put forward several theories, the most popular of which are the resource mobilisation theory, the political opportunity structures, and the collective identity theory.

Collective identity theory focuses on individual and group identity to explain why collective actors come together, what motivates individuals to participate in collective actions, as well as the cultural effects of group action on society at large (Pollettal & Jasper, 2001; Snow & Corrigall-Brown, 2015). Conversely, the resource mobilisation theory dwells on how material resources are used to organise and mobilise collective actions, and measure the material outcomes of such actions.

However, this study is neither interested in understanding MOSOP's cultural identity nor in how it utilised its resources for action. Rather, it intends to discuss the successes and challenges facing MOSOP in actualising its goals and objectives. Therefore, both collective identity and resource mobilisation theories are relegated in this article, though only partially.

Since MOSOP's agitations are within the context of environmental justice from multinational oil companies and the FGN, it is most convenient to analyse the group's challenges through the lens of political opportunity structures.

Political Opportunity Structure

The Political Opportunity Structure (henceforth POS) theory, or political process theory, emerged as an alternative explanation to resource mobilisation theory by specifying external factors referred to as "political opportunities" to explain social movements' mobilisation, form, and outcome. In other words, POS comprises "specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilisation, which facilitates the development of protest movement in some instances and constrain them in others" (Kitschelt, 1986, p. 58). Since POS is originally developed to explain social movements in a democratic context, it is based on the assumption that "political contention is facilitated or constrained by aspects of the political environment, regardless of the type of regime in which it occur" (Schock, 1999, pp. 360-361).

There are four core dimensions of POS, namely increased political access, influential allies, divided elites, and declining repression. "Political access" refers to the avenues through which movements meet with relevant policymakers, such as legislatures, judiciary, executives, and bureaucracies. These access points are often more available in open regimes and less in closed regimes, though the latter system could be open to a certain extent to gain legitimacy (Schock, 1999). In other words, "the access of social movements to the public sphere and political decision-making is also governed by institutional rules, such as those reinforcing patterns of interaction between government and interest groups, and electoral laws" (Xie & van der Heijden, 2010, p. 54). The "declining repression" of social movements enhances their mobilisation capacity and success, while increasing repression narrows the chances for mobilisation and success. Overall, "authoritarian regimes are inclined to repress social movements, whereas representative ones facilitate them. A country's democratic past heavily influences the prevailing elite strategies" (Flam, 1994). Non-democratic regimes tend to fear political protest and also have police forces or sometimes the military, which remain immersed in the authoritarian values of the preceding regime, with a tendency to use indiscriminate force (Schock, 1999). The dimension of "influential allies"—such as professional associations, labour unions, political parties, and others—facilitate social movements' mobilisation and success by supporting them with leadership, organisational expertise, and money. However, in a closed system, these allies often come from religious, intergovernmental institutions, and transnational social movements outside state control. Moreover, the mobilisation potency for protest of social movements is occasionally contingent upon the emergence and dissolution of other social movements (Schock, 1999; Xie & van der Heijden, 2010). Lastly, "elite divisions" in a formal democracy usually manifest in party differences based on economic and social policies and not based on the system of governance. Conversely, the elite differs in the type of political system, coupled with differences in social and economic policies that could significantly impact societal transformation.

In addition to the four POS dimensions, Schock (1999) considered "press freedom/flow of information" as another dimension of political opportunity not considered by POS since it is democracy biased. The flow of information may significantly impact non-democratic or closed regimes. Political opportunities are aspects of the "external political environment that facilitates

or constrains collective action and influences movement outcomes, [thus] press freedoms and information flows can be considered a relevant political opportunity" (Schock, 1999, p. 362).

Background of the Ogoni Protest: From Environmental Justice to Agitation for Self-determination

As mentioned earlier, the basis of MOSOP's agitation lies in the fact that the Ogoni communities live in vital oil-producing areas in Nigeria, yet have long suffered environmental degradation due to oil exploration, gas flaring, clearing of farms, and the like for over four decades by mainly the Social Democratic Party (SDN) under the authority of the FGN. Since the discovery of oil in commercial quantity, multinational oil companies operated the Oil Mining Lease (OML 11), interfacing with 47 Ogoni land communities (Mckague, 2017). It was claimed that about 634 million barrels of oil worth approximately USD30 billion had been generated from its land by Shell, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), Agip, and Elf over the years (Maier, 2000). Worse still, there has been no fair allocation of oil revenues and no adequate compensation on farms, land, and polluted water bodies, all of which constitute the basis of livelihood and sustenance in the Ogoni land. In essence, the Ogoni people "have suffered from land scarcity, oil-based ecological degradation, which has severely undermined Ogoni's traditional peasant and fishing economy, and the failure of the Nigerian state to integrate them into the non-traditional oil economy" (Naanen, 1995, p. 64).

A watershed in the Ogoni protest could be traced to an oil spillage incident in 1970 at the Bomu (Dare) oil field, famously known as the Bomu blow-out. For over two months, the "blow-out kept emitting crude oil, sand, water, gas and fire, which not only destroyed farmlands in the area but also left a heavy veneer of crude oil within a three-mile radius" (Osha, 2006, p. 28). During this devastating period, the affected communities were neither compensated by Shell nor provided with relief materials by the FGN. Consequently, the relationship between the oil companies and the local communities further deteriorated (Osha, 2006). Earlier in 1968, Ken Saro-Wiwa had expressed the growing hostility between the Ogoni people and the oil companies in his pamphlet entitled "The Ogoni Nationality Today and Tomorrow", in which he called on the Ogoni people to organise and assert themselves (Saro-Wiwa, 1995, p. 52–4).

In the aftermath of the blow-out in 1970, "complaints about oil pollution came from conservative and influential Ogoni chiefs who sent a protest letter to the Rivers State military governor, demanding a greater share of oil revenues extracted from Ogoni land and a programme to reverse environmental destruction" (Duru & Uno, 2007, p. 81). In 1973, another oil spill occurred at Ibobu.

It is pertinent to mention that the agitation of the Ogoni community was not limited to environmental degradation. There were equal economic agitations symbolised by continuous demand for increased revenue allocation from oil proceeds, cultural dimensions indicated by complaints of ethnic marginalisation and domination, and, of course, political agitations symbolised by the quest for autonomy and self-determination. Coincidentally, this was catalysed by the fundamental social ideology of MOSOP, referred to as ERECTISM (Ethnic Autonomy, Resource and Environmental Control). Regarding revenue allocation, the derivation principle has been utilised since Nigeria's independence. Half of the revenue extracted was given to the extraction regions, only 20% went to the FGN, while the rest went to the distributable pool, which was shared equally among the federating units. During the

military intervention between 1966 and 1969, the distributable pool was cancelled and a 50/50 sharing formula between the producing states and the FGN was maintained. By the end of the Civil War, the enactment of the Petroleum Decree (No. 31) of 1969 resulted in transferring all lands and resources to the FGN, leading to a shift in the ratio of 45 to 55 between 1969 and 1971.

In addition, the 1978 Land Use Decree further reinforced the 1969 decree. Thus, between 1979 and 1981, 100% of revenue went to the FGN. It was later from 1982 to 1992 that 1.5% was given to the producing states. By 1999, the ratio settled at 13 to 87 (Duru & Uno, 2007; Watts, 2003).

Consequently, the corresponding agitation of the Ogoni people steadily increased by the day. The Ogoni people thought that participating in governance would abate their plight. As such, prominent Ogoni individuals became involved in politics. For example:

> … since the creation of Rivers State in 1967, every clan in Ogoni has produced one minister or more at the federal and state levels and other top political appointments. The most significant of these include Ken Saro-Wiwa's appointment as Administrator for Bonny during the civil war and later as commissioner for education in Rivers state; Garrick Leton's appointment first as commissioner for health in Rivers state and later federal commissioner for education; Kenneth Birabi's election as senate minority leader in the short-lived National Assembly of the Third Republic; and I. S. Kogbara's appointment as secretary for industries in the interim national government of 1993. (Osaghae, 1995, p. 331)

Similarly, Ken Saro-Wiwa contested for membership to the Nigerian Constituent Assembly in 1977 and lost to another candidate who was believed to be under the patronage of Chief Edward Kobani, an Ogoni elder statesman. Similarly, another Ogoni named Kernte Giadom was chosen as the gubernatorial candidate in 1983 by the Nigerian People's Party, which competed against the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the ruling party at the national level, for control of Rivers State. However, Giadom was defeated by another candidate (Naanen, 1995; Osha, 2006).

When the "Ogoni's pursuit of economic and political empowerment through the use of formal channels such as political parties (when these were allowed to exist), petitions to the military government, and agitation for a separate state yielded little tangible benefit", according to Naanen, the people resorted to another strategy that ultimately led to the protest in 1990. In the words of MOSOP's general secretary:

> Events of this kind reinforced the growing feeling among the Ogoni that an alternative strategy was necessary for a successful prosecution of their cause. Their problem came to be seen as structural. As long as the existing constitutional arrangements remained, there was little that even an Ogoni governor could do to change the situation fundamentally. (Naanen, 1995, p. 64)

Before the creation of MOSOP, there were several professional, youth, women, and religious organisations all over the Ogoni kingdom, such as: the Federation of Women Associations (FOWA), National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), Council of Ogoni Churches (COC), Council of Ogoni Professionals (COP), Council of Ogoni Traditional Rulers

(COTRA), National Union of Ogoni Students (NUOS), Ogoni Students Union (OSU), Ogoni Teachers Union (OTU), and the Ogoni Central Union (OCU) (Barikor-Wiwa, 1996). Thus, when MOSOP was ultimately established in 1990, it functioned primarily as a collective organisation encompassing multiple interest groups (Obi, 2001). It then became the task of some leaders such as Ken Saro-Wiwa to harmonise these groups for an articulate and united action. Therefore, rigorous ideological framing based on the ethos of ethnic extension attempt and marginalisation, coupled with the heroic rhetoric of the Ogoni people, was adequately utilised to campaign for action against the FGN and multinational oil companies. The founding of MOSOP occurred under the tutelage of Chief Edward Kobani with Dr Garrick Leton as president, Ben Naanen as general secretary, and Ken Saro-Wiwa as publicity secretary.

Furthermore, MOSOP under Saro-Wiwa persuaded the Ogoni stakeholders, including the intelligentsia and most of the Chiefs across the kingdom, to draft the famous Ogoni Bill of Rights to serve as articulated demands and standpoints of the Ogoni nation. This Bill was issued to the military regime of General I. B. Babangida, and mainly requested the following rights:

> (i) Political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people; (ii) The right to the control and use of a fair proportion of OGONI economic resources for Ogoni development; (iii) Adequate and direct representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions; (iv) The use and development of Ogoni languages in all Nigerian territory; (v) The full development of Ogoni culture; (vi) The right to religious freedom; and (vii) The right to protect the OGONI environment and ecology from further degradation. ("Ogoni Bill of Rights," 1990, p. 6)

In June 1992, at Umuechem village near Port-Harcourt, the mobile police brutally attacked unarmed protesters at Shell facilities, leading to several deaths and over 400 houses burnt. The situation worsened within a short span, and there were pockets of protests across the Niger Delta—the affected included the Ogbia, Igbide, Uzere, Diebu, Burutu, and Bomadi communities in 1992, and the Irri community in 1993 (Obi, 2001).

In December 1992, MOSOP leaders wrote an addendum to the Ogoni Bill of Rights to Shell, NNPC, and other oil companies operating in the Ogoni land, demanding:

> (1) payment of US $6 bn for accumulated rents and royalties for oil exploration since 1958; (2) payment of US $4 bn for damages and compensation for environmental pollution, devastation and ecological degradation; (3) immediate stoppage of environmental degradation and in particular gas flaring in Yorla, Korokoro and Bomu; (4) immediate covering of all exposed high-pressure oil pipelines; (5) initiation of negotiations with Ogoni people 'to reach meaningful and acceptable terms for further and continued exploration and exploitation of oil from Ogoniland and to agree on workable and effective plans for environmental protection of the Ogoni people. (Osaghae, 1995, p. 336)

Upon hearing no response from either the FGN or the oil companies, MOSOP, in early 1993, mobilised about 300,000 people for the Ogoni day rallies in which Shell was declared persona non grata in Ogoni land. Moreover, a clarion call was made to other minorities in Niger Delta to rise and fight for their rights. The demand of USD10 billion in damages for the destruction of the environment and in payment of taxes and royalties was also made to Shell (Duru & Uno, 2007).

By April 1993, Shell contracted an American company, Wilbros, to dualise the Trans-Niger pipeline that distributed oil from Niger Delta via Ogoni to the Bonny export terminal. At a village near Biara, a disagreement happened between Wilbros workers on the field and a woman farmer who claimed that her crops were destroyed without any notice. The soldiers denied her people's attempt to halt the activities of the Wilbros workers on guard. The next morning, the villagers mobilised to stop the project but were repelled by the soldiers on duty, which left one person dead and several injured. Shell finally withdrew its operations in the Ogoni land in October 1993 after an attack by the Ogoni people on its facilities that led to the deaths of its staff.

Meanwhile, MOSOP became increasingly militant in its approach and even boycotted the federal elections. MOSOP President Dr Leton and Chief Kobani defected from the organisation, paving the way for Ken Saro-Wiwa to be the next president. Besides, the organisation was now singing its anthem and flag and clamouring for self-determination. To contain any act of secession, the military government banned Saro-Wiwa and his secretary Mitte from attending meetings. On May 21, 1994, NYCOP attacked and killed Edward Kobani, Chief Samuel Orage, Chief Theophilus Orage, and Albert Badey in a meeting they perceived as a plot to sabotage MOSOP. This was the Waterloo that led to the persecution and subsequent execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni individuals.

The period between 1993 and 2008 after the withdrawal of Shell and their partners marked the era of oil bunkering. Oil spills continued due to pipeline vandalisation, illegal refineries, and the waning of abandoned oil facilities of the oil companies. Several youths within the Ogoni land and across many areas of the Niger Delta participated in oil theft, running illegal refineries, and other illegal activities (Adamu et al., 2020). Consequently, insecurity due to rival competition between and among factions of the oil bunkering cartels increased.

POS, Mobilisation, and Outcome in the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)

Increased political access

Unlike previous military regimes, the Babangida regime (1985-1993) had more civilian involvement in governance than ever. For example, in 1993, at the executive arm, civilians were appointed as ministers: "there were two Ogoni commissioners in a cabinet of seven members; two of the three federal ministerial positions held by indigenes of the state were held by Ogonis; and the managing director of the state-owned Pan African bank was Ogoni" (Osaghae, 1995, p. 331). Chairmanship elections were held in 1987/1988 for the local governments in preparation for the transition to democracy. Again, several commissions, such as the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), had chairmen and other key figures from Rivers State. A one-year campaign, from September 1990 to September 1991, was allowed for the only two registered political parties in the upcoming democratic 1993 elections. Although it can be argued that MOSOP boycotted the election, it still did not negate that political activities were freer during the crucial moment of its mobilisation. Therefore, political access increased and aided the protest's success.

Declining repression

During the peak of MOSOP's agitations, Nigeria was under a military dictatorship. As expected, repressing protests and group agitations challenging the government's authority increased. Therefore, the tendency of protest success was narrowed, according to POS. The MOSOP leadership had been detained and intimidated severely. About five pockets of protests were brutally quenched around the Ogoni land in 1992 alone. However, the military regime was on the verge of transition to democracy and elections were to be held in June 1993. Logically, this period experienced declining repression, which gave MOSOP a political opportunity to match it peacefully without the military's corresponding repression.

Influential allies

MOSOP was able to co-opt influential allies within and around it skilfully. Within the Ogoni land, several professional, religious, gender-based, and trade unions mentioned earlier were incorporated into the MOSOP Movement. More fascinating was MOSOP's ability to secure even more influential allies internationally. Obi (2001) aptly described it as follows:

> 'MOSOP's 'complaints' were well packaged for the global audience through networking with human and environmental rights INGOs [international nongovernmental organisations] such as Amnesty International, FIAN International, Human Rights Watch Africa, Article 19, Inter-Rights, the Body Shop, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and others. (p. 185)

Therefore, these alliances helped to checkmate the military government's excesses towards any behaviour that would hinder the credibility of its transition to democracy. Meanwhile, the internationalisation of MOSOP's agitations equally restrained the extent to which the multinational oil companies could react, thereby giving MOSOP a political opportunity to advance its protest.

Notably, the military regime that allowed the protest did not hand over power to an interim civilian government after the annulment of the June 12 election. A few months later, another military regime intervened and subsequently prosecuted and executed Ken Saro-Wiwa alongside eight others.

Divided elites

Since the end of Nigeria's first republic (1960-1966), the country has been ruled by a series of military regimes, one toppling another. From 1966 to 1979, there were four military regimes. The second republic reigned only from 1979 to 1983 when the military intervened to stay for the next eight years by 1992. This is indicative of the deeply divided elite in Nigeria. The government of General Babangida succeeded two potential coups, the latest being in August 1990, and this was the peak of MOSOP's agitations. Possibly, therefore, this dividing elite at the military level and an even worse predicament at the level of the politicians might have given a political opportunity to MOSOP's activities.

Press freedom/flow of information

A pivotal strategy utilised by MOSOP was the press (print and virtual) to extend its agitations. Saro-Wiwa utilised his literary skills to write in newspapers and magazines (Aliyu, 2022). For example, he was a columnist in *The Sunday Times Magazine*. One of the earliest things the Babangida regime did was to release prisoners in detention by the previous regime. Thus, to project its case, MOSOP allies equally used "publications (books, newsletters, press releases, faxes and messages posted on the Internet and international campaigns), [following which] the world has come to be well educated on the poor state of human rights in the Niger Delta" (Obi, 2001, p. 75). In some instances, the release of "documentary films…showed the savage destruction of the Ogoni environment by Shell, and the ruthless repression of the Ogoni by the Nigerian military to shocked audiences in the UK, Europe and other parts of the world." *The Heat of the Moment* was the first of these films, followed by *Drilling Fields* and *Delta Force* (Obi, 2001; Okpadah, 2022).

The following information paved the way for MOSOP's story to be known and closely watched so that it could go against the "almighty" Shell and the military regime.

Challenges of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)

Despite the successes recorded by MOSOP, the movement faced several challenges, including but not limited to the following.

Firstly, the leadership crisis became a fundamental challenge to MOSOP, especially after the demise of Ken Saro-Wiwa. Only Saro-Wiwa was able to utilise some of the dimensions of political opportunity, especially in creating and forging foreign and domestic alliances with institutions that could help actualise the movement's goals. Similarly, the rally efforts to persuade the different groups and organisations of the Ogoni land could have been extended to non-Ogoni communities within the Niger Delta (Osha, 2006; Watts, 2003).

Secondly, MOSOP was an ethnic-based movement that catered only to the interest of the Ogoni nation rather than the greater environmental emancipation of the Niger Delta. Consequently, other ethnic communities were somewhat suspicious of aligning with MOSOP and preferred to champion their course differently. For instance, after MOSOP's agitations, over 26 ethnic groups emerged, such as Ijaw (INCE, IYV), Isoko (IDU), Urhobo (UPU), Itsekiri (INP), and Ogbia (Obi, 2001; Watts, 2003).

Thirdly, the ideological shift in the grievances of the Ogoni people, which initially was environmental justice, became evident before the protest. The FGN never tolerated the controversial agitation for the new grievance—self-determination. As Duru and Uno (2007) rightly observed:

> The ideological bent of military autocracy is to defend and protect a state's national interest, sovereignty and territorial integrity and maintain law and order. This rationalisation motivates the military to intervene in governance and propel their action in government. Nigerian military authorities easily saw the clarion call for resource sovereignty, political autonomy, the boycott of the 1993 presidential elections, flying a flag, writing an anthem and violent

> demonstrations by MOSOP as pushing mass pressures and protests to the limits of subversion. (p. 82)

The Federal Government of Nigeria learned its lesson from the Biafra secession attempts in 1967. As such, it has always treated matters of self-determination seriously. Had MOSOP continued to mount pressure on seeking environmental justice, it would have recorded more success with minimal cost to lives and properties.

Lastly, the radicalisation of MOSOP's activities shifted from being a peaceful strategy to a radical one. The movement's youth wing became radical and almost uncontrollable by the elders. There was significant resistance, particularly from other elites within the Ogoni community (Mai-Bornu, 2020). For example, "the clan heads (Gbenemene) of Babbe, Ken Khana, and Nyo Khana, as well as other prominent leaders like Chief Giniwa and I. S. Kogbara, opposed MOSOP's strategy and were accused by the radicals of being state agents" (Osaghae, 1995: 335). For the fact that these youths were radicalised, it was obvious that MOSOP could not do much to stop the oil bunkering, theft, and pipeline vandalisation during the era of militancy, at least in the Ogoni land. Therefore, the radicalisation of youths turned MOSOP against its weight—rather than manage the existing ecological damage, the pipeline vandalism worsened it.

Conclusion

This article has discussed how political opportunities influenced the mobilisation and outcome of the famous MOSOP protests in the 1990s. Five dimensions were found to explain the success and failure of the said protests: declining repression, influential allies, political access, dividing elite, and the flow of information. Despite the successes recorded by MOSOP, the execution of its leader posed the greatest challenge to the movement. Besides, the change in its ideology from fighting for environmental justice to agitations for self-determination, as well as its shift in strategy from being peaceful to violent, was considered the Waterloo of the movement. Had MOSOP persisted peacefully and continued negotiating so that the world could see its exploitation by the oil companies to the bare, its success story would have actualised. Nevertheless, credit must be given to MOSOP for all the government interventions, ranging from the commissioning of the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Niger-Delta Amnesty Program, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) environmental assessment report, to its implementation through the Niger-Delta Clean-up programme. It is obvious that MOSOP could have achieved better results in democracy through negotiation and peaceful engagement with the FGN and the multinational oil companies than under chaos and rebellion.

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Islamic Ethics and Liberal Democracy: A Critical Analysis of Mustafa Akyol's Perspectives

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Abstract: The Arab Spring and its aftermath sparked a renewed interest among scholars and thinkers in exploring the potential compatibility between Islam and liberal democracy. This led to a series of debates both supporting and critiquing this idea. This study focuses on the ideas of Mustafa Akyol, a prominent scholar who actively engaged in the ongoing debate on reforming Islamic political thought over the past decade. By closely examining his primary work, *Reopening Muslim Minds,* this paper argues that Akyol not only presents a clear intellectual framework for demonstrating the convergence of Islam and liberal democracy but also explores how Islam can contribute to shaping modern multicultural societies. However, this study also suggests that Akyol's failure to critically examine modernity and liberalism as philosophical project to the same extent as he did with Islamic intellectual tradition resulted in a lack of genuine dialogue between Islam and liberal democracy in his work. Additionally, the paper argues that Akyol's analysis of Islamic intellectual tradition is somewhat flawed, particularly in his binary take on classical Islamic theological and philosophical movements.

Keywords: Mustafa Akyol, Islamic politics, political modernity, Islamic state, liberalism

Introduction

Contemporary discourses and debates on Islam and politics can be situated within a context marked by the challenges faced by modern Muslim thought in grappling with modernity and secular values. In the contemporary era, Muslim-majority societies confront a multitude of socio-political transformations driven by globalisation, democratisation, and the spread of secular ideologies. These changes have prompted debates within Islamic scholarship about the compatibility of Islamic principles with modern political frameworks, such as liberal democracy, human rights, and secular governance. In that sense, in early 1800s and 1900s, Islamic reformists such as Tahtawi, Afghani, at-Tunisi and Rida strongly asserted that Islamic values are closely linked to democratic principles. They called for the restructuring of the political system in the Muslim world to align with democratic institutionalism in order to challenge Western colonialism (Islam & Islam, 2017). After the colonial era, Islamic thinkers began advocating for Islamic particularism and identity politics in response to the perceived impact of Westernisation on the Muslim world. This led to the emergence of discourses on an Islamic state and political system in opposition to Western liberal political values. This shift resulted in both more democratic and more theocratic orientations in Islamic politics, with the concept of 'God's sovereignty' shaping both aspects in the twentieth century Muslim world (March, 2023). The post-Cold War context reignited the debate on Islam and liberal democracy, particularly in response to the rise of a new world order and the discourse on Islamic extremism.

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Islamic political thought made serious attempts to incorporate democratic values into its theorisation efforts and expand its civic nature (Fadel, 2008; Jawad, 2013). This debate further ignited the aftermath of the Arab Spring as it opened up a fresh window for scholars to relook at the older discourses in light of new developing conditions.

Participating in this complex discursive debate, Mustafa Akyol played a significantly important role in developing a coherent set of ideas that envisioned to rethink Islam's commitment towards liberal democracy, freedom and political modernity. His popularity increased as he operated on multiple platforms as the public speaker, op-ed writer and also researcher. His fundamental argument is that there are ample avenues where Islam can meet liberal democracy philosophically and also politically. In addition, he has been a strong proponent of a discourse that Muslim world can only thrive through liberal democracy. Thus, he is currently considered as one of the leading voices of Muslim modernism that aim to make Islam more democratic and liberal.

Given this background, this paper explores key ideas of Mustafa Akyol on Islam, democracy and political modernity as found in his latest work, *Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom and Tolerance* (henceforth, RMM). As the central work of Akyol, *Reopening Muslim Minds* is considered to be the culmination of his previous contributions. It delves deep into theology, ethics and epistemology in constructing an Islamic political theology that can potentially co-exist with liberal political principles. After exploring his ideas, this study argues that Akyol's project as developed in his work, *Reopening Muslim Minds* presents a coherent set of perspectives in reconciling Islam with liberal democracy. As such, his ideas could be seen a clear intellectual schema for democratisation and liberalisation of Islam. Nevertheless, Akyol failed to inquire modernity and liberalism in the same fashion as he questioned Islamic intellectual tradition. He takes the philosophical premises of liberalism and political modernity for granted. He totally ignores recent critical scholarship on the impact and implications of liberal philosophy on contemporary societies. Thus, his project failed to make honest conversation between Islam and liberal democracy at the end. As an overall note, this paper's main objective is to engage with Akyol's main work and respond to its ideas. For that purpose, this paper is divided into five sections. Beside this introduction, the section two gives a brief overview about the contemporary debate on the interplay between Islam, democracy and political modernity. The section three discusses a short biography of Mustafa Akyol. The section four elaboratively discussion the key arguments of Mustafa Akyol while section five is dedicated to critically explore Akyol's ideas and its intellectual merits. The paper ends with an analytical conclusion.

Islam, Democracy and Political Modernity: A Brief Review of an Evolving Debate

This review mainly focuses the recent scholarship in debating compatibility thesis between Islam and the concept of liberal democracy. In that sense, it is possible to observe that current scholarship looks at Islam's relation to political modernity and liberal democracy from two different perspectives: Islamism's commitment to liberal democracy and Islamic thought's philosophical commitment to political modernity. Bassam Tibi argues that Islamism is an "exclusive ideology" and a manifestation of "religious fundamentalism". He believes that Islamism promotes a discourse of "totalizing Shariah" and embraces a vision of "remaking the world" in light of its ideology. Therefore, he concludes that while democratisation of Islam is possible, there can be no Islamisation of democracy (Tibi, 2010). Guida stresses that for Islamists, "democracy is only taken as a set of representative institutions and a free electoral system, and not pluralism, civility, and tolerance" (Guida, 2010). Nazek Jawad also points out

that even al-Ghannouchi, known as a “democrat within Islamism,” did not provide a clear explanation of how Islamism would embrace a political party that professes an ideology that contradicts the Islamic framework. All he did was develop an argument that the Islamic State would embrace democracy within its terms and conditions (Jawad, 2013).

Bayat argues that Islamism has been changing, and he names the new emerging phenomenon as post-Islamism. He notes that Islamist movements now try to legitimise their presence through liberal political terms. However, post-Islamists are not typical liberals. They are strict about separating the public from the private sphere. Instead, post-Islamists envision developing a socio-political discourse embracing all spheres of life in light of the Islamic value system. However, the Islamic value system is understood in a broader ethical sense that comes close to liberal philosophy (Bayat, 2013). Taking the discussion further, Raja Bahlul challengingly says that even post-Islamism could not reach the endgame of reconciling the political ambitions of Islamists with liberal-secular factions of the larger Muslim world. Exploring recent debates on the concept of a "civil state with Islamic reference" or "Dawla Madaniyyah," a post-Islamist product, he argues that a civil state with Islamic reference seems to be a bridging concept. However, the ideological divide suddenly surfaces when the conversation discusses the role of religion and religious ethics in checking a state's executive and legislative power (Bahlul, 2018).

Regarding Islam's philosophical commitments towards liberal democracy, scholars Kuru, El-Fadl, and Abu Ziad argue that the consolidation of democratic pluralism in the Muslim world can only be possible after realising an epistemological revolution within Islamic thought. Kuru and El-Fadl emphasise the close connection between democratic pluralism and public reasoning. They believe that Islamic thought needs to revise its epistemological framework and recognise reason as having equal status with revelation in order to uphold a democratic community in a modern society. Kuru points out that the traditional rigid legalism that has dominated mainstream Islamic thought for centuries resists public deliberation based on shared human rationality (Kuru, 2023). Similarly, El-Fadl suggests that political philosophy is a form of applied ethics and that Islamic political thought can be reformed to meet the demands of modern plural societies by embracing ethical objectivism (Kaul, 2020). This ethical position emphasises that God has given human reason the capacity to judge moral and ethical principles and would lead to the development of Islamic democratic thought that incorporates pluralism and rational public policy. Abu Zaid, on the other hand, argues that Islam's primary and secondary sources are products of specific historical conditions and cannot be used as sources of eternal inspiration. Therefore, he suggests that we should focus on contemporary socio-political and legal concepts rather than confronting the past (Kaul, 2020). Fadel and Rane delve into Islamic intellectual history by examining the nature of Islamic political discourse in the context of modern democratic ideals. They emphasise that the current concept of democracy is rooted in Western thought, but this does not imply that pre-modern Islam was inherently authoritarian. A thorough examination of early and classical Islamic history reveals principles aligned with liberal democracy (Fadel, 2008; Rane, 2013).

In the last few decades, political liberalism has become an accepted form of liberalism. As a result, some scholars have explored how Islam could engage with political liberalism as form of governance to manage the plural societies (Pirsoul, 2018; Swaine, 2009). Political liberals try to argue that political liberalism is different from philosophical liberalism as their conception accepts religious reasoning as a part of democratic policy making process. On this issue, Raja Bahlul and Kaminski argue that public reason, as proposed by political liberals, is a kind of accommodative liberal reasoning (Kaminski, 2021; Bahlul, 2018). Contrarily, Fadel highlights that classical Islamic theological, ethical, and jurisprudential tradition supports the

possibility of participating in a democratic society rooted in political liberalism. For him, classical Islamic theology is founded upon rational deliberation about God. Even Islamic ethical and legal theories, for the most part, demand human reasoning considering public well-being. Hence, Muslims and Islam can participate in enriching political liberalism as a shared form of governance that incorporate religious reasoning to be part of making a democratic polity (Fadel, 2008).

Mustafa Akyol: Life and Works

Mustafa Akyol is a Turkish by origin and an author of best-selling books on Islam and contemporary political theories. Having completed his Bachelor's and Master of Arts in political science at Bosphorus University, Istanbul, in 1999, he has been a regular writer for *Hurriyet Daily News*, *Al-Moniter.com*, and *The New York Times*. Apart from this journalistic orientation, he is an academic who served as a lecturer at Fatih University between 2012-2016. Since 2018, Akyol has joined the Cato Institute in Washington D.C. as a senior fellow at the Centre for Global Liberty and Prosperity, involved in research projects on the interplay between Islam, public policy and modernity. He has published more than six books. A few among those created a considerable public debate on the question of Islam, pluralism, and freedom, such as *Islam without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty* (2011), *The Islamic Jesus: How the King of Jews Became a Prophet of Muslims* (2017), *Reopening Muslim Minds: A Return to Reason, Freedom and Tolerance* (2021), and *Why as a Muslim I Defend Liberty* (2021). Akyol is a popular speaker and has delivered public lecturers at prestigious academic institutions: Stanford University, Boston University, Georgetown University, Columbia University, Oxford University, London School of Economics, Birmingham University, London School of Oriental and African Studies, New York University, University of California, and more. As such, the world's leading think tanks also invited Akyol to share his ideas and views on Islam in the contemporary world, such as the Council for Foreign Relations, Brookings Institutions, Atlantic Council etc. Renowned academics like Khalid Abu El-Fadl and Asma Barlus and political analysts like Fareed Zakariyyah praised Akyol's works and ideas. El-Fadl mainly writes that Akyol's work on *Reopening Muslim Minds* is a must-read for those who are interested in contemporary Islam.[3]

The Crisis of Modern Islam and Political Modernity: Key Arguments of Akyol

This section of the paper aims to summarise overall thrust of Mustafa Akyol's reformist concepts and ideas as presented in his work, *Reopening the Muslim Minds*. It is divided into three sub-themes: *The Context, Elements of an Exclusivist Islamic World View, and Towards a Non-Hegemonic Islam*.

The Context

Akyol argues that contemporary Islamic political thought still needs to embrace freedom and liberty, which are fundamental values of the modern world. He believes that reformist voices in the Muslim world have not been successful in addressing this issue. While many have tried to reinterpret Islamic texts and jurisprudence in light of modern liberal values, Akyol thinks that this approach has only reinforced the problematic idea of Islamic supremacism against the shared values of political modernity. Instead, Akyol suggests that Islamic intellectuals should

[3] Biographical information is available in Mustafa Akyol's personal website: http://www.mustafaakyol.org/

look beyond reinterpreting controversial texts and traditional jurisprudential opinions and strive for a fresh paradigm of Islamic enlightenment. Akyol recognises the need to advocate for Islamic enlightenment, which involves reconciling Islamic thought with democratic pluralism and freedom (RMM, p. xxiv). This requires a significant reconstruction of the traditional Islamic worldview, essentially redefining it within a new philosophical framework. The first step in this endeavour is to challenge the prevailing historical Islamic epistemic and ethical concepts that still influence discussions about the Islamic socio-political thought which aims to endorse Islamic supremacism, pollicisation of religion, and political authoritarianism. Particularly, Akyol further observes that the promotion of slogans advocating the implementation of Islamic law by Islamists is considered a significant obstacle to political pluralism and liberty. He believes that the only way to address this issue is to reformulate Islamic political and ethical thought on rational grounds. However, contemporary Islamic politico-legal thought continues to resist the development of a political theory based on rational thinking, remaining trapped within the paradigm of rigid legalism. Akyol argues that the legal-centred nature of Islamic political thought and its reluctance to develop a rational political theory has been heavily influenced by the dominant epistemological and ethical reasoning methods within the context of the Islamic intellectual tradition. Thus, for Akyol, critical reading of Islamic intellectual history and locating key historical junctures that constructed an exclusivist and authoritarian view of Islam is foundational step to move in terms making a genuine reconciliation between Islamic thought and modern world (RMM, p.12-13).

Elements of Exclusivist Islamic Worldview

In that sense, Akyol highlights that certain instances of Islamic intellectual history have led to the development of exclusive and authoritarian views of society and politics in the Muslim world.

Theology and Politics in Umayyad Dynasty. He contends that the main cause of this exclusivist view is the use of theology to justify political projects. As such, he notes that the toxic mix of theology and politics in the Muslim world originated with the emergence of the Umayyad dynasty. This authoritarianism was sustained with the support of theology. The Umayyads used theology to justify their political actions by resorting to one of the first theological controversies of early Islam, which debated whether human beings are free or just objects in the hands of God. He suggests that the Umayyads were deeply interested in this debate due to its political implications. They endorsed and supported the views of scholars who promoted anti-freewill discourse. This allowed them to suppress political dissenters who sought change by labelling them as anti-Islamic and theological. The Umayyads attempted to suppress the political aspirations of the masses by using theology, and the group that suffered the most in this campaign was Muʿtazilah. According to Akyol, the Muʿtazilah presented a “dignified anthropology” in contrast to a passive theology that assumes an all-powerful God and disempowered humans. On the contrary, the Muʿtazilah strongly advocated for free will, which they saw as representing God's justice. The Umayyads feared this theological trend, believing it would encourage people to become politically active. Akyol also suggests that there is a lesson to be learned from this early doctrinal conflict in Islam: Islamic theology, and all the conflicts and divisions within it, did not develop in isolation. It evolved under the influence of despotism, which dominated Islam from its early days and shaped it according to its own earthly goals and ambitions (RMM, p.18).

Ascendency of Ashʿarī Theology. In the early development of Islam, debates on the nature of God had a significant impact on political developments. Akyol argues that another critical factor in shaping an exclusivist and supremacist view of Islam was the consolidation of the Ashʿarī school, which is more sophisticated version of rejecting human moral agency. This school promoted divine command ethics and Islamic legalism. The key argument of the Ashʿarī school, as the dominant mainstream theological sect, was that reason cannot be considered an independent source of ethics or law. They strongly critiqued scholars who saw reason as independent, arguing that reason cannot act without the aid of revelation. In contrast, their rivals, the Muʿtazilah school of thought, argued that, much like revelation, reason can also make moral judgments. They asserted that moral values are objective, and human reason can reach them through independent reasoning without revelation. The dominant Ashʿarī position rejected the idea of ethical objectivism while establishing itself as a protector of Islamic orthodoxy (RMM, p. 46-49). Akyol argues that dominance of Ashʿarī school even prevented the maturation of objective-based thinking or *Maqāṣid*-based thinking in the Islamic history. He states that traditional Islamic epistemology is largely sceptical of the idea of Maqāṣid or the objectives of Islamic Sharia. In Islamic intellectual history, Maqāṣid Sharia was only used to justify the existing legalism of Islamic jurists. It was allowed with strict preconditions in Islamic legal history. By examining the attitudes of two prominent classical legal theorists, al-Ghazalī and al-Rāzī, towards the idea of Maqāṣid, Akyol argues that "even for al-Ghazali and al-Razi, the Maqasid were not conceived as purely theoretical objectives that underpin the law, but they were themselves derived from existing laws. In other words, laws came first, and Maqasid were derived from them, not the other way around." For him, this way of looking at the Maqāṣid theory would further embolden the dominant legalistic approach to Islam, as the theory will be deployed to argue that existing Islamic legalistic corpuses contribute to the higher objectives of Shariah and must be preserved regardless of the space and time factor. This legal epistemology that tries to keep the theory of Maqāṣid Sharia within a narrow space has its roots in the Ashʿarī theory of ethics. As briefed previously, it promotes the idea that morality and ethics could only be known through revelation (RMM, p. 78-80)

Theory of Islamic Caliphate and Politicisation of Religion. Akyol explains that Ashʿarī ideas about knowledge and ethics significantly influenced classical Islamic political philosophy. For instance, he points out that the concept of the Caliphate, as understood by most Islamic thinkers in the past, was shaped by Ashʿarī worldview. One of the major impacts of Ashʿarī on Islamic political theory was that it brought politics into the realm of religion and theology rather than being based on rationality. Islamic scholars who represented Ashʿarī school of thought used revelatory grounds to justify the legitimacy of the Caliphate. In other words, instead of providing a secular reason for the existence of political order, Ashʿarī school of thought influenced them to the use of revelatory and juristic reasons to support the political community. This led classical Islamic political thinkers to defend the political office of the Caliph regardless of its efficiency and productivity (RMM, p. 148-150). As a result, the Ashʿarī political theology justified the controversial position of the legality of the Caliph's office despite the latter having adopted authoritarian tendencies and disrespecting the role of the community in managing the office. Islamic scholars and jurists approve of the authoritarian office even if it symbolically facilitates the implementation of basic Islamic rituals. Akyol explains that the literal readings of political institutions led medieval Islamic political theologians to legitimise authoritarian political systems and pay less attention to developing accountability mechanisms to check the ruler. Personal advice was the only accepted way to convey the people's wishes to the ruler. The fear of losing the remaining political institutions in case of challenging the ruler prevented

Islamic thinkers from reflecting on the concept of accountability. Additionally, Ashʿarī political theology advised the masses that even if they saw apparent injustice from the ruler, the people must obey them (RMM, p.151). Furthermore, another significant impact of Ashʿarī political theory was the reinforcement of the politicisation of Islam. If the justification for the political institution is based on revelation rather than rational grounds, one could easily conclude that the community lacks legitimacy if it does not have a political office dedicated to safeguarding their religious life and implementing Islamic law. According to Akyol, this understanding of politics has created a host of problems for Islamic political theology, which continues to challenge Islamic thinkers striving to establish a religious state in the modern world marked by profound moral pluralism and cultural diversity.

Towards a Non-Hegemonic Islam, Ideal Islamic Polity and Epistemological Revolution

Akyol argues that the historical origins of Ashʿarī political-ethical theory have caused Muslims to disconnect from the collective human wisdom. Islamic thought gradually lost its universality, failing to embrace the collective wisdom of human society. Instead of working with the rest of humanity based on shared experience and collective objectives, Islamic political and social thinkers sought defensive "Islamic" alternatives to existing political theories and concepts rooted in divine revelation. This led to the creation of a separate religious space and demands for the implementation of religious laws, ignoring the plural and complex nature of modern societies (RMM, p. 67). Akyol contends that this particularism is rooted in traditional epistemological and ethical reasoning, which inhibits the Muslim mind from considering that a plural society can generate its moral frameworks through democratic collective deliberation. To address this, Islamic thought needs to consider the rational faculty as an independent source of knowledge alongside revelation. He believes that such an epistemological shift would guide Muslim thinkers to develop a form of governance that guarantees freedom, liberty, and dignity for all individuals. This concept of governance should allow people to live according to their beliefs without interference from the state or imposition of moral values. Islamic thinkers should present Islam and its socio-political legal concepts as non-hegemonic, emphasising that public affairs can be addressed through public deliberation (RMM, p. 62). Muslims thinkers can theorise an Islamic paradigm of global cooperation and mutual exchange of experience and wisdom. In Akyol's vision of an ideal political society, the state would not be responsible for promoting any religious doctrine. Instead, it would ensure a political system where everyone can live according to their conscience, regardless of their religious beliefs. The state would not push its citizens towards secularisation either. Religious citizens could contribute to the country's shared concerns based on their religious principles, while others could participate using their ethical framework. Akyol suggests that citizens can engage in moral arguments and debates about religious beliefs, but they should not use state power or communal cohesion to cancel each other out. To achieve this kind of governance, Muslim thinkers should work on formulating a new vision for Islamic epistemology and ethics based on reason and rationality (RMM, p. 95).

Akyol's Project: A Critical Analysis

This section critically evaluates Akyol's arguments and its intellectual merit. The analysis is organised into three important dimensions. First, it debates the overall contribution of Akyol's project to the current debate on Islam, democracy, and political modernity. Second, it engages

with Akyol's reading of Islamic intellectual history. Finally, the analysis focuses critically on Akyol's understanding of modernity and liberal philosophy.

Akyol's Project in Context

It is possible to stress that Akyol's project attempts to reconcile two seemingly contradictory paradigms: the public presence of Islam and respect for the liberal conception of freedom and human rights. Akyol acknowledges that current theories of an Islamic state, as developed by Islamists, only offer authoritarian versions of a religious state. These theories undermine political modernity and its values, such as freedom and pluralism, by enforcing Islamist supremacism and authoritarianism. However, Akyol does not want religion to be marginalised in shaping the modern world, fearing it could lead to complete secularisation in the Muslim world. To avoid religious authoritarianism on one hand and state-sponsored secularisation on the other, Akyol envisions a non-supremacist, yet active, role for religion in the public sphere. To reconcile these seemingly contradictory ends, he argues that religion needs to be interpreted in line with modern values such as freedom, liberty, and unrestricted democracy. He contends that these values are inherently Islamic if the religion is objectively understood. Therefore, if religion is interpreted in line with shared human values such as freedom, rights, and pluralism, promoting those values becomes a form of Islamic activism. By doing so, Islam could become a source of protection for the values of political modernity and an active shaper of the modern world. Akyol's vision is to present Islam as a source that empowers shared values and collective human wisdom. His project offers a middle-ground solution between religious authoritarianism and assertive secularism for the Muslim world.

Akyol's second essential contribution to the existing debate on the compatibility between Islam and political modernity is his perspective that reforming Islamic political thought is a multi-disciplinary project. Akyol situates his project of reconciling Islam with political modernity within law, ethics, and epistemology. Most discussions that try to find common ground between Islam and democracy and human rights confine their methodology to the traditional hermeneutical methods of Islamic primary or secondary sources. This approach emanates from an obsession of the Muslim mind with the mantra of revelation above reason. However, for Akyol, this approach would yield a negative result since both the traditional hermeneutical methods and political modernity are rooted in two different philosophical foundations. For Akyol, political modernity is the current global paradigm that shapes the world's political reality and is the most progressive and advanced form of human invention to regulate political power and ensure freedom and justice. The paradigm is philosophically rooted in rationality and public deliberation in formulating ethics and law-making. Hence, if Islam needs to become an effective partner in shaping the political discourse, it must find a way to positively engage with rationality and public reason from an epistemological and ethical perspective. Only this positivity about human reason and rationality would help contemporary Islam to situate itself in the modern world. The significance of Akyol's ideas is that they expand the current discussion on the interconnectivity of Islam, epistemology, and political thought reform more elaborately.

Contemporary scholarship generally concludes that one of the reasons for the modern anti-democratic tendencies in the Muslim world is the authoritarian nature of classical Islamic political thought. Despite Akyol's acceptance of this narrative, he expands the debate further by highlighting that the authoritarianism of classical Islamic political thought is not merely a failure of Islamic political thinkers to acknowledge the proper ethics of Islamic governance. It results from the politicisation of religion over the rationalisation of politics. The Ashʿarī School

of Ethics, as a dominant school that shaped most parts of the Sunni world, brought politics into the fold of religion by justifying the need for a political office through revelation. This mainstream thought movement is the core of the issue that paved the way for religious-based politics in the Muslim world. Therefore, Akyol offers a new reflection on reading classical Islamic political thought from a holistic perspective incorporating ethics, law, and epistemological developments.

Akyol's Reading of Classical Islamic Ethics: Some Methodological Issues

The discussion on ethics emerges as a central aspect of Akyol's critique of Muslim intellectual stagnation and his proposed remedies for revitalising Islamic thought. Akyol emphasises the importance of reason (*aql*) in interpreting religious texts and understanding divine commandments, advocating for a return to the rationalist traditions, according to his understanding of *Muʿtazilite* theology and the philosophical insights of figures like Ibn Rushd by highlighting the role of reason as a moderating force in relation to revealed knowledge (*naql*). The central argument against Akyol's thesis on Islamic ethics is that it suffers from methodological flaws and does not align with the historical realities of Islamic intellectual history. Akyol's binary division between divine command ethics and philosophical ethics is overly simplistic and fails to capture the nuanced interplay between reason (*ʿaql*) and revelation (*naql*) that characterises the Islamic tradition. Contemporary scholarship on Islamic ethics, as highlighted by al-Attar, demonstrates that such binary divisions do not fully align with the classical Islamic tradition. Akyol's reliance on Western epistemological frameworks which was developed in a Christian religious context, such as divine command theory and philosophical ethics, is problematic because it disregards the unique nuances of the Islamic context (al-Attar, 2019, p. 99). For example, Akyol's critique of early theological frameworks, particularly Ashʿarī theology, lacks depth and overlooks the intricate interplay between theology and law within Islamic thought. His tendency to conflate Ashʿarī theology with Sunni legalism disregards the complementary relationship among disciplines such as theology, law and ethics. Within Sunni-Ashʿarī legal theory, a clear distinction exists between theological beliefs (creed) and practical legal matters (praxis). While Ashʿarī thought primarily concerns itself with theological matters, adherents historically aligned themselves with one of the four Sunni schools of law for practical application (Ali, 2021, p. 78). Moreover, Akyol's oversimplification is further underscored by the argument put forth by a leading authority, Aymen Shihadeh, on the early and classical development of Sunni Islamic theology. It is commonly believed that classical Ashʿarites subscribed to a divine command theory of ethics, rejecting the ethical rationalism of the Muʿtazilah. However, recent scholarly discoveries of more classical Ashʿarite texts reveal a fuller account of their teachings on the subject. A subtle yet significant shift towards a consequentialist theory of ethics can be discerned in the theological and juristic works of al-Ghazālī, a student of al-Juwaynī. Additionally, Al-Rāzī, a proponent of Ashʿarī theology, presents a theory of ethical value distinct from both the Muʿtazilah and earlier Ashʿarites. He supports ethical rationalism at the human level, akin to the Muʿtazilah, asserting that only the mind (ʿ*aql*) can judge acts as good or bad. However, he maintains, in line with Ashʿarī doctrine, that ethical rationalism does not apply to God's acts (Shihadeh, 2016) (Shihadeh, 2016, p. 21-23). This broader understanding of ethical thought within the Islamic tradition challenges prevalent tendencies to interpret such concepts through the lens of problematic yet influential liberal secular binaries, such as legal/mystical, moderate/extremist, and reformist/traditionalist or voluntarism/rationalism distinctions.

Limits of Akyol's Engagement with Liberalism and Modernity

One of the notable limitations of the Akyol project is that it simply assumed the solutions offered by liberalism and political modernity to the complexities of moral pluralism of the modern world. The author treats both modernity and liberalism as progressive and unavoidable realities of the current world. On one hand, he did not critically engage with any scholarship that emerged in the West that explores the philosophical and social implications of the modern liberal paradigm on the contemporary world. On the other hand, he failed to incorporate developing debates on reforming the modernist paradigm considering the religious and ethical wisdom of the epistemically marginalised communities in the global south. Specifically, these developing discourses aim to envision a new kind of human subjectivity formation, social order, and political philosophy that transcends the ethical constraints of modernity and liberalism. In the Western context, the works of Alasdair Macintyre and Michael Sandel have offered a powerful critique of liberal individualism and rights discourses and exposed its moral and societal impacts in detail.

For example, MacIntyre suggests a theory of virtue as an alternative paradigm for liberal individualism. He argues that modern individualism has deconstructed the moral landscape of contemporary society. He believes that the Western enlightenment project, which worships individual autonomy and rights, has paved the way for social disorder and downfall. Instead, his theory of virtue aims to form a new human who prefers certain communal good over their individual interests. MacIntyre (2007) argues that this new human subjectivity formation cannot be attained under liberal conditions. American philosopher Sandel (1998) critiques the liberal conception of individual rights and autonomy, highlighting that it over-focuses on individuality, ignoring the importance of community and communal values in social development. He further stresses that communities play a vital role in crafting an individual's moral outlook and reasoning process. These scholarly debates fundamentally point out that liberalism has its own metaphysics and ontology, and it is also an all-encompassing system though it portrays itself not to be. Liberalism adopts a certain conception of the good life, permits other religious and ethical traditions to operate only within its limits, and eventually crafts a particular form of individual subjectivity that ignores communal values and ethical principles. On the topic of Islamic ethical and moral philosophy, Wael Hallaq, Taha A. Rahman, and Ovamir Anjum offered a systematic critique of the modernist legal and political paradigm. They presented several crucial arguments examining how Islam envisions an alternative conception of law, ethics, and political philosophy that aspires to produce an Islamic ethical being (Hallaq, 2013; Hallaq, 2019; Anjum 2012).

Given the importance of the ongoing discussions on liberalism and its moral and political impact in the West, it is surprising that Akyol did not engage in any of these conversations and instead urged Muslims to reconsider how they could potentially contribute to these discussions through their historical and philosophical moral resources. What Akyol suggests is to accept liberalism as a de facto regime and to reframe the Islamic worldview accordingly. Although Akyol's analysis covers a wide spectrum of academic realms such as ethics, law, and philosophy in the discussion of Islamic political reform, he only brings certain conversations from those realms that fit his overall project and avoids substantial works that strive to examine liberal philosophy critically. In that sense, his overall project fails to facilitate a genuine conversation between Islam and liberal political philosophy.

Conclusion

This article is motivated by a desire to critically understand the ideas of Mustafa Akyol as found in his major work *Reopening Muslim Minds*. In that sense, the research finds that Akyol's project is premised upon fundamental foundational assumptions. It is that the modern liberal world order has the potential to bring more freedom, progress, and liberty to the world, and those values are inherently Islamic in an objective sense. However, political Islamists and other conservative currents within the Muslim world aimed to disregard such an understanding of Islam. As a result, this mainstream current created a fracture between Islam and the modern world, leading to pushing Islam into a crisis. However, Akyol rightly notes that to meet the demands and values of liberal democracy and political modernity, Islamic thinkers need to actualise an epistemological revolution within Islamic thought. Because mainstream Islamist currents are primarily sceptical of independent reason as a source of knowledge and ethics, which is the cornerstone of political modernity. In addition, another critical point Akyol makes is that the root of the sceptical attitude of Islamists and conservatives towards reason comes from the mainstream Islamic intellectual tradition, the Ashʿarī school of thought. According to Akyol, the worldview of Ashʿarite shapes Islamists' current ethical and political views. Hence, Akyol calls for Islamic thinkers to adopt a rationalist interpretation of Islam that could guide Islamic thought to effectively contribute to the modern world. Against this background, the Akyol project is a critical intervention in developing dialogue between Islam and liberal democracy. Moving ahead, if we look at Akyol's work as a project to make a genuine conversation between Islam and modern liberal democracy, this study found that Akyol fails to critique liberal values and their impact on global societies and community ethics in a similar fashion as he critiques the Islamic intellectual tradition and modern Islamist and conservative currents. Modern scholarship on critiquing philosophical premises of the liberal political and ethical philosophy is rich and diverse. Akyol's project fails to incorporate any of that conversation in his discussion. Finally, this paper found that Akyol's critique of traditional Ashʻarī Islamic epistemology has its limitations since it tries to impose ethical theories that developed in the Western context, such as divine command ethics, into the Islamic context.

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Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Traditionalism

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Abstract: In this study, the basic views of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, one of the contemporary Islamic thinkers, on Traditionalism have been analysed. Nasr, one of the leading figures of the Traditionalism movement, has written in many fields from art to architecture, from science to philosophy, from religion to literature, and in these works he has tried to examine issues from a Traditionalist perspective. According to Nasr, one of the main problems facing the Islamic world today lies in the modernist and secular worldview and the view of nature, science and technology. According to him, modernism has brought anthropocentrism, unprincipledness, reductionism, progressivism and evolutionism. These have not been for the good of humanity and have led to wrong paths. He proposes the rediscovery of Tradition as a solution to today's individual and social problems. Nasr's identification of the problems in this way and his solution proposals have also received some criticism, and it has been stated that Tradition and Sufism, which are presented as solution proposals, will be insufficient in solving the problems. However, his criticisms and thoughts, especially his views on Traditionalism, are followed with interest.

Keywords: Seyyed Hossein Nasr, traditionalism, modernism, secularism, Sufism

The Life of Seyyed Hossain Nasr

Childhood Years (1933-1945)

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was born in Tehran on April 7, 1933. His father was Dr. Seyyed Waliyullah Nasr (1876-1946) and his mother was Mrs. Ashraf. His father, who was a physician, worked in the field of education and was appointed as the head of an institution that corresponded to the Ministry of National Education during the Shah's reign, and was a well-equipped intellectual who was well-versed in Eastern and Western languages. His mother, Mrs. Ashraf, was Nasr's first teacher, who strived for Nasr's good upbringing and taught him prayers, Quranic surahs and prayers. She too was the daughter of a well-established Iranian family prominent in politics and science. Nasr's childhood home was an intellectual environment where religious, scientific, philosophical and literary debates took place. He spent his childhood years following the discussions in this house, which had a large library, with interest.

When Nasr was 13 years old, his father, Dr. Seyyid Waliyullah, decided to send him to the United States with his relatives for a good education. Part of the reason for this was that he had broken his scapula in a bicycle accident, and in the war climate at the time, he should have gone to Europe for treatment but could not. Dr. Seyyid Waliullah, who felt that he could not take care of his son's education, said goodbye to Nasr as he sent him to the United States to be

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with his brother, saying, “I will never see you again, but I will follow you wherever you are.” Nasr would never forget his father’s last words to him, and a few months later, his father passed away. Nasr started his long journey from Tehran in October 1945 and reached Cairo after Baghdad, Damascus and Palestine. After a short stay there, he took a ship from the port of Alexandria, first to Thessaloniki, then to the port of Marseille, and then across the Atlantic Ocean to New York on December 17, 1945. After a difficult journey that lasted about two months, he eventually joined his uncles and cousins (Nasr, 2007, p. 18).

Years of Education in America (1945-1958)

Upon Nasr’s arrival in the US, the search for a school began immediately and it was decided that he would attend the Peddie School in New Jersey. This was a Baptist community school, a branch of Protestantism. Nasr attended Saturday services at the church with his friends and learned about the beliefs and rituals of other religions (Nasr, 2007, p. 10). In 1945, Nasr started 8th grade and graduated at the top of his class. Looking for a university education, Nasr decided to study physics and mathematics with a scholarship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), one of the world’s leading universities, in Boston in 1950 with the advice of his teachers. Although he would successfully graduate with honors from the Physics department, the questions in his mind and the thoughts of the British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) about physics in a lecture at MIT caused him to distance himself from physics, which he thought did not take human beings into account. Russell’s statement that physics is not concerned with the nature of physical reality per se, but with the mathematical structures related to it, in a way confirmed Nasr, who already had such questions and doubts in his mind (Chittick, 2012, p. 9-16). Thus, his field of interest shifted away from physics towards philosophy and metaphysics. The excessive, albeit implicit, understanding of positivism and scientism at the time was another reason for his detachment from physics (Nasr, 1996, p. 32).

During his undergraduate studies in physics at MIT, Nasr’s meeting with Italian Professor Giorgio de Santillana (1902-1974), who knew Eastern and Western philosophies and taught history of science, was, in his own words, “the turning point of his intellectual life”. De Santillana, in whose lectures on the history of science and the history of scientific thought Nasr showed great interest, told him about the Traditionalist school and suggested that he read the works of René Guénon (1886-1951) and other Traditionalist thinkers such as Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998). In this way, he was introduced to this school, which he would be a part of throughout his life and to which he would make great contributions. Especially through the works of Coomaraswamy, Guénon and Schuon, he began to feel himself within the Traditionalist school (Nasr, 2007, p. 18).

The rich library of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy made the greatest contribution to Nasr’s acquaintance with the important names and works of this school. Rama Coomaraswamy opened his father Ananda’s library to Nasr. It was in this library that Nasr first encountered the works of Traditionalist writers such as René Guénon, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, Marco Pallis and Martin Lings. These names and especially Schuon had a great influence on Nasr’s intellectual and intellectual development. He met Schuon in France in 1957 and kept in touch with him frequently in Morocco until his death in 1998. He described Schuon, for whom he had great love and respect, as the “Cosmic Mind” charged with the energy of divine grace and “the Frenchman of Ibn ‘Arabî” (Nasr, 2012, p. 120).

Nasr, who had planned to switch from physics to another field during his undergraduate studies, decided not to continue his graduate studies at MIT. Even though people like the famous philosopher of religion Paul Tillich (1886-1965) wanted him to stay at MIT and do graduate studies, he chose not to do so. After graduating from MIT in 1954, he went to Harvard University and earned a master's degree in geology and geophysics. After completing his master's degree in 1956, he started a PhD program at Harvard at the History of Science Chair founded by George Sarton, where many famous professors taught at the time. In his doctoral courses, which were very productive, he had the chance to take courses from world-renowned professors. He took Islamic thought courses from H. A. R. Gibb (1895-1971), history of science courses from George Sarton (1884-1956) and I. Bernard Cohen (1914-2003), and history of theology and philosophy courses from Harry A. Wolfson (1887-1974). During his studies, he met Aydın Sayılı (1913-1993), who had come back to Turkey to do research. Sayılı was the first scholar from Turkey to be sent to Harvard for a PhD in the history of science and the first PhD in this field in 1942. Nasr continued his contact with Aydın Sayılı from time to time in Turkey.

Although Nasr wanted to work with George Sarton as his doctoral thesis advisor, upon Sarton's death in 1956, he successfully submitted his doctoral thesis, *Conceptions of Natura in Islamic Thought* in 1958 under the joint supervision of I. Bernard Cohen, H. A. R. Gibb and Harry A. Wolfson. This work was later revised and published in 1964 as *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*. During this highly successful and productive period at Harvard, he became the assistant of Richard N. Freye (1920-2014), the Aga Khan Professor of Iranian Studies at Harvard University. At the same time, he published his first book, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1968). In this work, he mainly tried to introduce the concept of "Islamic Science" into the literature. During this period, he traveled to many countries in Europe, met important names and conducted research. All these expanded his intellectual development and horizons of thought. In this process, he constantly emphasised that his travels to France, Spain and Morocco and the friendships and spiritual experiences he gained here were very important in his life. Meeting names such as Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998), Titus Burckhardt (1908-1984), Marco Pallis (1895-1989), Martin Lings (1909-2005) and Henry Corbin (1903-1978) in France caused him to see this country as a special place in his life. Spain, on the other hand, became a place where he felt that the spirit of Andalusia was still alive and he wanted to travel constantly. In Morocco, his initiation into the Sufi school led by Sheikh Ahmed al-Alawi, a branch of the Shazeliya order, in 1958 led to a spiritual closeness to this region (Nasr, 2007, p. 34-40). Thus, his years of graduate studies at Harvard University were highly influential in shaping Nasr's thoughts and fully embracing the ideas of the Traditionalist school.

Back to Iran (1958)

Nasr returned to Iran in 1958 and started working at Tehran University. In addition to his teaching activities, he served as a dean, and from 1968-72 he was the vice-rector of this university. Among his many students in Tehran were William Chittick (b. 1943) and the Japanese woman scientist Sachiko Murata (b. 1943). While in his home country, he translated his doctoral thesis into Persian, which was awarded the Royal Prize. Although Nasr was well-versed in Eastern and Western thought, he felt that he was lacking in the sciences taught in his traditional education, so he studied for ten years in Iran with madrasa scholars. Thus, he became a world-renowned teacher and at the same time a student who took lessons from very important names. In madrasas in the cities of Tehran, Qom and Qazvin, he mainly studied Arabic, Islamic

law, Islamic philosophy and natural sciences. Among his teachers were his father's close friend Seyyid Muhammad Kazim Asrar, Allāme Husain Tabatabaī and Seyyid Abū al-Hasan Qazvinī.

It was during this period that Nasr began to receive invitations from universities in many countries to give lectures. In 1962 and 1965, he lectured on the history of science at Harvard University, where he had earned his doctorate. He was invited to give short seminars at Princeton University and the University of Utah. In the 1964-65 academic year, he lectured at the Aga Khan Department of Islamic Studies at the American University of Beirut.

While conducting intensive scientific studies at home and abroad, he was appointed by the Shah as the rector of Arya Mehr University of Science and Technology in 1972. He served in this position until 1975, when he fell ill. Nasr took part in the "Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy" (Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy/Encümen-i Shahanshahi-i Felsefe-i İran), commonly known as the "Imperial Academy", which was established in 1973 under the patronage of the Queen, and contributed to the publication of its journal *Sophia*.[2] In addition to Nasr, H. Giben, Toshihiko Izutsu, H. Smith, William Chittick, M. Morteza, C. Ashtiyani, Hairi Yazdi and others made important contributions to the work of the Academy. Nasr, too, carried out very important work in this institution, which he called the most important project of my life.

Especially his studies on Suhrawardī and Mollā Sadrā with Henry Corbin at this institution attracted much attention. During this period, he expanded his knowledge by studying Japanese aesthetics and Far Eastern philosophy with Toshihiko Izutsu. Nasr, who was in contact with many countries of the world during his academic career in Iran, started to visit Turkey from the end of the 1960s and to participate in scientific activities such as conferences and panels. Among the people he met in Turkey were Aydın Sayılı (1913-1993), whom he met at Harvard, as well as well-known scholars such as Zeki Velidi Togan (1890-1970), Süheyl Ünver (1898-1986), Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı (1900-1982), Ahmet Ateş (1917-1966), Nuri Arlasez (1910-2000) and Tahsin Yazıcı (1922-2002).

One of Nasr's activities during this period was to be the first Muslim and even the first Eastern thinker to be invited to the Gifford Conference in 1981, which had been held since 1889. Nasr participated in the conference on "On the Theology of Nature" in Scotland, to which very important names such as Heisenberg, Paul Tillich, A. Toynbee, A. N. Whitehead were invited, and evaluated the conference subject from the Traditionalist point of view. His most famous work, *Knowledge and the Sacred* is based on the texts he presented at this conference.

Exile to the West (January 6, 1979-)

Nasr worked in Iran as a lecturer, authored books, worked at the Academy and carried out scholarly activities until the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. He also took part in the Pahlavi Foundation, which the Queen established in 1970 for education, training and cultural activities, and worked under her patronage by being appointed as the head of her private office. Two weeks before the revolution, Nasr went to England on assignment, but due to the unrest in his country, he was called by Queen Shahbanu Farah Pahlavi and advised to stay abroad for a while longer. After the Iranian-Islamic Revolution in 1979, his self-imposed exile to the West began.

[2] Today, this Academy continues its activities under the name of "Institute for Philosophical Research".

In search of work, he went to the United States and worked briefly at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Utah (March 1979). He then moved to Temple University in Philadelphia, where he worked from 1979 to 1984. From 1984 onwards, he taught for a long time in the field of Islamic Studies at George Washington University, where he would last serve. Especially at his last university, he trained many students. Under Nasr's supervision, well-known names such as Zailan Moris from Malaysia, Walid al-Ansari from Egypt and İbrahim Kalın from Turkey received their PhDs. Nasr was the first Muslim scholar to receive the "Templeton Religion and Science Course" award in 1999.

The Main Philosophical Views of Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Tradition and Traditionalism

Traditionalism is a school that emerged in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century and whose founder is considered to be René Guénon. Although there is no unity in the definition of Tradition among the thinkers belonging to this school, there is a consensus that the Tradition in daily use and the Tradition in the use of the Traditionalist school are completely different from each other. In this sense, Tradition is not the transmission of customs, habits or thought motifs between generations; it is a set of principles that have descended from the sky and are identified with a manifestation of the divine (Nasr, 1984, p. 89). Tradition is essentially sacred and divine.[3]

Nasr explains this distinction as follows: A traditionalist and a Traditionalist are very different from each other. While a traditionalist is a person who adheres to his customs, traditions, customs and traditions, a Traditionalist is a person who adheres to the sacred, revelation and religion. Again, a traditionalist is a person who is not based on any accurate information and has a tendency to long for the past. A Traditionalist, on the other hand, is someone who defends Tradition, who does not rely on blind faith or simple slogans and rhetoric, who knows the West, and who is able to respond to the problems of the modern age from an Islamic perspective. Traditionalists put forward views in many fields from philosophy to art, from architecture to literature, and make a holistic defense of Tradition. Traditionalists are a class of scholars who know the West well without being slaves of the West (Nasr, 1989, p. 328). Within the Traditionalist school, Tradition is often used to mean eternal wisdom, metaphysics and *al-dīn* (Nasr, 1984, p. 165). The source of Tradition is the Truth, the sacred, *al-dīn*. According to Nasr, the sacred as an ontological reality is like blood circulating in a vein (Nasr, 2012, p. 89).

According to the Traditionalist school, everything that has its origin in the heavenly/revelation is Tradition. If Revelation is the root of a tree, its trunk and branches constitute Tradition. Tradition is the totality of revealed truth (Nasr, 1984, p. 25). Tradition is the manifestation of God, the source of eternal wisdom. Tradition is the application of the principles of revelation, both celestial and divine in source, in different times and places. Tradition, which has a transhuman character and is handed down from generation to generation, manifests itself mostly in the fields of art, literature, philosophy, architecture, mysticism, etc. It

[3] According to the Greek-born Traditionalist thinker Marco Pallis (1895-1989), who traveled to the Himalayas to study Buddhist philosophy and wrote *Peaks and Lamas* (1942), wherever there is a complete Tradition, there is the presence of a revelation and the transmission of Tradition through generations (*initiatic*). See. (Pallis, 2007, p. 8).

manifests itself in worship, culture and symbols. In this sense, Tradition is the chain that connects civilisation to revelation (Northbourne, 2003, p. 35).

According to the Traditionalist school, there is actually only one Tradition. Nasr describes this Tradition with different names such as "Ancient Tradition" and "hanif religion". Other traditions are worldly manifestations of this Ancient Tradition. In this context, Tradition and Truth are used interchangeably. He defines the transcendent, divine revelation in the vertical dimension as "Absolute Truth", and its horizontal manifestation in the form of culture, civilisation, art, etc. as "Relative Truth". In this sense, religions such as Christianity and Judaism are special manifestations of the Absolute Truth. The language in which God speaks is sacred. According to Guénon, human history has been illuminated by divine revelation and divine light throughout history. This light has manifested itself as Tradition and it has always existed and will always exist. Transcendent wisdom has always existed and will continue to exist in every authentic Tradition (Nasr, 1995c, p. 18).

Nasr takes an optimistic approach to this issue by stating that Tradition (religion) will always exist in the life of society until the end of history. Even if its influence in the social sphere diminishes, the Tradition will never disappear because it is based on a divine foundation. The revelation aspect of religion is the transcendental dimension; the interpreted, continuity aspect of Tradition is the horizontal dimension (Nasr, 1984, p. 15). The transcendent dimension is absolute; all religions that include orthodoxy, that is, a true belief, are relative absolutes. Unlike other religions, Islam, the last revelation, is a Tradition with a deep spiritual dimension and preservation (Nasr, 1996, p. 50).

According to Nasr, Islam is the greatest and last revelation in human history. It is the last of the traditions and is therefore a return to the religion of fıtrat (*al-dîn al-hanif*) and a synthesis of the religions that came before it (Nasr, 1988b, p. 83). Islam is the heir, not the denier, of the truths of other traditions. In this sense, it is the summation of revelations. That is why most Western Traditionalists have embraced Islam. Titus Burckhardt (İbrahim İzzeddin), Michel Valsan (Mustafa Valsan), Frithjof Schuon (Sheikh İsa Nureddin), Martin Lings (Abu Bakr Siraceddin), Lord Northbourne (Sidi Noah) are examples of Traditionalists, most of whom converted to Islam through Sufism.

Basic Concepts Related to Tradition

The Traditionalist school frequently uses a number of terms and concepts that are unique to them. One of these concepts is *philosophia perennnis*.[4] Philosophia perennis, which translates as "eternal wisdom" in English, is expressed in other languages with different words such as *lex Aeterna, Hagia Sophia, al-Dînü'l-Haqq, Akaliko Dhammo, Sanătana Dharma, al-Hikmetü'l-hâlide, al-Hikmetü'l-lâdüniyye,* and *câvidân-ı hired*. Philosophia perennis refers to the eternal and eternal Truth at the heart of all Traditions. Philosophia perennis is based on universal metaphysics with its application to fields such as metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, art, poetry and music. Due to the frequent use of this term by the Traditionalist school, this school is also called the "Philosophia Perennis School". This school believes that

[4] Although Aldox Huxley, in his *Perennial Philosophy* (1945), claims that the concept of *Philosophia Perennis* first appeared in a letter Leibniz wrote to Remond in 1714, Nasr disagrees with this view. According to him, this phrase was first used in the sense of eternal wisdom in the work *De prenni philosophia* by Agostino Steuco (1497-1548), a Renaissance thinker.

there is a Primordial Tradition, received through direct revelation at a time when heaven and earth were yet one, which constituted the first and original spiritual intellectual heritage of man. All religions and traditions have emerged from this Original Tradition on which they are based. Every Tradition is a reflection of the Original Tradition.

Another concept closely related to Philosophia Perennis is *Sophia Perennis*. In the understanding of Sophia Perennis as the Ancient Tradition, there is really only one Sophia Perennis; the others are worldly manifestations of the Ancient Tradition. Philosophia Perennis is the intellectual aspect of Truth; Sophia Perennis is the embodiment of Truth.

One of the basic concepts related to Tradition is *Religio Cordis*. This concept, which means going from the shell to the core, is frequently used in the circle-center symbolism of the Traditionalists. In this metaphor, the core represents the religion at the root, the religion of the heart. The closer we are to the center of the circle, the more we are surrounded by Tradition. Traditionalists describe this essence with the concept of *Scientia Sacra* (Sacred Knowledge). In fact, Scientia Sacra is nothing other than what is at the core of every revelation and the center of the circle that encompasses and defines Tradition. This knowledge is not attained through reasoning, but only through intellectual intuition (*ilm al-huzūrī*) (Nasr, 2012, p. 141).[5]

Scientia Sacra, properly understood as the ultimate knowledge of Truth, is nothing but metaphysics. Nasr especially emphasises that metaphysics has nothing to do with philosophy but is a discipline in its own right. He states that the prefix "meta" (transcendental) in the name of metaphysics causes misunderstandings and does not indicate immanent existence, whereas metaphysics encompasses the principles of all sciences, and that thinking of metaphysics as a branch of philosophy also limits it (Nasr, 2012, p. 143). According to him, metaphysics is "the knowledge of Truth, of the beginning and end of all things, of the Absolute and what is relative in its light.[6] Metaphysics is as clear and precise as mathematics. Metaphysics is a monotheistic (*tawhiid*) knowledge at the heart of all true religions (Nasr, 1995a, p. 8).

Within the Traditionalist school, the concept of *Homo Islamicus*, which Nasr in particular frequently uses in his works, defines the Traditionalist human being. The opposite of this concept is *Homo Promethean* (Promethean Man), which represents the Renaissance man who is in rebellion against Heaven, anthropomorphist, and kills the divinity. Promethean Man defines the unruly, modernist man who wants to change everything. The characteristic of this person is that he closes himself to the Truth, dulls his abilities to realise spiritual truths and interprets the Truth in the postmodern style as everyone's own subjective truths.

Homo Islamicus is both Allah's servant and His vicegerent on earth. He is the equal of creation. He is accountable to God for his actions and is the overseer and protector of the earth, provided that he sees himself as the central earthly being created in "divine form" (a being in the image of God who lives in this world but is created for eternity) (Nasr, 2012, p. 172; 1995d, p. 82; 1984, p. 113).

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[5] To indicate the difference between *ilm al-husūlī*, which characterises acquired knowledge, and *ilm al-huzūrī*, which characterises unmediated knowledge given to the ready, examples of the former being merely knowledgeable about love and the latter being in love are often given.

[6] According to Nasr, Aristotle's counting metaphysics as a branch of philosophy was an unfortunate experiment. By doing so, doubts arose in philosophy and metaphysics lost credibility. According to him, philosophy arises from reason (raison), which is a purely individual ability, whereas metaphysics arises from mere perception (intellect). Religion, on the other hand, expresses metaphysical and universal truths in a dogmatic language. See. (Schuon, 2010, p. 16; 1988, p. 103, 105).

A final concept often used by the Traditionalist school is orthodoxy, which refers to strict adherence to an authentic faith. In order for a Tradition (religion) to have orthodoxy, it must have an absolute teaching and a spirituality with theory and practice. This raises the issue of how to distinguish between what is authentic and authentic and what is superstition and *bid'ah*. To the question of whether there is superstition, etc. outside of religion (revelation) within the Eternal Wisdom (Philosophia Perennis), Guénon replied, "Truth does not change, non-religious things change. The transmission of evil in history is incidental. The non-religious view from the traditional essence undergoes change and becomes superstition." (Guénon, 2010, p. 96). According to him, the preservation of Tradition is only possible through the proper interpretation of the Bible and other things, in accordance with the principles of the Book. The frequent use of such terms and concepts by the Traditionalist school is actually to better characterise and explain the Absolute Truth and the Original Tradition (eternal religion).

Nasr's Criticisms of the Changes in Western Thought

Traditionalist thinkers severely criticised the Renaissance and the processes of change that followed, which they saw as a sharp departure and deviation from religion, metaphysics and human nature. Almost all of these thinkers see the Renaissance as a milestone as a deviation from Tradition. Nasr, like these thinkers, sees the Renaissance as the beginning of the deviation, while Guénon sees it as the end.

Traditionalist thinkers have interesting stories and analogies about the change between the pre-Renaissance period and the post-Renaissance period. Nasr's story on this subject is interesting: "In the past, people did not realise that they were living in Tradition. With Modernism, this difference became apparent. We can explain this with the following story: Baby fish ask their mother about the nature of water, which they have heard much about but have not seen and whose qualities have not been explained to them. The mother fish says that when she finds something that is not water, she will explain the nature of water to them." According to him, pre-modern man was like the baby fish in the Sufi parable. Pre-modern people lived in worlds that were saturated with what we now call Tradition. They did not have a separate concept called Tradition, which needs to be defined and explained in the modern world. They were familiar with revelation, wisdom and the sacred... In the pre-modern period when Tradition was dominant, nature was viewed as sacred and there was a harmony between man, things and nature (Nasr, 2012, p. 76).

Nasr sees the Renaissance (1500-1700) as the turning point of this change in Europe. However, there are a number of thinkers and events that prepared this process. Foremost among these is William of Occam, who he believes paved the way for the attack on reason and skepticism in the fourteenth century. Therefore, according to Nasr, there are four main stages of the break with Tradition in Western thought. These are: a. William of Occam, b. Descartes' philosophy, c. Kant's philosophy, d. Renaissance thought.

The Pioneer of the Break with Tradition: William of Occam. According to Nasr, the nominalist philosophy of William of Occam (1285-1347), which in a sense concluded the subject of universals, separated the paths of theology and reason and reduced human knowledge to empirical data. According to William of Occam's nominalist interpretation of universals, universal concepts do not have any reality. These concepts are just a naming and a sign. Although this understanding led to a development in the sciences and mathematical fields that emphasised symbolic description, it dealt a heavy blow to metaphysics. Because the reality of universal concepts was not accepted, all religious discussions became symbolic. After this, agnosticism emerged in the fields of theology and philosophy. Nominalism led to the secularisation (desacralisation) of knowledge by excluding metaphysics and faith (Nasr, 1995c, p. 132-134).[7]

William of Occam and the Occamites who followed him created an atmosphere of philosophical doubt, nominalist theology replaced philosophy, and interest in metaphysics began to fade (Nasr, 1988a, p. 77). The atmosphere of doubt created by nominalist philosophy led to the Renaissance in the fourteenth century and lasted until the Age of Scientific Revolution and Copernicus in the seventeenth century. Therefore, according to Nasr, nominalism marks the final stage of the intellect's departure from certain knowledge.

Descartes' Philosophy Based on the Subject. René Descartes (1596-1650), who is considered the founder of modern philosophy, established a philosophy based on the subject (cogito) instead of acting from the object, and adopted an approach that wanted to apply rational knowledge to every field. Descartes' cogito considered the consciousness of his own limited self as the measure of existence (Nasr, 1984, p. 110). According to Nasr, this Cartesian philosophy opened by Descartes is the root cause of the dilemmas in the Western understanding of science. Modern science after Descartes developed in a unidirectional and material dimension from the seventeenth century onwards. According to him, modern Western (secular) science caused an epistemic and ontological crisis in Western thought due to its single and pure content, its reliance on a single method, its claim to absolute objectivity, its rejection of reality beyond experiment and observation, its denial of different ways of knowing and spirituality.

Nasr makes an interesting distinction between reason and intellect here and emphasises that the power of the intellect is only to explain by stating that the intellect is the faculty that can penetrate the intelligible. In this context, he draws attention to the fact that the Cartesian intellect (reason), which was dominant in the West after Descartes, would have a limited knowledge, and that in this process, reason was reduced to reason (rationality/Cartesian intellect) (Nasr, 2012, p. 65-66).

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[7] Ernest Renan ironically states that "Eons, jinns, sefirot, demiurges, demiurges, metatrons, and the like have been extinct since the merciless Occam caused the gods to flee with his Scholastic axiom, 'Possibilities should not be multiplied without necessity. See. (Renan, 2021, p. 98).

Kant's Limitation of Knowledge to the Phenomenal Domain. Nasr continues his criticism of Western thought with Enlightenment philosophers and Kant. According to him, with the Enlightenment, human beings lost the sacred and were regarded as mere piles of flesh and bones. In the Age of Enlightenment, religion was corroded, the Divine Principle was distanced from the humanism, deism, agnosticism and atheism, and life became secularised.[8] In this process, the people who wrote Encyclopedia articles for the dissemination of knowledge to the public were also among Nasr's targets. According to him, with the Encyclopedists, the idea of human beings without transcendental aspects spread to the public and reality was reduced to utility.

Nasr summarises these changes and transformations in Western thought in six points:

First, the secular understanding of the universe ignored the traces of the sacred in nature and opposed the idea of the 'purpose' of the universe.

Secondly, since modern philosophy and science claimed that they could explain everything rationally and scientifically, they tried to construct the universe as a machine. Therefore, they concluded that the methods of analysis and measurement of physics could explain the universe.

Third, empiricism and rationalism were the only ways to reach the Truth.

Fourth, as a result of Cartesian dualism, a clear distinction emerged between the known object and the knowing subject, and as a result of this understanding, man became epistemologically and spiritually alienated from his natural environment.

Fifth, man was conceived as a 'Promethean man' as the measure of all things.

Sixth and last, nature was conceived as an object to be exploited as a source of power. This new understanding has overthrown the classical understanding of the cosmos and has led to environmental crises and nuclear wars (Kalın, 2009, p. 138-139).

Nasr reminds us of God's name "al-Muhīt" (the All-encompassing) and states that the main cause of the environmental crisis and ecological problems is the rejection of God as the true All-encompassing God (Nasr, 1995a, p. 177). According to him, in order to solve environmental problems, it is necessary to completely change our way of life and stand against the negativities of modernism.

These criticisms of Western thought, shaped by Nasr's profound interpretations, are actually intended to reveal the footprints of the road to modernism. According to him, this whole process prepared the way for the arrival of modernism. Nasr and other Traditionalists target modernism and modernist thinkers. For this reason, the Traditionalist school is even seen as a kind of anti-modernist movement.

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[8] For this reason, Guénon preferred the term "Tradition" instead of "religion", which was vulgarized and reduced to a pejorative meaning with the Renaissance.

Rebellion against God: Renaissance Thought. In Nasr's criticism of Western thought, the Renaissance thought has the highest share. For this reason, we do not take the change in the West chronologically, and we consider the Renaissance, which is seen as the cause of all developments, last. According to Nasr, the Renaissance, which is seen as the beginning of material progress in the West, is actually a mental and spiritual regression. The Renaissance and the subsequent Reformation declared war on the sacred and rebelled against God. The Renaissance initiated a radical secularisation of man and knowledge, resulting in humanism. The Renaissance, which expressed the cultural resurgence of the Latins against the military power of the Teutons in the West, was not a rebirth, but in fact the intellectual death of many things (Nasr, 2012, p. 41).

Nasr criticises this movement, which is considered a milestone in Western thought because it symbolises the liberation of man and the birth of modern science and art. According to him, the "painter-engineer" class that emerged in Italy with the Renaissance was instrumental in the emergence of the idea of a mechanical universe by challenging religion. The Renaissance is nothing but a resurrection of the Promethean and Titanic spirit (Nasr, 2002b, p. 136).

Nasr's Criticisms of Modernism and Other Movements

Nasr sees modernism, which has been achieved as a result of the process of change in the Western world, as the biggest problem for both the West and the Islamic world, and even for the whole humanity. According to him, four currents stand out in today's Islamic world that are influenced by the intellectual development in the West: fundamentalism, secularism, Mahdist/ messianic movements and modernism:

1. *Fundamentalism*: This movement, which is based on a literal and narrow interpretation of the Bible, first emerged in the early twentieth century in the United States by Protestant evangelicals as a reaction to the secular way of life with the idea that modern science and biblical interpretations could not be reconciled.[9] Nasr finds it strange that this Christian movement has also affected the Islamic world and sees fundamentalism as a movement that interprets religion ideologically (Nasr, 1984, p. 94). According to him, such movements destroy the sacred and spirituality in religion and make it look like a man-made ideology. However, the rival of religions should be religions. Throughout history, Islam has demonstrated its superiority over religions such as Christianity and Judaism through theological methods.

However, those who interpret religion ideologically have turned it into an ideological movement, a product of the Age of Enlightenment. Despite these criticisms, Nasr finds the efforts for the revival of Islam in the Islamic world important but draws attention to the fact that this creates a Pan-Islamist, *Salafist*, ideological and artificial tradition. He also finds the fundamentalist Salafist movements' criticism and distancing of Sufism because they think that it leads Muslims to laziness, their criticism of philosophy, which they see as the product of Ancient Greece (the science of the ancients/*ulūm al-awāil*), and their retrospective approach aiming to return to *Asr al-Saḥadat* unrealistic. He gives examples from the Islamic world such

[9] The emergence of Fundamentalism as a movement in the West can be traced to the 12-volume *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, edited by evangelical fundamentalists Reuben Archer Torrey (1856-1928) and Amzi Dixon (1854-1925) and written by 64 authors between 1910 and 1915: edited by 64 authors between 1910 and 1915. The authors in the book mainly expressed their reactions to modernity, the secular way of life, modernist interpretations of religion, the theory of evolution, and the thesis that modern science and the Bible can be reconciled.

as Ikhwân-ı Müslimin, Mawdudî and Jamaat-i Islam and Said Nursi as examples of this trend (Nasr, 1984, p. 96-97).

2. *Secularism*: Nasr claims that movements in the history of Western thought such as progressivism, historicism, evolutionism, scientism, historicism, existentialism, psychologism and materialism are all the result of secularism. Islam does not give Caesar the right of Caesar in the motto "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto Jesus the things that are Jesus". This is because religion integrates world affairs within the framework of the principle of tawhid. According to him, secularism has been in constant struggle with religion, challenging it since the Renaissance.

3. *Mahdist/messianic movements*: According to Nasr, Mahdist movements have always existed throughout history. These currents are revolutionary currents that are kept in the refrigerator in the Islamic world and put on display from time to time. Especially as the attacks on the Islamic world from the West increase, this trend is on the rise (Nasr, 1984, p. 94-95).

4. *Modernism*: The term modern refers to the new economic, social and political situation that began with the Renaissance in Europe. Although modernism defines itself in positive terms such as modernity and the rediscovery of nature, according to Nasr, the opposite is the case.

Nasr sees modernism as the opposite of Tradition, a deviation and break from it, reducing everything to the human level, severing ties with the divine and transcendent, and the source of the world's problems. According to him, modernism, which began with the Renaissance, is the most fanatical, dogmatic and extreme ideology in the history of the world. Modernism is a secular movement that makes humanity unhappy, despairing, deceiving and creating false happiness and distancing humanity from the sacred. Modernism, a slippery and slippery concept, has replaced the Absolute Truth with relative truth.

Nasr finds the criticisms of modernism in the Islamic world weak and insufficient because they are made in a fideistic and voluntarist manner (Nasr, 1984, p. 322). However, he states that modernist currents, like fundamentalism, are also effective in the Islamic world and that these currents seek a synthesis with Western thought and criticises these currents severely. Especially within the Islamic modernism movement, he finds the apologetic writings and thoughts of Islamic modernists such as Afghani, Seyyed Ahmad Khan, Tahawi and Amir Ali unacceptable (Nasr, 1988b, p. 16).

In addition, the Traditionalist school is constantly criticised as a modern movement. Nasr responds to those who claim that Tradition is also in modernism by saying, "Tradition emanates from Heaven; modernism emanates from the individual. In fact, the Traditionalists are not against the new, they are against modern epistemology and modern science, and against the new destroying nature and corrupting human nature. Modernism creates false prophets with movements such as positivism (Comte), materialism (Marx), psychoanalysis (Freud), progressivism (Spencer) and these new discourses disconnect humanity from revelation.

In this context, Nasr emphasises anthropocentrism, unprincipledness, reductionism, progressivism and evolutionism of modernism:

1. *Anthropocentrism (Renaissance)*: The Renaissance did not liberate man; on the contrary, it enslaved him. The self-centered character of man destroyed nature and the universe. In this process, in which the charm of nature was disrupted, man, who had previously been in

harmony with nature and the Sky, was replaced by the Promethean man, who saw himself as the authority over everything and tried to subjugate nature.

2. *Unprincipledness (loss of center)*: Nasr sees the settlement of sophistic, septic, modernist and postmodern thought with the shift from the God-centered conception of the universe to the human-centered conception as unprincipled.

3. *Reductionism (Agnosticism)*: Again, according to Nasr, harmful movements for humanity such as naturalism, socialism, skepticism and agnosticism, especially evolutionism and humanism, are products of modernism. Contemporary Western thought is reductionist in almost every field. Freud and his psychoanalysis can be given as an example. Freud's assertion that the soul is not immortal, his reduction of the soul to the ego, and his claim that human actions are caused by subconscious forces are all aimed at eliminating human moral responsibility (Nasr, 1995b, p. 239).

4. Overconfidence in progress and the idea of evolution that this understanding brings forth: According to Nasr, the ultimate destination of *progressivism* is secularism. Again, a bad gift of progressivism is the idea of *evolution*. For him, evolution is to divinize the historical process, to transfer the power of creation from the transcendent divinity to the historical process. Therefore, the opium of the peoples is not divine religions, but the idea of evolution and progress, which promises us that we will become like the gods (Nasr, 1995c, p. 145). According to Nasr, the most harmful of modernist movements is Darwinism.[10] Darwinism is the craziest example of modernism, a theory that still confuses and confuses people. Nasr gives the theory of evolution as an example of the presuppositional, fashionable and ideological aspect of science (Nasr, 1988a, p. 163). According to him, evolution is not a view with scientific objectivity, but a worldview and a conception of existence like metaphysical, physicalist and mythological theories that try to explain the universe.

Nasr's distinction between Tradition and Traditionalism and modernism can be summarised as follows:

- Tradition is a movement that is divine, that leads to the sacred, that elevates; modernism, on the other hand, is a movement that is humanistic, that takes away from sacred values, that degrades human beings.

- While tradition is reconciled with religion and religious life, modernism is disconnected from the sacred.

- While tradition is God-centered, modernism is human-centered.

- While tradition explains everything within the framework of the principle of tawhid, modernism is unprincipled.

- While tradition adopts a hierarchical view of existence, modernism is reductionist.

- While sacred knowledge is valuable and important in tradition, in modernism it is only secular knowledge that is valuable.

- While the question "why?" is more important in tradition, the question "how?" is important in modernism.

[10] In this context, Nasr also criticises Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) for evolutionism.

- In tradition, the view of man, things, nature, science and technology is humble and respectful; in modernism it is arrogant

- Tradition is based on metaphysical principles; modernism has no such concerns.

- While traditionalism is not based on pure utility, modernism is based on pure utility.

- While traditionalism does not sanctify science by practicing scientism, modernism cannot refrain from practicing scientism.

- Tradition pursues the universal, the Truth; modernism pursues the particular, the real, the quantitative.

- While traditionalism is based on ancient eternal wisdom (philosophia perennis), modernism is based on the scientific revolutions of the seventeenth century.

As a result, modernism has led to secular life, moral degeneration, environmental crisis, deism, agnosticism, atheism, etc. Modernism is anti-traditional, Promethean philosophy and modern thinkers are sophists like Protagoras.

Another movement criticised along with modernism is the modernist movements influenced by the West and the so-called traditionalist movements in the West. While Nasr is moderate in this regard, Guénon, a true idol-breaker and uncompromising in his attitude of clearing the ground, is stricter.[11] For him, theosophy, especially in the sense of the Theosophical Society of Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891) and Annie Besant (1847-1933), various kinds of spiritualism, and Western-influenced movements such as the Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj in India have nothing to do with Traditionalism (Nasr, 2012, p. 114).

Conclusion

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the leading figure of the Traditionalist school, has influenced many people working on Islamic thought in the East and West with his knowledge of Eastern and Western thought, unifying, peaceful and dialogical characteristics. The fact that almost all of the Traditionalists, with the exception of Nasr, were Westerners, and that they wrote their works in Western languages, made it possible for the West to recognise Eastern religions, philosophies and metaphysics, especially Islam.

Throughout his life, Nasr tried to stay away from ideological, temporary and destructive ideas. Nasr, who was a very prolific writer, dealt with everything from art to architecture, science to philosophy, religion to literature from the perspective of Tradition. He argued that there is such a thing as Truth and that it can be obtained through the intellect enlightened by divine revelation and through knowledge.

Nasr states that Western people are looking for a way out of the crisis they are experiencing and that he has spent a lifetime in books, articles, conferences, trainings, etc. to show this path. In his book, *Religion of the Heart*, which he wrote after the September 11 attack,

[11] A. K. Coomaraswamy, Schuon, and especially Guénon have also criticised philosophy in order to clear the ground of metaphysics and prevent a corruption or deviation that could lead to a confusion between sacred knowledge and Tradition/Metaphysics through disrespectful philosophy. Nasr and other Traditionalists characterise modern Western philosophy as misophia (love of falsehood) or "anti-philosophy". Nasr states that the German philosopher Hermann Türck (1856-1933) was the first to use the term "misosophy" in the sense of hating wisdom instead of loving it. See. (Nasr, 2012, p. 67, 97)

he characterises those who believe in one God as believers and those who do not as infidels, without making any distinction between religion, sect, etc. (Nasr, 2002a).

According to Nasr, the main problems facing Islam today are the invasion of secularist worldview and philosophy, the secular view of nature, science and technology, the increase in environmental problems in parallel with the prevalence of modern technology, the need for religious pluralism and a deep understanding of other religions, the defense of religion against exclusionary secular Christianity, discovering the authenticity of Islamic art and architecture and applying it to the present day, and establishing a correct relationship between religion and science. He attaches great importance to the Islamic Tradition in solving all these problems. In this context, Nasr summarises what needs to be done today to "rediscover the intellectual Tradition" as follows:

1. To emphasise the profound dimension of Islam: For this purpose, Islam should not be interpreted in an ideological way, as modernists do, but should be considered in parallel with other divine religions.

2. Explaining the traditional wisdom of Islam in contemporary language and reformulating this accumulation in a language understandable by contemporaries: The unearthing of this Islamic heritage, which has long been neglected and inaccessible due to the lack of qualified personnel, is crucial not only for Tradition but also for scientific developments.

3. Answering the problems caused by the works of the Orientalists: The problems are not only those posed by the Orientalists, but also those within the Islamic community, of various persuasions.

4. Standing up to the challenges of modernism.

5. Promote rapprochement between different Muslim groups.

6. Dialog between Islam and other religions (Nasr, 1988b, p. 56).

7. Developments in the natural sciences, scientific discoveries, inventions, theories, etc. are very important. These should be followed closely, but the results obtained should be interpreted from a metaphysical and traditional point of view. According to him, it is necessary to interpret scientific discoveries and discoveries on the axis of "Islamic science" different from the Cartesian dualist understanding of the West and to create a new metaphysics of nature.

Criticising the process of Western thought since the Renaissance and describing himself as a follower of eternal wisdom, Nasr argues that the task of the modern Western world is to re-evaluate its own intellectual and philosophical heritage in the light of Tradition.[12] According to him, the Tradition, which carries the eternal wisdom that has always existed throughout the ages, is lost to modern man. What needs to be done in this last hour of history is to rediscover the Tradition and reaffirm the sacred nature of knowledge. And the way to do this lies in acquiring pleasure wisdom (sapiential knowledge) and re-establishing the relationship between knowledge and the sacred.

[12] It is not only the Traditionalist school that criticises the West's rationalism, scientism and modernism. Non-Traditionalists such as Jacques Ellul (1912-1994), Ivan Illich (1926-2002) and Theodore Roszak (1933-2011) have also criticised the West severely.

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