

## ISLAM AS A BASIS FOR CIVILIZATIONAL THOUGHT AND DEVELOPMENT

(Islam sebagai Asas kepada Pemikiran dan Pembangunan Tamadun)

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### ABSTRACT

This article discuss a brief meaning of civilization and development in Islam, how Islamic civilization and development have impacted the world community particularly in intellectual fields, the significance of Islamic thought on civilization and development in the midst of contemporary scientific and technological developments before linking all these topics back to the basis for civilizational thought and development set forth by al-Quran and dwell further on the cooperative effort, particularly by Malaysian and Japanese scholars, on understanding Islamic thought in relation to civilization and development at international level.

**Keywords:** Civilization and development; Islamic thought; world community

### ABSTRAK

*Makalah ini membincangkan tentang kepentingan tamadun dan pembangunan dalam Islam secara ringkas, bagaimana tamadun dan pembangunan Islam telah memberi kesan kepada masyarakat dunia terutamanya dalam bidang intelektual, kepentingan pemikiran Islam dalam tamadun dan pembangunan di tengah-tengah arus perkembangan sains dan teknologi kontemporari sebelum menghubungkan semua topik ini kembali kepada asas pemikiran dan pembangunan tamadun yang*

*telah diajarkan dalam al-Quran dan seterusnya membicarakan tentang usaha kerjasama, khususnya oleh sarjana-sarjana dari Malaysia dan Jepun, dalam memahami pemikiran Islam yang berkaitan dengan tamadun dan pembangunan di peringkat antarabangsa.*

***Kata kunci:*** *Tamadun dan pembangunan; pemikiran Islam; masyarakat dunia*

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Meaning of Civilization and Development in Islam**

In describing the meaning of civilization and development according to Islam, I do not attempt to define the terms ‘Islamic civilization’ and ‘Islamic development’. Muslim scholars (e.g., al-Attas 1977 & 1978; Ismail Faruqi 1982; Seyyed Hossain Nasr 1964 & 1968; Shaharir 1990 & 1996) and non-Muslim scholars (Bucaille 1976; Ravetz 1991; Saliba 2007) alike have dwelled into this, rigorously, since 1960s. What I attempt to do here is to describe what civilization and development mean in Islam to a Muslim who is striving to live his life to the will of Allah.

In Islam, civilization and development have little meaning to a Muslim in front of Allah should they are independent of the religion. For civilization and development to have their true meaning in Islam, the establishment of civilization and the quest of development must be dependent on Islamic values. Therefore, the establishment of civilization and the quest of development must be within the Islamic values based on al-Quran. The logic of development effort, for instance, is not the western conventional logic such as to benefit the society, but the Islamic logic that goes beyond the benefit to society, that is, to meet the will of Allah in that to know Him and to submit to Him and to be a moral person as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad SAW leading to the fulfilling of Allah’s will in that to know Him and to submit to Him.

### **IMPACTS OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT ON WORLD COMMUNITY**

Many scholars such as Jahanbakhsh Thawaqib (2012), Rachida El Diwani (2005) and Masoumeh Banitalebi et al. (2012) have talked about Muslims’ significant contribution to human knowledge in various fields through their innovations. Islamic civilization in science; scientific method and rationalism; humanism, philosophy, scholasticism; medicine; astronomy; mathematics and material culture (such as commerce and seafaring; agriculture and minerals; the arts of ‘gracious

living' namely industrial good, architectural building, music, books, and urban living) have awakened especially the Western world, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to the new meaning of human life, civilization, and destination.

Muslim contribution in the various fields mentioned above was so great that Islamic civilization has been the pioneer of the scientific, intellectual and cultural genius for a long period of time, benefiting not only the West but also the world at large then and today from its great achievements (Jahanbakhsh Thawaqib 2012).

In twelfth and thirteenth centuries the West was imitating the science and the method of learning from the Islamic world to gain their intellectual achievements in the West:

Universities were found in the West patterned on the Muslim universities to assimilate the new knowledge made available by translations of the works in Arabic and, to a lesser extent, of Greek classics which have been superseded by the Muslims (Rachida El Diwani 2005).

Since the establishment of al-Azhar University in 969 (which has been a leading institution in Islamic studies including in medicine; engineering; natural, positive and human sciences for centuries) higher learnings of Islamic civilization and development have been well institutionalized and flourished in the other parts of Islamic world including in the Far East. And today, we are witnessing another one being established, that is Hadhari Center for Islamic Civilizational Studies.

Saim Kayadibi & Ahmad Hidayat Buang (2011) quoted on their research findings published in Jurnal Hadhari that, today:

With the result of globalization, attention of the intellectuals to Islamic studies and its civilization (Islam Hadhari) recently are being highly increased. Western as well as Eastern countries especially Malaysia aspires to play a central role for the world's Islamic Higher Education Institutions. In achieving that essential goal, many institutions in Malaysia have introduced teaching of Islamic studies in English and Arabic beside Malay language. According to these changes the institutions have employed erudite scholars from different part of the world. This internalization process made the universities more popular among the intellectuals.

## **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT ON CIVILIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Islamic thought on civilization and development in the midst of contemporary scientific and technological developments is crucial to contribute to the solutions

of a number of world crises. Science and technology may have brought people to the moon and contributed to multinational businesses and trading but we failed to manage the environment and to produce God-fearing and ethical businessmen. Social science theories may have given us insights on human and humanity but we still produced children disrespectful of their parents.

Al-Quran is a book of guidance or *hidayah*, and guidance or *hidayah* on the topics of civilization and development is included in the Quran. The establishment of civilization and the development of every field, be it science or economy, must make use of this guidance. Current facts and figures on the status of our environment and social behaviour have illustrated that the failure of incorporating this guidance in the establishment of civilization and the development of many areas in human life are detrimental.

Hence, Islamic thought on civilization and development is timely and relevant to be researched in Islamic centres at regional scale. This is at the best interest of countries within the Asia region. Asia governments support the establishment of Islamic centres, such as Institute of Islam Hadhari UKM, Center for Islamic Area Studies ASAFAS Japan, Ar-Raniry State Institute for Islamic Studies Indonesia, and Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Language South Eastern University Sri Lanka.

### **ISLAM AS A BASIS FOR CIVILIZATIONAL THOUGHT AND DEVELOPMENT**

Al-Quran stated that who research the reality of the creation, to the greatness of Allah:

{9} اَلَّذِيْنَ عَلِمَ مَا لَمْ يَدْرُوْنَ اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتٰهُم مِّنْ فَضْلِهِۦٓ اَلَا يَتَذَكَّرْنَ اَلَا سَاءَ لِمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ

(al-Zumar 39: 9)

Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful.

And

اِنَّ فِيْ خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفَلَكَ الَّتِي تَجْرِيْ فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

وَبَتْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ {164}

(al-Baqarah 2: 164)

Surely! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, and in the sailing of the ships through the sea to benefit mankind, and the water (rain) which Allah sends down from the sky and makes the earth alive therewith after its death, and to scatter every kind of animal throughout it, and directing the winds and clouds which are driven along between the sky and earth, are (all) indeed Ayat (evidences, proofs, indications, signs, etc.) for people of understanding.

Enabling regional cooperation in integrating Islamic thought into civilization and development will not only strengthening interactions among Islamic scholars as well as conventional scholars, but it would contribute to a global change in the development of human community with God-fearing mentality and ethical or moral behaviour.

Literature reviewed revealed that the effort on integrating Islamic thought into civilization and development covers only a certain domain of Islamic thought on civilization and development namely religious, social, economic and political domains of Islamic civilization and development (e.g., Agensky & Barker 2012; Borer et al. 2009; Lindsey 2012; Nakagawa 2009; Stark 2009; Yong et al. 2009).

The integration of Islamic thought on the science aspect such as religion and scientism; Islamic worldview of science; Islam-philosophy-science and history of Islamic science, remains neglected in the effort to integrate Islamic thought into modern human civilization and development. This gap is due to two main reasons: (a) the lack of effort to mobilize regional Islamic research centres towards research and development collaboration on such integration, and (b) the unattainable nature of such effort to be conducted by a single institution or even a country.

Hence, Hadhari Center for Islamic Civilizational Studies should aim at mobilizing regional Islamic research centres towards research and development collaboration on integrating Islamic thought on the science aspect into human civilization and development which would also consequently address the problem of the unattainable nature of such effort to be conducted by a single institution or a country.

## TOWARD MALAYSIA-JAPAN COOPERATIVE EFFORT

I would like to dwell further on the cooperative effort, particularly by Malaysian and Japanese scholars, on promoting Islamic thought in relation to civilization and development at international level.

The idea of Islam Hadhari approach emerged in 2004 during my time as the Fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia. This approach is a continuity of earlier policy agendas of New Economic Policy (1971), Assimilation of Islamic Values into Government Administration (1985), and Vision 2020 (1991). The previous policy agendas were focusing on system building in the community while Islam Hadhari focuses on the formation of human civilization with Islamic values given that Islam Hadhari approach is global and inclusive in nature. This approach embodies the teaching of al-Quran in that human beings are created to know and to be kind to each other and to learn from one another:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ \* {13}

(al-Hujurat 49: 13)

O Men! Truly We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribe that you might get to know (and be kind to) one another. The noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the one most deeply conscious of Him among you (not in accordance with the nobility of lineage of ethnicity). Truly, Allah is Most Knowing, Most Aware (of your state and deeds).

In 2007, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia has made a proactive initiative in establishing Institute of Islam Hadhari. Institute of Islam Hadhari is a research institute aims at educating, researching, and servicing the community in four main areas: (1) Politics and leadership; (2) Socio-culture; (3) Economics and business; and (4) Science & technology, health and environment. These thrust areas are integrated in all areas covered by the principles of Islam Hadhari approach as outlined by the Government of Malaysia, namely:

1. Faithful and obedience to Allah.
2. A just and trustworthy Government.
3. Citizens with independent spirit.
4. Mastery of knowledge.
5. Balanced and comprehensive economic development.
6. High quality life.

7. Rights protection for women and minority groups.
8. Moral and cultural integrity.
9. Conservation of nature and environment.
10. Strength of defence.

Islam Hadhari approach and wasatiyyah approach are both needed in the implementation of Islamic jurisprudence. Wasatiyyah is one of the most important elements in Islam. Hence, the meaning of wasatiyyah must be understood correctly.

Al-Qaradawi (2010) defines wasatiyyah as ‘balanced’ or ‘the middle of two different things’ in that one of them does not impact on or reject the other and does not take more than it should and does not delete the other. In other words, one should give space for the other; give its right in a just (*adil*) manner, without cruelty, transgression, less, without pressure, or loss.

Wasatiyyah approach signifies the teaching of al-Quran in that Islam is a blessing to all human beings and the universe:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ {107}

(al-Anbiya' 21: 107)

And we have sent you forth (O Muhammad) but as a mercy to all the worlds.

Institute of Islam Hadhari has been engaging in research with a total research fund more than one million USD. The graduate programmes in Institute of Islam Hadhari have at least 80 students. The cooperation with Center for Islamic Area Studies (KIAS) and Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies (ASAFAS) Kyoto University (KU) since 2009 started as a joint organizer of an annual symposium alternately located between UKM and Kyoto University has developed into a strong relationship in other academic areas such as academic research, teaching and learning, student attachment, and institutionalizing research. The graduate students and academic scholars of both institutions have been actively engaging in research activities as well as presenting the results of their research in many conferences.

Additionally, Institute of Islam Hadhari publishes *Jurnal Hadhari an International Journal* twice a year fully funded by Malaysia Government, and Prof. Dr. Yasushi KOSUGI is one of the International Advisory Board Members of the journal. The researchers from both institutions utilize the journal fully to publish their research findings on civilizational studies.

In 2014, Institute of Islam Hadhari and ASAFAS proudly present 5<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Islam, Civilization, and Science or ISICAS 2014 to officiate Hadhari Center for Islamic Civilizational Studies at Kyoto University Japan. This center will be jointly managed by Institute of Islam Hadhari UKM and Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies Kyoto University with an initial fund of RM 15 million (USD 4.5 million) from Malaysia Government.

The establishment of this new Hadhari Research Center in Japan will produce more research and findings on Islamic Civilization and to learn that Kyoto has an Islamic Culture Centre which is jointly supported by both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. With the establishment of this new Hadhari Research Center, Japanese community will gain more understanding about Islam and the Muslims.

The effort in establishing this Center strengthens the two ways relations between UKM-Kyoto University and Malaysia-Japan. This is parallel with the aspiration of the Sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia YAB Dato' Seri Haji Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak to strengthen Look East Policy which is not only focusing on economy and work culture but also on culture as a whole.

The world today is facing all kinds of crises such as financial and economic crises, social and environmental crises as well as issues on global warming, climate change, food supply and consumerism. Hence, the effort to foster research on Islam Hadhari as a mainstream research is hoped to solve, if not all, some of the world crises mentioned above.

In the future, both institutions are able to make more collaboration on research and other academic programmes such as joint research; fellow and student attachments; joint seminars; and joint publications.

## **CONCLUSION**

We must emphasize the effort to mobilize regional Islamic research centres towards research and development collaboration on integrating Islamic thought into civilization and development to address the problem of the unattainable nature of such effort to be conducted by a single institution or a country. This is because integrating Islamic thought into civilization and development will contribute to a global change in the development of human community with God-fearing mentality and ethical or moral behaviour.



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