

# Knowledge, Culture, and Contemporary Muslim Civilization: Factors Caused to Downstanding and Significance Efforts to be Taken

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study is to describe knowledge, culture, and contemporary Muslim civilization. The results of library research find that the achievements of the golden age of Islamic civilization are the culmination point of Islamic progress to date. There are various reasons for the waning of Muslim culture and civilization. For example, the death of scientific tradition in the Muslim world, the feeling of satisfaction of Muslims today with the achievements of earlier Islamic thinkers, so that they no longer feel the need to do ijthab. The efforts needed to rebuild a high civilization can only be initiated, if the Muslim community has high intentions and enthusiasm to seek and develop knowledge based on a strong religious commitment; carry out assimilation and acculturation; have an open attitude to cooperate with all parties in the field of culture; and support from the government through political policies to develop culture.*

**Keywords:** Knowledge, culture, and Islamic civilization.

## A. Introduction

The presence of Islam in the modern world raises many big problems, both for Islam itself and for the existing modern world (Cassiem, 2017). Islam as a religion continues to spread and develop to all corners of the world, gaining new followers, gaining a growing cultural face, and of course increasing the richness of the discourse of civilization along with the increasing area and variety of people who accept Islam (Mohd Azlan et al., 2020).

However, in the midst of the continued development of Islam as a religion embraced by the world community, and currently placing it as the second largest religion in the world after Christianity, there are major anomalies and problems facing it (Nor et al., 2018). The problem is the low scientific ethos among Muslims

(Zuhdi, 2018), and at the same time the presence of the West as the ruler of science and technology (Platteau, 2008).

Due to the low scientific ethos, it seems that Muslims are isolated from the global scientific world (Adinugraha, 2021). This is seen as an irony, because in classical times, for about six centuries, the Ummah was at the forefront of the development of science and technology, so that it had a civilization that supremacy of the world, and the Islamic world became a mecca for the whole world in terms of the development of science and technology (Wood, 2011).

In another context, the presence of the West as the ruler of science and technology has serious implications for Muslims (Sholehuddin et al., 2021), because science and technology developed in the West are secular in nature, where religion is placed within the outer framework of the development of science and technology (Adinugraha, Kumala, et al., 2021). Because of his secularism, then it gives rise to negative cultural excesses such as secularism, materialism, hedonism, individualism, consumerism, the destruction of family order and morality, promiscuity, and so on (Kosim, 2008). Although, of course this still requires in-depth study, do these negative excesses really arise as a result of secularism? Because in some respects, secularism in the West is seen as quite successful with its various scientific and technological achievements, and at the same time, still able to provide space for religious development. Meanwhile, in some Muslim areas, such as what happened in Turkey, the attempt to implement secularism is seen as unsuccessful, in fact it is caused by the lack of seriousness of Muslims in implementing secularism in the arena of state life (Arif, 2021).

Some of these phenomena are of course worthy of contemplation by Muslims, as a provision for self-organization efforts in terms of reviving the scientific ethos as experienced in the classical period (Ernst & Kamrad, 2000). There is hope, with this scientific ethos, the development of the distribution area and the Muslim community can be accompanied by the rate of development of science and technology (Kulikov, 2020), so that the Islamic community is at least able to become a partner of civilization for the West (International Crisis Group, 2001), moreover to sow hope, science and technology in Muslims able to compete with the West in terms of development.

## **B. Discussion**

### ***1. The Development of Knowledge in Muslim Society in the Classical and Middle Ages***

Islamic civilization, which is built on the foundation of the rapid advancement of science (El-Khawas, 2002), is a constructive format for the results of the program of transmission, transformation and socialization – even efforts to assimilate – Islamic principles and values in the daily lives of the people. Muslims (followers of the religion of Islam), both individually and collectively in order to form a conception of an Islamic society (Hayatullah, 2014). In the next turn, this pattern of behavior is able to become a reference for the community together, so that it appears to be a civilization that has existed as world hegemony, or Islam has experienced globalisation, before the existence of modern Western globalization, which is enforced through the penetration of politics, economy, and culture in a combinative way (Mignolo, 2021).

Such idealization, of course, has always been the obsession of intellectuals and the Muslim community in general (Manduchi, 2017), because the pattern of the dream society has already been formed. This was alluded to by the Western observer, Wormhoudt & Arberry (1967), that the ideal formulation of the Islamic building is theocracy, which is based on the Word of Allah in the Qur'an, and finds its elaborative model through the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Jurji et al., 1969). This ideal model has been able to inspire Muslim reformers for almost 14 centuries to realize the concept of “the city of God” under the auspices of Islam, as was realized during the Medina era in the era of the Prophet and the four caliphs after it (Arberry, 2013). On another scale, something like that was realized in the golden age of Islam in the classical era (D'Alton, 2019; Rochester, 2020).

By historians, the history of the rise and fall of civilization and the development of science is divided into three periods (Rahmawati et al., 2016). *First*, the classical period, namely the years 650-1250 AD, which was the period from the emergence of Islam to the peak of its glory. This period is divided into two phases: expansion, integration and peak progress (650-1000 AD), and disintegration (1000-1250 AD). *Second*, the middle period, namely the years 1250-1800 AD. This period is also divided into two phases. The decline phase (1250-1500 AD) as well as the phase

of the three great kingdoms (1500-1800 AD), which began with the era of progress (1500-1700 AD) and the era of decline (1700-1800 AD). *Third*, the modern period, namely from 1800 onwards. During this period, the majority of the Islamic world was under European colonialism and imperialism, and learned a lot from the West in order to restore the balance of power. At this time too, Muslims tried to rise again by doing renewal (*tajdid*) or the revival of Muslims (Noupal, 2013). During this period, many Muslim-populated countries gained their independence.

As it is understood, that in classical times, Islam was able to make itself world hegemony, where the level of achievement of science and technology experienced its peak era. It is said to have reached the peak era because until now, Muslims have not been able to do more than what was achieved at that time.

The progress of science and civilization of classical Islamic society, can not be separated from the nature and communal nature of society at that time, which among the main factors are; (a) love of science; (b) active cooperation between intellectuals and authorities to advance science; (c) the spirit of spreading religious messages by utilizing all existing scientific tools; (d) guarantee of scientific tradition, freedom of intellectual thought, and research; (e) always feel dissatisfied with the progress that has been achieved; (f) economic and social stability; (g) economic prosperity that is free from corruption, and the provision of adequate budgets for the development of science and technology; (h) interactions between cultures and civilizations are well established, and there is a pattern of cooperation with various other developed nations; (g) neutrality and sterilization of science from other negative interests or misuse of science (Riyadi, 2014).

The expansion of Islamic territory, supported by scientific progress, led to advanced management, so that Islamic cities were formed which developed themselves as all-dimensional cities. All of this further positions Islam as a respected religion (Sorayaii Azar, 2020). Mecca and Medina as centers for the development of the science of hadith and fiqh. Baghdad, Kufa, and Basra became centers for the development of knowledge such as interpretation, hadith, jurisprudence, language, history, philosophy, natural science, kalam, exact sciences, music, and so on in Iraq. Fustat (present-day Cairo) and Alexandria became the center of science in Egypt. Damascus, Halab, and Beirut are cities in Sham (Syria) that have developed as cities

of knowledge. In Bukhara there is Noah bin Nashar al-Sammany's maktab as the most complete maktab. In Tabaristan there is the palace of the emir of Thabaristan as a mouthpiece of knowledge for the surrounding area. In Ghazna there is the palace of Sultan Mahmud al-Ghazni who loves knowledge. In the Andalusian region there are big cities such as Cordova, Granada, Valencia, Murcia, Seville which grew as centers of knowledge and Muslim civilization along with developments in Baghdad. It was from Andalus that Islamic knowledge then seeped into the West ("Why 'History of Islam'?", 2003).

Simultaneously at that time the Muslims with their scientific movement succeeded in establishing themselves as inheritors of Greek, Persian, Roman and Indian knowledge, in addition to the original knowledge of Islam itself. The palaces of the caliphs and governors became the centers of the khalaqah of scholarship, where seekers of knowledge were free to enter and leave from all corners of the world. Meanwhile, library facilities spread to remote village levels (Goitein, 2010).

In general, the science that developed at that time included what was known as the *naqli* sciences and the *aqli* sciences (Grunebaum, 2017). The science of *naqli* that developed includes mainly: the science of interpretation, hadith, kalam, tasawuf, fiqh and ushul fiqh and so on (Berman, 2019). While the *'aqli* sciences are mainly: philosophy, medicine, architecture, pharmacy, astronomy, riyadiyah science, history science, and so on (Spies & Watt, 1973).

During the period of the three great empires (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal) between 1500-1800 AD, Muslims also made progress in the field of science and technology, and gave rise to many scientists, such as Muhammad Baqir ibn Muhammad Damad, and so on. However, the progress achieved during the three great kingdoms was not at the same level as the progress in classical times, for several reasons:

- 1) The method of thought that develops is the traditional method, where the thinking that develops is more directed to fatalistic thinking, although there is also dynamic qadariyah thought. The notion of human independence, including the development of technological thought, has been rejected.

- 2) In the classical period, freedom of thought developed rapidly with the inclusion of Greek philosophical thought. Meanwhile, during the period of the three great kingdoms and so on, philosophical thought did not get a place. Intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid said that this was part of the effect of Imam al-Ghazali's criticism of philosophy, thus giving rise to the effect of imprisoning Islamic intellectual creativity (Rusydi, 2014).
- 3) Various facilities and infrastructure for the development of science and technology provided by classical times were destroyed and lost due to various attacks on the heart of the Islamic world.
- 4) Power during the three great kingdoms was generally held by the Mongols and Turks, who were known as nations who preferred war over love of science.
- 5) The centers of Islamic power are not in Arabia and are not held by Arabs, so that Arabic, which has become the language of the Islamic world at that time and the language of science, cannot develop and even decline (Peters & Watt, 1975).

In the midst of the retreat of Muslims in the field of Science, the West succeeded in achieving a secure renaissance, which then gave rise to the exploration movement of the West to various other countries, and then followed by colonialism by the West against other countries, especially countries with Muslim populations (Syarif, 2021).

From the various descriptions mentioned above, it can be made a kind of overview of Islamic civilization that has existed until now. Although the progress and retreat of a civilization is a relative thing, it can be said that from the 14th century AD to the early 21st century AD, Islamic civilization is still under the line of "regression", or at least "decline" when compared with classical Islamic civilization that has passed (Dalacoura, 2019). Indeed, this comparison scale is unfair, because the various underlying conditions are different. However, at least the comparison pattern can be a frame of reference for efforts towards improvement.

The relative progress of Islamic civilization can be seen, for example, in classical Islamic civilization, during the fourth caliphate, which has a peculiarity in the political system or government, which can be said to be very democratic, because it is

through an electoral system. However, in the context of thinking and scientific results, there has not been any significant progress. In the days of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties which are referred to as the “heyday of Islam”, the development of science and technology has progressed rapidly, but the government system takes place in absolute terms, namely in the royal pattern, lineage. So the political system is not as advanced as during the Khulafa al-Rasyidin period.

## ***2. Knowledge and Scientific Methodology in the Modern Perspective of Islam***

As already stated, the modern period in Islamic history began in 1800 until now. In the early modern era, Muslims were in the penetration of European colonialism, which brought many consequences. Only since the mid-20th century, various Muslim countries rose and freed themselves from colonialism (Karčić, 2015). The post-independence period marked the era known as the era of the revival of Muslims, or what is often referred to as renewal, which had actually started since the era of Western colonialism over various Islamic worlds (Fogg, 2012).

As is well known, Islamic civilization experienced a drastic decline in around the 13th century AD. Only at the same time, when Islamic civilization in the Middle East and West was in a state of decline, Muslim activists then directed the pattern of spreading Islam to other areas (Wan Sabri et al., 2015). the East, and to other areas which until recently had not been touched much by Islamic da’wah, nor had any contact with the West (Riyadi & Adinugraha, 2021). However, even though geographically, the area of Islam’s spread is getting wider, Islamic civilization continues to experience a “decline” period until the end of the 18th century AD, when revival movements emerged in the Islamic world. Indeed, the movements that continue to this day, the beginning of the 21st century AD, has not shown significant results, but at least, there have been efforts to stop the decline of Islamic civilization. So it cannot be said that Islamic civilization has “ended”, except in a formal-historical context. Because in a smaller form, it could be culture, or “remnants of civilization”, which is still available today.

Geographically, the “remnants” of Islamic civilization are still developing, thus demanding an increase in the scope of the study of Islamic civilization further. The study of Islamic civilization so far has only been limited to four caucuses forming the dominant Islamic civilization, which are interrelated: (1) areas of Arab

cultural influence (Middle East, North Africa, and Islamic Spain); (2) the area of Persian cultural influence (Iran and Islam in Central Asia); (3) the area of influence of Turkish culture; and (4) the area of influence of Indian-Islamic culture (Yatim, 2002: 4). Meanwhile, in other development areas, such as the West-European region, Southeast Asia, and parts of East, West, and South Africa, it has not been much touched on in various civilization studies, where indeed the development of Islam only occurred in the 18th century AD (West and Europe), the 14th century AD (Southeast Asia), and the 17th century AD (Africa other than North Africa). In fact, during the revival times, these areas contributed significantly, especially at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century AD. Indeed, at the beginning of its development, the development of Islam brought the original Islamic civilization, one of the four the area of influence, but in subsequent developments, it turned out to be able to form its own sub-system of Islamic civilization, with all its peculiarities (Meraj, 2018).

From the point of view of the use of the language used by the Muslim community alone, there has been a rapid development quantitatively. If before the 20th century AD, the languages used by the Muslim community only included Arabic (with various dialects), Persian, Turkish (Western), Urdu, Malay, then after the 20th century AD there was an expansion of the Indonesian language. -Beuter, Pashsha, Baluchi, Kurdish, Turkish (Eastern), Slavic, Albanian, slightly Greek, Bengali, Punjabi, Kasymiri, Sindhi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Sundanese, Javanese, Champa, Chinese, Swahili, Hanse, Somali and other African, and especially various European languages, especially English (Bulliet & Hodgson, 1978). While philologically, a civilization is what develops in literature from a single language, or from a single group of culturally related languages (Schubel, 2019). So from this perspective, in the current era of decline in Islamic civilization, in certain parts, there are still changes for the better.

Likewise, in terms of ethnic distribution, Muslims by the 21st century AD had a more widespread distribution. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, in mid-1997, the spread of Islam had covered 204 countries (of course still under Christianity and non-religious people who reached 244 countries). Meanwhile, the



Muslim population reached 1,147,494,000 people, or 19.6% of the world's population (5,848,739,000 people).

In terms of the number of adherents, in 1996, Islam was the second largest religion (1,099,634,000 people), after Christianity (1,927,953,000). After Islam in succession: Buddhists (323,894,000), Sikhs (19,161,000), Jews (14,117,000), Baha'ism (6,104,000), Confucianism (5,254,000), and Sintoists (2,844,000). The rest are adherents of other religions and beliefs, or have no religion, and have no religion. This means that from 1996 to 1997 there was a surge in Muslim adherents worldwide to reach 47,860,000 people (Hazard, 2021). A very significant increase.

In all African countries, Muslims at the end of the 20th century had reached 62.5%. Compared to developments in Europe and America, the progress of African Muslims is more advanced. European countries where the number of Muslims are now experiencing considerable progress include the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Austria, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, England, Germany, and Albania. Similarly, American Muslims are increasing both in quantity and quality. In quantity, Muslims in America in 1995 were 5,167,000 adherents, or 1.9% of the American population. Meanwhile, in mid-2000, it had reached 5,600,000, or 2% of the total population, an increase of 433,000 adherents.

These data show that since entering the modern era until the last centuries, Islam has indeed experienced a significant decline in civilization. But on the other hand, the presence of Islam outside the region itself is becoming increasingly prominent, either because of the attention of the mass media, or political plans outside the Muslim population, or because the number of Muslims outside their traditional areas is getting bigger (Mesir, 2015). In America, for example, Islam has been a part of popular religion since around the 1930s AD until now, with an increasing number of followers, which recently has also begun to get (political) attention from the government.

The spread of Islam in these new areas is no longer a controlled, centralized, and systematic work, as an effect of the existence of Muslims who are divided into various nation-states. There are the majority of adherents in certain countries, and there are also minorities, both in culture and religion. However, this dissemination process seems to be increasingly positive, because it is balanced with the

development of means of transportation, communication, information, and technology that far surpass all that ever existed (Adinugraha, Din, et al., 2021). The policies of each country, and the direction of global policies related to human rights, democracy, justice, pluralism and so on, in some ways benefit the struggle of Islam in minority areas, although in some Western countries it has not been matched by practical policies that more biased.

On the other hand, the relationship and interaction of Islamic society with Western civilization raises other excesses, which must get a response and response from Islam. There are many things that add to the treasury of Islamic treasures for its progress, although at the level of its emergence it currently raises various controversies. Meanwhile, the West itself, due to historical trauma and concerns about the future fate of its civilization, has also not been able to fully accept Islamic society as a partner in civilizational dialogue. Therefore, some Western intellectuals still doubt Islam as a global partner, such as Samuel Huntington, for example, even though this attitude is strongly challenged by his fellow Western colleagues, such as Francis Fukuyama (Pad'our, 2020). Therefore, in the global era, the position of Islam as "enemy" or "partner" is still a hot debate in the West ("Clash or Coop. Civilizations?," 2016), as well as it is still a matter of controversy among Muslims.

As already stated, Muslim intellectuals themselves have tried to be able to deal with the West, but it seems that there are still too many obstacles from among Muslims themselves, especially regarding the uniformity of their attitude in responding to the hegemony of Western civilization today. Many sectors and infrastructures of social, cultural, and economic, as well as political circles among the Muslim community are not ready to interact with Western civilization.

Of course, in the midst of the rapid roar of the Muslim community, which has developed since entering the middle ages and modern times, until today, the condition of civilization that pivots on science, Muslims are still in various lagging ways.

### ***3. Offering Critical-Epistemological Views of Contemporary Muslim Scholars***

Based on these conditions, there are many methodological offers from Muslim scholars and scholars, as a strategic effort to catch up.

## **1. The Salafiyah Movement**

Efforts to restore the strength of Muslims must begin with the purification of Islamic teachings from foreign elements that cause the decline of Muslims. This was tried to be realized by Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab (1703-1787 AD) in Arabia, Shah Waliyullah (1703-1762 AD) in India, and Muhammad Sanusi in North Africa. This movement, regardless of the pros and cons, arose not because of western influence, but emerged from concerns about the condition of Muslims who had been seen as corrupted by their monotheism (Suhilman, 2019).

## **2. Renewal and Modernism in Islam**

This movement was pioneered by Jamaluddin al-Afghani (1839-1897), developed by Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and continued by Rasyid Rida (1865-1935). This movement tries to filter the progress of the West and adapt it to the lives of Muslims. They refuse to rely on the past glory of Islam, but rather take its lessons and bring them to life in the midst of Muslims in political, social and religious thought (Subandi, 2018).

## **3. Westernism in Islam**

That is a methodological effort to invite Muslims to accept Western knowledge and all that comes from the West. This movement was pioneered by Sir Ahmad Khan (1817-1898 AD) in India by establishing Aligarh University (Amir, 2020).

## **4. Secularism**

Secularism is a movement of separation between state and religion, namely the power of the ulama who can determine the direction of social, economic, legal, political and educational policies. This movement was pioneered by Mustafa Kamal al-Taturk (1881-1938). All religious symbols are removed from the public sphere, with the assumption that plagiarism of Western progress can soon be realized for Muslims (Yuni Pangestutiani, 2020).

## **5. Islamization of knowledge**

Some scholars, such as Isma'il Raji' al-Faruqi and Naquib al-Attas, as well as several friends and colleagues, think that in order to prepare the Muslim community,

we must start with reforming the field of education. The proposal was put forward in the big idea and agenda of “Islamization of knowledge” which had become the hope of many parties. It’s just that it has arrived at the threshold of the early 21st century AD, has not shown results that are quite encouraging. This effort is more in a reactive context, not proactive, because it is intended as a “fast way” to be able to quickly catch up. The application of this concept that can be implemented is the emphasis on the axiological plane or scientific ethics, rather than towards new discoveries (Adinugraha et al., 2018).

## **6. Scientification of Islam**

This concept is offered by Fazlur Rahman, with the core that Muslims must produce knowledge from the Qur’an, where knowledge must start from the Qur’an, not end with the Qur’an as happened in the Islamization of science. This theory departs from the assumption that Allah has determined qadar which means “measurement” for every thing, namely certain potentials and the laws of their behavior. With this natural law, Muslims need to explore and use it in the form of productive scientific findings. In this case, Rahman criticized the concept of Islamization of knowledge from Raji’ al-Faruqi and Naquib al-Attas (Azhar, 2009).

## **7. Applied Islamology**

To catch up with Muslims in the modern era, Mohammad Arkoun offers the concept of Applied Islamology, by abandoning the medieval episteme which tends to forget the historical dimension. According to Arkoun, the epistemology of classical Islamic thought which tends to be normative textual will find it difficult to adopt various social changes, including the problem of scientific development. According to him, to advance science, one must begin by examining the fate of post-Rusydian philosophy. A double comparison should be made by comparing the factors that cause failure in the Muslim world and those that promote the success of the Christian West (Arkoun, 2003). Researchers must study the sociology, ideology and cultural factors that led to the victory of orthodoxy from Islam, because thought cannot be separated from social history. Philosophical perspective is very important to reach the destructive ideologies that hinder all efforts of scientific renewal and

creativity. Because in classical Muslim science discourse, there is a harmonious relationship between religion, philosophy and science (Arifullah, 2015).

### **8. Hassan Hanafi's Science Anthropocentrism**

As for Hassan Hanafi, viewing science discourse is based on a philosophical perspective which holds that nature is not an object, but is a cultural perception that determines human attitudes towards nature. Nature is God's creation and manifestation of His attributes. Nature is temporary and is a field in which man acts, a test for his life. His joy, pleasure and immortality were conditioned by his success in this test. The destruction of nature will be avoided if humans are responsible and accountable in managing nature. This responsibility for nature stretches across the globe. Unfortunately the Muslim world today has lost this cultural perspective seven hundred years ago (Feriyadi & Hadi, 2018). Hassan Hanafi further stated that God, in today's Muslim consciousness, is more permeating nature with a theocentric vision inherited from traditional orthodoxy.

### **9. Mohamed Abed al-Jabiri's offer**

Another contemporary Muslim thinker, Mohatnmed Abed Al-Jabiri, tries to put forward three concepts of thought. First, the Bayani pattern (textual-normative understanding). Bayani's reasoning is more focused on the text or on the basics (known as al-ushul al-arba'ah: Al-Qur'an, sunnah, ijma' and qiyas) which are pegged as something that is standard and does not change. Although at first his world view was a rational world view of the Qur'an, but this kind of reasoning gradually turned into a separate world view that was unique to Bayani because much of it was based on the Arabic mind, and not on the Qur'an itself. Such as the teachings of al-jauhar al-fard (atomism), denial of the law of causality (al-sababiyah), and also the principle of al-tajwiz (permissibility in the relationship between cause and effect). Second, Irfani's reasoning (spiritual-intuitive), epistemologically tends to be irrational and considers the outward content of the Qur'an as the truth contained in the Hermeticism tradition. For Al-Jabiri, the bayani and irfani style of thinking is very difficult to be used as the basis for the development of science. So in order to develop scientific discourse in the future, Muslims need to develop a third scientific epistemology, with a burhani (rational-demonstrative) pattern. Al-Jabiri devoted his

attention to the traditions of Islamic thought in the western hemisphere of the Islamic world (Maghrib and Andalusia), where burhani figures such as Ibn Hazm, Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Thufail, Ibn Rushd, al-Syathibi, and Ibn Khaldun were born (Daifallah, 2012).

Based on the references of the thinkers above, al-Jabiiri stated: What prevails in the thinking of the Andalusians is no longer the qiyas method which makes the text and the past (*salaf*) the authority, it is no longer atomism or the principle of “permissibility” which denies the law. causality that is declared contrary to the spirit of rationalism and scientific certainty. On the basis of this burhani epistemology that uses Aristotelian logic, what emerged later were the methods of deduction (*istintaj*, *qiyas jami*’), induction (*istiqra*), the concept of universalism (*al-kulli*), inductive universalities, the principle of causality and historicity, and also *al-maqashid* (*sharia* goals).

#### **10. Depreciation and Development**

As for the Muslim thinker from Iran, Abdul Karim Soroush, also put forward the theory of “shrinkage and development”. For Soroush, religiosity is human understanding of religion, just as science is their understanding of nature. Soroush tends to distinguish between religion and religious knowledge. Religion as a form of human knowledge is highly dependent on the collective and competitive conditions of the human soul. Religious interpretations can differ between philosophers, preachers, Sufis and politicians. By citing knowledge from the philosophy of religion, Soroush states that all phenomena are essentially theoretical in nature, so that we see the world through theoretical lenses. Therefore, continued Soroush, nothing appears as an innocent incident or a hard fact. If we don’t like an interpretation of a particular event, we certainly replace it with another interpretation. Thus, the science of religion is one type of human science, which can change, interact, shrink, and expand. That is why, believers have various ideas (Parray, 2018).

Soroush further explained about his theory: My thesis on the decline and development of religious knowledge shows that to interpret religious texts, we need various other types of knowledge, if we do not want our understanding to stagnate. Religious Shari’a is never equal to human opinion, so it is impossible for there to be conformity or incompatibility between the two; It is the understanding of a human

being that may or may not be the same as the understanding of another human being. So, wherever we are dealing with is the science of religion that observes and understands religion, but it is not religion. Such provisions cover all branches of human science. The fixed part is religion; the part that changes is the understanding of religion.

These are some of the critical-epistemological views of some of the contemporary Muslim thinkers above, which have a correlation for efforts to develop religious thought and implications for efforts to develop the area of science in the Muslim world, in the future.

The ideas of the intellectuals of the 20th and 21st centuries AD are still controversial. But it seems, rather than continuing to dwell on the nostalgia of the golden age of classical Islam, it is better to do something that leads to a better civilization than now. As an intellectual --or another name according to Dr. Mukti Ali, a teacher--, they don't care whether his ideas are accepted or not, deemed appropriate or not for their time, approved or not. The important thing is that he expresses his opinion and is firm, firmly holding on to his opinion. Because maybe even if the time is not appropriate, then the things that are said will have paradigmatic urgency for the next period. The duty of a teacher is to always increase knowledge, so he must dare to do according to his knowledge even though it is different from the will of many people. A teacher with his knowledge dares to say something even if his words are not understood by people (Aziz, 2019). Knowledge is the goal, not people.

Differences in the point of view and understanding can not be avoided with the starting point that; Islam is a system or way of life that is complete and has a balanced proportion between its values and principles, and at the level of social reality it has a secularism-ridden line, which became the basis of the development of the Muslim world in the following periods (Adinugraha & Muhtarom, 2021).

So, precisely because Islam is a complete *syar'i* system, it opens itself up to various thought discourses to realize the perfection of the promised system. From this it can be understood the assumption that Islam is a universal religion that is *hanif*. While in particular, it is the religion of *ishlah*; namely an order that always demands improvement in attitude and growth. This means that culturally and

historically, it must always be reformative, never stagnate. So here, innovations and creativity of thought are always increasing in order to create the ideals of a hegemonic Islamic civilization. And this is the big task of Islamic thought in welcoming the upcoming third millennium era, as the era “belongs to” the formulators of today’s civilization, especially to reclaim the progress of Islamic civilization which has long receded. This is no longer the era of confrontation for the arena of civilization. Patterns of dialogue, and complementarity seem to be an alternative for the realization of a better civilization for humanity (Sabila, 2019).

Islamic civilization has the possibility to dominate again if it is able to provide answers to the transitions related to cultural values, which dominate the system of Western civilization today. The transition, in Kuhn’s analysis involves what is called a “paradigm shift”, an important change in thoughts, perceptions, and values that form a separate vision of reality (Alifah Putri & Iskandar, 2020).

This paradigm that is now constantly changing dominates Western civilization that is hundreds of years old, and has shaped modern Western society that has significantly affected the entire world. A paradigm that consists of a number of thoughts and values that differ greatly from medieval values, values that have been associated with various currents of Western culture such as the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, the industrial revolution and so on (Bulliet & Hodgson, 1978). These values include the belief that the scientific method is the only valid approach to knowledge; the view that the universe is a mechanical system consisting of the basic building blocks of matter; the view that life in society is a competitive struggle for existence; and belief in unlimited growth.

After the last few decades, there has been a growing awareness of the fact that these ideas and values are very limited, and require fundamental revision, and are a major project of civilization work. In this case, if Islam is able to provide answers to these fundamental problems, it will again become an alternative for future civilizations.

### **C. Concluding Remarks**

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that everything that has been described as a result of the achievements of the golden age of Islamic



civilization is the culmination point of Islamic progress to date. So to get back the lost treasures, it is something that for now, with the chaotic conditions of Muslims, it seems very difficult to get back. There are various reasons for the waning of later Muslim culture and civilization. Among the most important are the death of scientific tradition in the Muslim world. Freedom of scientific thought, and the tradition of conducting research are essential for the advancement of science, which in turn leads to the advancement of culture and civilization, have been satisfied with what has been achieved by previous Islamic thinkers, so they feel no need to do *ijtihad* anymore. Later Muslims did not do as the classical Muslim figures did.

Efforts to rebuild a high civilization can only be initiated, if the Muslim community is able to create the following factors: there is a high intention and enthusiasm to seek and develop knowledge based on a strong religious commitment; willingness to assimilate and acculturate culture and civilization; openness of attitude to cooperate with all parties in the field of culture; and the existence of a political policy to develop culture. Above all, Muslims should always prioritize the principle of maintaining the old ones that can still be used and are able to adapt to new and better things or *المحافظة على القديم الصالح والاخذ بالجديد الاصلح*.

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