

REVITALIZATION OF ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE: RESPONDING TO EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHALLENGES IN THE MODERN ERA

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Abstract: *The development of knowledge during the golden age of Islamic civilization made significant contributions to global progress, particularly in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, philosophy, and the arts. However, the modern Islamic world faces serious epistemological challenges, including the dichotomy between religious and secular sciences and the dominance of Western secular paradigms in education systems. This study aims to trace the historical contributions of Islam to science and to explore integrative educational models as a response to these ongoing challenges. It employs a qualitative method with a library research approach and uses content analysis through a descriptive-analytical framework. Data are collected from scholarly books, journal articles, and historical literature relevant to the influence of Islamic education on the development of modern scientific systems. The findings highlight the need to strengthen an Islamic scientific paradigm grounded in maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, the ethics of adab, and the integration of spiritual and rational dimensions. Such a paradigm is essential for building a holistic Islamic educational system rooted in Islamic values and capable of constructively and sustainably addressing contemporary global challenges.*

Keywords: *Islam and science; integration of knowledge; wahdatul 'ulūm; maqāṣid al-sharī'ah; Islamic epistemology.*

Abstrak: Perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan pada masa kejayaan peradaban Islam telah memberikan kontribusi besar bagi kemajuan global, khususnya dalam bidang kedokteran, astronomi, matematika, filsafat, dan seni. Namun, dunia Islam modern menghadapi tantangan epistemologis yang serius, seperti dikotomi antara ilmu agama dan ilmu sekuler, serta dominasi paradigma sekuler Barat dalam sistem pendidikan. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menelusuri kontribusi historis Islam terhadap ilmu pengetahuan serta mengeksplorasi model pendidikan integratif yang ditawarkan sebagai solusi atas tantangan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi pustaka serta teknik analisis isi yang bersifat deskriptif-analitis. Data diperoleh dari buku-buku ilmiah, artikel jurnal, dan literatur sejarah yang relevan dengan pengaruh pendidikan Islam terhadap pembentukan sistem ilmu modern. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan perlunya



penguatan paradigma keilmuan Islam yang berakar pada *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, nilai adab, dan integrasi antara dimensi spiritual dan rasional. Dengan demikian, dapat dibangun sistem pendidikan Islam yang holistik, berakar pada nilai-nilai keislaman, dan mampu merespons tantangan global secara konstruktif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Islam dan ilmu pengetahuan; integrasi ilmu; *wahdatul ‘ulūm*; *maqāṣid al-syarī‘ah*; epistemologi Islam.

A. INTRODUCTION

History records that Islam spread widely across various parts of the world and significantly contributed to the development of global scientific knowledge.¹ Muslim scholars inherited knowledge from ancient civilizations such as Ancient Greece and India. They developed and enriched that knowledge through applied and transformative scientific works.²

Islam regards reason (*‘aql*) as an essential instrument in understanding divine revelation, granting rationality a respected position within Islamic discourse.³ This appreciation of reason fostered the growth of a strong intellectual tradition in the Islamic world. Historical records highlight the emergence of thousands of Muslim scholars who contributed significantly across diverse disciplines, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy.⁴

One of the most renowned Muslim scientists was Al-Khwarizmi. He played a pivotal role in developing the concept of zero and the system of algorithms, which later became foundational to the advancement of modern mathematics. Before the introduction of zero, scholars relied on the abacus to maintain numerical order. However, this method was not well received in the West. In contrast, the Arabic numeral system—including zero, as developed by Al-Khwarizmi—was eventually accepted and widely adopted approximately two and a half centuries later. For his work in formulating systematic procedures for solving mathematical problems, Al-

¹ Hafiz Amjad Hussain and Hafiz Masood Qasim, “Contribution of Islamic Civilization to the Scientific Enterprise of the Modern World,” *Journal of Religious and Social Studies*, 4.1 (2024), 1–15 <<https://doi.org/10.53583/jrss07.01.2024>>.

² Fatia Rahmanita, Durrotun Nashihah, and Muhammad Fadli Ramadhan, “Al-Khawarizmi Serta Kontribusinya Untuk Perkembangan Sains Modern,” *Uluḡuddin: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 13.2 (2023), 297–312 <<https://doi.org/10.47200/ulumuddin.v13i2.2045>>.

³ Dadang Mustopa, “Integration of Reason and Revelation in the Perspective of Philosophy of Science,” *International Journal of Nusantara Islam*, 6.2 (2019), 175–81 <<https://doi.org/10.15575/ijni.v6i2.4876>>.

⁴ M. Basheer Ahmed, “Muslims Achieved the Highest Status in the Fields of Medicine, Math, Philosophy, and All Sciences. What Happened?,” *Journal of the British Islamic Medical Association*, 13.5 (2023), 1–4 <https://www.jbima.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/3_History-2-Basheer_.pdf>.

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Khwarizmi became known in the West as “Algorismus” and is often referred to as the Father of Algorithms or the Father of Mathematics.⁵

Muslim intellectual contributions were not limited to the technical aspects of science but also extended to the development of educational institutions. Muslim thinkers established formal learning centers such as *madrasahs*, *ribats*, and *kuttab*s. One of the most prominent examples was the Nizamiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad, founded by Nizam al-Mulk, which became a symbol of an organized and professional Islamic educational system.⁶ From its inception, Islamic education integrated the development of intellect and spirituality, forming devout and intellectually productive generations. Although Islamic education experienced periods of decline due to the Mongol invasions, Western colonialism, and the weakening of educational institutions, history demonstrates that the integrative approach between Islamic values and modern scientific development can revive Islamic civilization.

The spread of Islamic education to Europe did not occur suddenly but rather through a long historical process involving cultural interaction, trade, and the influence of major centers of civilization such as Al-Andalus. The West inherited a valuable body of knowledge in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy through translating works by Muslim scholars and intellectual exchanges. The role of Andalusia as a civilizational bridge between Islam and Europe was vital in paving the way for the Western Enlightenment and the scientific revolution.⁷

The influence of Islamic civilization on the West can be observed in various aspects. Since the reign of Caliph Al-Walid of the Umayyad Dynasty, the Islamic world began establishing contact with Europe by expanding into North Africa and Spain.⁸ Under Islamic rule, these regions experienced an intellectual awakening that would later inspire the resurgence of science in Europe. Numerous discoveries and

⁵ Achmad Mulyadi, “Pemikiran Al-Khawarizmi Dalam Meletakkan Dasar Pengembangan Ilmu Astronomi Islam,” *International Journal Ihya’ ‘Ulum Al-Din*, 20.1 (2018), 63–86 <<https://doi.org/10.21580/ihya.20.1.2782>>.

⁶ Nur Lila Kamsi, “Nizamul Mulk Dan Madrasah Nizamiyah Relasi Lembaga Pendidikan Dan Penguasa (Madrasah Dan Otodoksi Pendidikan),” *Edification Journal: Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 5.1 (2022), 11–24 <<https://doi.org/10.37092/ej.v5i1.407>>; Moh Romzi, M Lutfi Musthofa, and Shobihatul Fitroh Noviyanti, “The Role of Nizamiyah in the Development of Early Islamic Education,” *Maharot: Journal of Islamic Education*, 8.1 (2024), 89 <<https://doi.org/10.28944/maharot.v8i1.1652>>.

⁷ Febrian Afriadi and Hektaviandri, “Analisis Pengaruh Peradaban Islam Di Andalusia Terhadap Kebangkitan Ilmu Pengetahuan Di Eropa,” *QOSIM: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial & Humaniora*, 2.2 (2024), 129–38 <<https://doi.org/10.61104/jq.v2i2.444>>; Irzak Yuliardy Nugroho and Riani Muarafah Jannati, “Islam Di Spanyol: Jembatan Peradaban Islam Ke Benua Eropa Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Renaissance,” *HUMANISTIKA: Jurnal Keislaman*, 7.2 (2021), 190–219 <<https://doi.org/10.55210/humanistika.v7i2.522>>.

⁸ Henny Yusalia, “Daulah Umayyah Ekspansi Dan Sistem Pemerintahan Monarchiheriditis,” *Wardah*, 13.2 (2015), 135–44 <<https://doi.org/10.19109/wardah.v13i2.322>>.

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ideas by Muslim scholars in natural and social sciences attracted the West's attention and became important learning sources.⁹

The success of Islamic civilization in advancing scientific knowledge was also closely tied to the political support of Muslim rulers. Abbasid caliphs such as Al-Mansur, Harun al-Rashid, and especially Al-Ma'mun played active roles in establishing translation institutions, founding higher educational institutions, and funding the writing and translation of scientific works. Al-Ma'mun, in particular, supported the translation of Greek texts into Arabic, driven by his interest in freedom of thought and rationalist schools such as the Mu'tazilah.¹⁰ These translations laid the foundation for the development of medicine, mathematics, and astronomy in the Islamic world.

In addition, many European students pursued their studies in Islamic educational centers in Spain, particularly in cities such as Cordoba during the 10th and 11th centuries. At the time, Cordoba was one of the world's most advanced centers of knowledge, attracting students from France, Italy, and other parts of Europe. Islam provided access to education not only for Muslims but also for non-Muslims, demonstrating the high value Islam places on knowledge and education as a means of building a global civilization.¹¹

Although the Crusades were marked by violence, they indirectly paved the way for cultural and intellectual exchange between the Islamic world and the West.¹² When the city of Toledo in Spain fell to Christian forces in 1085 CE, many Islamic scientific works were translated into Latin. Key figures known as the Monarabes played a crucial role in this process. Although some in the West later claimed these works as their own, history cannot conceal the fact that Islamic civilization played a significant role in shaping the foundations of modern Western science.¹³

Thus, it is evident that Islam has played a central role in the dynamics of global scientific development. The contributions of Muslim scholars were not

⁹ Imam Amrusi Jailani, "Kontribusi Ilmuwan Muslim Dalam Perkembangan Sains Modern," *Jurnal Theologia*, 29.1 (2018), 165–88 <<https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2018.29.1.2033>>.

¹⁰ Achmad Gholib, *Filsafat Islam* (Jakarta: Faza Media, 2009), p. 76 <[https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/bitstream/123456789/32750/1/FILSAFAT ISLAM BUKU.pdf](https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/bitstream/123456789/32750/1/FILSAFAT_ISLAM_BUKU.pdf)>; Nur Syakinah Hasibuan, Junaidi Arsyad, and Salminawati, "Kebebasan Akademis Pada Masa Khalifah Al-Ma' Mu Dan Relevansinya Dengan Konsep Merdeka Belajar Di Indonesia," *Tawazun: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 16.3 (2023), 443–58 <<https://doi.org/10.32832/tawazun.v16i3.15394>>.

¹¹ Abdul Aziz and Tri Huda Munawar, "Pendidikan Islam Andalusia: Sebuah Kajian Sosial-Historis Pendidikan Islam Masa Kejayaan Andalusia," *JOIES (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 2.1 (2017), 103–20 <<https://doi.org/10.15642/joies.2017.2.1.103-120>>; Uswatun Hasanah and others, "Sistem Pendidikan Daulah Umayyah Andalusia Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Masa Kini," *Alhamra Jurnal Studi Islam*, 5.1 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.30595/ajsi.v5i1.20459>>.

¹² Aniroh Aniroh, "Perang Salib Serta Dampaknya Bagi Dunia Islam Dan Eropa," *AT-THARIQ: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Budaya*, 1.1 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.57210/trq.v1i1.41>>.

¹³ Abid Nurhuda, "Peran Dan Kontribusi Islam Dalam Dunia Ilmu Pengetahuan," *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, 2.2 (2022), 222 <<https://doi.org/10.22373/jpi.v2i2.15909>>.

merely technical but also laid the philosophical and institutional foundations for the advancement of knowledge that continues to this day.

Several previous studies have examined Islam's contributions to the development of science and education, both within the Islamic world and in terms of its influence on the West. Santika, Azwara, Demina, and Yahya, in their article on the dynamics of Islamic cultural development, highlight the role of Muslim intellectuals as agents of change.¹⁴ These scholars bridged revelation with rationality and contributed to educational growth by establishing institutions such as madrasahs, ribats, and kuttabs. One notable example is the Nizamiyyah Madrasah, which illustrates how Islamic education was systematically organized. In this context, Islamic education functioned as a medium for transmitting knowledge, shaping communal identity, and promoting intellectual progress. However, this development faced periods of stagnation due to invasions, internal conflicts, colonialism, and intellectual decline. The authors underscore the importance of renewing Islamic education by integrating Islamic values with the advancements of modern science.

Similarly, research conducted by Syaridawati and Yahdi demonstrates that Islamic education significantly contributed to the development of science in the Western world.¹⁵ Knowledge from the Islamic world spread to Europe through various channels, including translating scientific works, cultural interactions, trade, and the influence of Andalusian civilization. This influence is evident in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. The diffusion of knowledge from the Islamic world laid an essential foundation for the European educational system. It served as a precursor to the Scientific Revolution in the West.

Another study by Wendi affirms that Islam's contribution to the Western world cannot be overlooked, even though it is often obscured or omitted in European historical narratives.¹⁶ He emphasizes that the Islamic conquest of regions such as Spain ushered in a period of enlightenment, which later spread throughout Europe. Islam became a center for the emergence of various scientific disciplines that attracted Western interest and facilitated intellectual exchange across civilizations.

Furthermore, Huzain systematically identifies four main factors that enabled Islamic civilization to influence European civilization: (1) the active role of Islamic kingdoms in promoting translation and education, particularly during the Abbasid Caliphate; (2) the widespread translation of Greek works into Arabic, which reached its peak during the reign of Al-Ma'mun; (3) the sending of European

¹⁴ Mella Amelia Santika and others, "Eksplorasi Dinamika Perkembangan Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam: Analisis Peran Intelektual Muslim Dalam Mewujudkan Kemajuan Sosial, Politik, Ekonomi, Dan Pendidikan Dari Masa Klasik Hingga Modern," *Pengertian: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia (PJPI)*, 3.1 (2025), 79–90 <<https://doi.org/10.61930/pjpi.v3i1.1078>>.

¹⁵ Syaridawati and Muhammad Yahdi, "Jejak Pendidikan Islam Di Eropa: Kontribusi Islam Terhadap Perkembangan Ilmu Pengetahuan Di Dunia Barat," *Al-Ubudiyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam*, 5.2 (2024), 286–93 <<https://doi.org/10.55623/au.v5i2.376>>.

¹⁶ Novrizal Wendi, "Pengaruh Peradaban Islam Terhadap Dunia Barat," *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 8.1 (2016), 53–68 <<https://e-jurnal.iainsorong.ac.id/index.php/Tasamuh/article/view/40>>.

students to centers of learning in Andalusia to study various fields of knowledge; and (4) the impact of the Crusades, which, despite their violent nature, indirectly opened access for Western societies to the intellectual treasures of the Islamic world. According to Huzain, although the Crusades were marked by conflict, they functioned as a cultural bridge between East and West. Through figures such as the Monarabes, Islamic knowledge was translated into Latin and disseminated across Europe, though often without proper attribution. This process accelerated the progress of Western civilization, including in areas such as military strategy and technological innovation.¹⁷

Together, these studies demonstrate that Islam, through its intellectual traditions and educational institutions, has played a significant role in the historical development of global knowledge. Its contributions were internal—within the Islamic world—and external in shaping the epistemological foundations of Western civilization.

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research. This approach aims to conduct a critical and in-depth examination of written sources relevant to Islam's role in the dynamics of global scientific development. The data utilized in this research are drawn from scholarly books, journal articles, and historical literature that discuss the contributions of Islamic education and civilization to the advancement of science, both within the Islamic world and in terms of its influence on the West.

The data analysis technique used is descriptive-analytical, which involves describing key concepts, the roles of Muslim intellectuals, and the factors contributing to the dissemination of Islamic education, followed by an analysis of their relationship to the formation of modern educational and scientific systems in Europe. This approach generates a deep and comprehensive understanding of Islam's contribution to shaping the foundations of global scientific knowledge.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Historical Dissemination of Islamic Knowledge

The history of the development and dissemination of knowledge in Islam is inseparable from the broader dynamics of Islamic civilization, which has experienced periods of glory, decline, and revival. Historians generally divide the history of Islamic civilization into three significant periods. Nourouzzaman Shiddiqy classifies them as the classical period (circa 650–1258 CE), the middle period (1258–late 17th century), and the modern period (18th century to the present).¹⁸ This periodization aligns with the view of Harun Nasution, who

¹⁷ Muh. Huzain, “Pengaruh Peradaban Islam Terhadap Dunia Barat,” *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 10.2 (2018), 355–77 <<https://e-jurnal.iainsorong.ac.id/index.php/Tasamuh/article/view/77/72>>.

¹⁸ Mardinal Tarigan, Ahmad Ardhi Mauluddin Sitorus, and Lydia Amelia, “Sejarah Peradaban Islam Sebagai Ilmu Pengetahuan,” *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal*, 4.3 (2023), 2843–52 <<https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v4i3.640>>.

categorizes Islamic history into the classical period (650–1250s), the middle period (1250–1800s), and the modern period (1800 to the present).¹⁹

a. The Classical Period (circa 650–1250 CE)

The classical period represents an era of remarkable expansion and intellectual advancement for the Islamic world, serving as the foundational stage for the emergence of a scholarly tradition that would later influence the West. This period is commonly divided into two significant phases.²⁰ First, the Phase of Expansion and Intellectual Flourishing (650–1000 CE). This phase was marked by the rapid territorial spread of Islam—from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa, Spain, Persia, India, and Central Asia. This expansion carried Islam's intellectual and cultural spirit to various parts of the world, fostering the development of major learning centers such as Baghdad, Cairo, Basra, Kufa, and Cordoba.

During this era, numerous influential thinkers emerged across various disciplines. In Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), four major schools of thought were established under the leadership of Imams Abū Hanifa, Mālik, al-Shāfiʿī, and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbāl. In theology, rationalist and dialectical thought (*kalām*) was advanced by figures such as al-Ash'arī, al-Matūridī, Wasil Ibn 'Atā', and al-Jubbaʿī. In the realm of Sufism, spiritual teachings were articulated by notable mystics such as Dhu al-Nūn al-Miṣrī and al-Ḥallāj.

This period also marked the golden age of Islamic philosophy and science. Thinkers such as al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Miskawayh developed rational philosophical systems that synthesized Greek thought with Islamic values. In the exact and natural sciences, scholars like al-Khawarizmi (mathematics), al-Razi (medicine), Ibn al-Haytham (optics), and al-Biruni (astronomy and geography) pioneered scientific methodologies that were later transmitted to the Western world through translation efforts in al-Andalus.

Second, the Phase of Disintegration and Initial Decline (1000–1250 CE). This phase witnessed the weakening of centralized political authority, the fragmentation of Muslim unity, and the intensification of sectarian and ethnocultural conflicts. The Abbasid Caliphate began to lose its power amidst the rise of minor dynasties. The peak of this decline occurred with the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258 CE, which effectively ended the Abbasid Caliphate as the symbol of political and intellectual unity in the Islamic world. Although some scholarly activity continued, it no longer reached the heights of the earlier golden period.²¹

¹⁹ Johan Wahyudhi, “Membincang Historiografi Islam Abad Pertengahan,” *Buletin Al-Turas*, 19.1 (2018), 39–48 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v19i1.3697>>.

²⁰ Fadilatul Husna and others, “Periodisasi Dan Perkembangan Peradaban Islam Dan Ciri-Cirinya,” *Journal on Education*, 5.2 (2023), 2899–2907 <<https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i2.939>>.

²¹ Linda Firdawaty, “Negara Islam Pada Periode Klasik,” *ASAS: Jurnal Hukum Ekonomi Syariah*, 7.1 (2015) <<https://doi.org/10.24042/asas.v7i1.1379>>.

b. The Middle Period (circa 1250–1800 CE)

This period is generally divided into two phases: early decline and the era of the three great empires²²—first, the Phase of Early Decline (1250–1500 CE). Following the fall of Baghdad, the Muslim world experienced deeper political and social disintegration. A sharp dichotomy emerged between Sunni and Shia communities, and tensions between Arab and Persian cultures. The Islamic world became polarized into two central regions: the Arab territories in Egypt and the Persian territories in Iran. Persian culture gradually took the lead, replacing the Arab cultural dominance in the intellectual sphere.

During this phase, the notion that the “gates of *ijtihad*” had been closed became widespread, leading to intellectual stagnation and repetition of past thoughts. Islamic sciences became entrenched in *taqlid* (uncritical adherence), while the natural and secular sciences lost prominence. Sufi orders gained influence, though not all contributed positively to intellectual life. Meanwhile, Muslims in al-Andalus faced increasing repression and expulsion by Christian forces, culminating in the fall of Islamic rule in Spain.²³

Second, the Phase of the Three Great Empires (1500–1800 CE). During this time, three major Islamic empires emerged, demonstrating continued strength in military and cultural domains: the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, the Safavid Dynasty in Persia, and the Mughal Empire in India. These three powers became symbols of Islamic resurgence in politics and the arts, particularly architecture, as exemplified by the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, the Imam Complex in Isfahan, and the Taj Mahal in Agra.²⁴

However, in the realm of scientific advancement, intellectual progress was limited. Scholarly activities did not keep pace with the rapid development occurring in Europe, which was entering the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The Islamic world remained largely stagnant and began to fall behind while Europe advanced in science, technology, and economics. Western colonization began to encroach aggressively upon Muslim territories, further accelerating the comprehensive decline of Islamic civilization.²⁵

²² Mahfudhoh Ainiyah and Agus Mahfudin Setiawan, “The Brilliant Legacy of Islam in Andalusia 711–1492: The Influence of Islamic Civilization’s Golden Age on Europe’s Renaissance,” *El Tarikh: Journal of History, Culture and Islamic Civilization*, 5.2 (2024), 104 <<https://doi.org/10.24042/jhcc.v5i2.23593>>.

²³ Hamdi Yusliani, “Pintu Ijtihad Tertutupkah?,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 6.2 (2018), 37 <<https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v6i2.3044>>.

²⁴ Sudin Yamani, Indo Santalia, and Wahyudi G, “Sejarah Perkembangan Dan Kemunduran Tiga Kerajaan Islam Abad Modern Tahun 1700-1800,” *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan*, 6.2 (2022) <<https://doi.org/10.31316/jk.v6i2.3632>>.

²⁵ Ilham Putra Pratama Pratama, Haidar Putra Daulay, and Solihah Titin Sumanti, “Pengaruh Peradaban Islam Terhadap Munculnya Renaissance Di Barat,” *Indonesian Reseach Journal on Education*, 5.2 (2025), 1337–43 <<https://doi.org/10.31004/irje.v5i2.1716>>; Hilmy Dzulfikar

c. The Modern Period (1800–Present)

This period marks a phase of revival and self-reflection among Muslims in response to the long-standing decline of Islamic civilization.²⁶ The fall of Egypt to Napoleon in 1798 served as a pivotal moment, awakening many Muslim scholars and leaders to the stark disparity between the Islamic world and the advancing West.²⁷ The astonishment at Western scientific and technological progress—evidenced by instruments such as the telescope, microscope, modern printing press, and laboratory equipment—prompted a critical question among Muslims: why had the Islamic world fallen behind, and how could it recover?

This question gave rise to various reformist movements to revitalize the Islamic world. Pioneers of this revival included figures such as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in India.²⁸ These reformers emphasized modern education, the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings, and the establishment of institutions that integrated religious and contemporary sciences. This period became a turning point for a comprehensive transformation of educational systems across the Muslim world, laying the foundation for reestablishing the connection between the Islamic intellectual tradition and the evolving currents of global scientific knowledge.

2. The Contribution of Islam to Scientific Knowledge

Historical records indicate that between the 11th and 13th centuries CE, particularly from 1050 to 1300, the Islamic world experienced a golden age marked by flourishing intellectual activity across diverse fields of knowledge. During the same period, Europe was mired in stagnation due to the dominance of ecclesiastical dogma, which significantly impeded the development of science and philosophy. Many educational institutions that had once taught the legacy of Greek thought were closed, prompting European scholars to seek centers of learning beyond their continent.

Rusydie, “Naik Dan Turunnya Peradaban Islam: Sebuah Ikhtisar,” *Tadabbur: Jurnal Integrasi Keilmuan*, 2.02 (2023), 93–112 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/tadabbur.v2i02.36255>>.

²⁶ Wawan Fuad Zamroni, “Awal Kebangkitan Islam Dan Peradabannya Pada Masa Modern: Peranan Muhammad Abduh,” *Mukaddimah: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 3.1 (2018) <<https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/pusat/mukaddimah/article/view/2751>>.

²⁷ Syahraini Tambak, “Eksistensi Pendidikan Islam Al-Azhar: Sejarah Sosial Kelembagaan Al-Azhar Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Kemajuan Pendidikan Islam Era Modernisasi Di Mesir,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah*, 1.2 (2017), 115–39 <[https://doi.org/10.25299/althariqah.2016.vol1\(2\).624](https://doi.org/10.25299/althariqah.2016.vol1(2).624)>.

²⁸ Manijo Manijo, “Rethinking Gagasan Dan Pembaharuan Muhammad Abduh Di Mesir Relevansinya Dengan Masa Depan Pendidikan Islam,” *Quality Journal of Empirical Research in Islamic Education*, 1.1 (2013) <<https://doi.org/10.21043/quality.v1i1.199>>; Ibrahim Nasbi, “Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (Pan-Islamisme Dan Ide Lainnya),” *Jurnal Diskursus Islam*, 7.1 (2019), 70–79 <<https://doi.org/10.24252/jdi.v7i1.9805>>.

The Islamic world became a primary destination due to its rich intellectual heritage, sustained by a strong scholarly spirit and substantial support from Muslim rulers. Islamic governance created a conducive environment for scientific advancement, including preserving and translating near-extinct Greek manuscripts. This situation led European intellectuals to engage deeply with Islamic scholarship by translating works by Muslim scientists or sending students to study at Islamic institutions. These interactions laid the groundwork for establishing modern European educational institutions, such as the University of Salerno and the University of Bologna in Italy.

Since the classical period, Islamic education has been a foundational pillar for developing an intellectually advanced civilization. Institutions such as madrasahs and *Bayt al-Hikmah* (House of Wisdom) were not only centers for religious instruction but also hubs for advancing rational sciences, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and philosophy. Muslim scholars like Al-Khawarizmi introduced the concept of algebra, which later became a cornerstone of modern mathematics. At the same time, Ibn Sina's *al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* (The Canon of Medicine) set medical standards that endured for centuries and served as a key reference in European medical schools.²⁹

These contributions were not limited to the exact sciences. In physics and chemistry, figures such as Al-Kindi and Jabir ibn Hayyan introduced experimental methods and the classification of chemical substances, laying the foundation for modern laboratory science.³⁰ In astronomy, observatories were established to systematically study the heavens, producing accurate astronomical tables and world maps based on mathematical calculations. Meanwhile, in the realms of history and philosophy, scholars like Ibn Khaldun and Al-Farabi pioneered analytical and reflective approaches to understanding social and political dynamics.³¹

Islamic heritage also profoundly impacted the arts, literature, and architecture.³² The Abbasid Caliphate fostered an environment in which Arabic literature flourished—both religious and secular poetry—whose aesthetic richness and thematic depth later influenced European literature through translation efforts. In the visual arts and architecture, symmetry, calligraphy, and geometric ornamentation reflected a harmonious integration of spiritual values and high aesthetic standards. Muslim geographers and astronomers such as Al-Biruni and

²⁹ Didin Saepudin, “Kedokteran Dalam Sejarah Islam,” *Buletin Al-Turas*, 12.2 (2006) <<https://doi.org/10.15408/bat.v12i2.4230>>.

³⁰ Sriyanto Sriyanto and Lia Lindawati, “Tujuh Ilmuwan Muslim Perintis Laboratorium Modern,” *Integrated Lab Journal*, 9.2 (2021) <<https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/pusat/integratedlab/article/view/2681>>.

³¹ Yosi Aryanti, “Pemikiran Ekonomi Ibn Khaldun; Pendekatan Dinamika Sosial Ekonomi Dan Politik,” *Imara*, 2.2 (2018), 151–61 <<https://doi.org/10.31958/imara.v2i2.1256>>.

³² Shubhi Mahmashony Harimurti, “Seni Pada Masa Pemerintahan Dinasti Abbasiyah Tahun 711 – 950 Masehi,” *Jurnal Kajian Seni*, 1.2 (2016), 194 <<https://doi.org/10.22146/art.11642>>; RA. Mipta Miftahul Janah and others, “Budaya Arsitektur Dalam Islam,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 6.1 (2022), 4302–4312 <<https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v6i1.3534>>.

Al-Idrisi also produced remarkably accurate maps of the Earth, surpassing the geographical knowledge possessed by Europeans at the time.

Islam's educational and intellectual contributions demonstrate that Islamic scholarly tradition has always been integrative, simultaneously spiritual and rational. The works of Muslim scientists and thinkers were foundational within Islamic civilization and instrumental in shaping global scientific knowledge. Recognizing this legacy is vital today, especially in reconstructing an Islamic educational paradigm transcending the dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge. By critically and creatively engaging with the Islamic intellectual heritage, Muslims can once again play an active role in building a just, holistic, and cosmically balanced civilization of knowledge oriented toward human well-being and universal benefit.

3. Contemporary Reflections and Challenges on Knowledge in Islam

Reflection on the history of Islamic scholarship reveals that Islamic civilization once held a central position in global knowledge development. The scientific flourishing from the 8th to the 14th century proves that Islam regards knowledge as an integral part of worship and religious practice. Muslim scholars did not merely build knowledge based on revelation. They explored rationality and the natural world, creating a harmony between faith and reason.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas emphasizes that the crisis of knowledge in the modern Islamic world is not merely due to technological backwardness or a lack of scientific innovation but is rooted in a deeper problem: a crisis of meaning, purpose, and *adab* (ethics and etiquette). According to him, knowledge has been detached from its spiritual roots and from the values of *adab* that should guide the process of inquiry, teaching, and application. Al-Attas asserts that proper Islamic education does not simply fill the mind with information but must involve a process of *ta'dīb*—the formation of a knowledgeable, ethical, and morally upright individual. In his view, *ta'dīb* is more than transmitting knowledge; it entails cultivating values, recognizing ultimate reality, and awareness of humanity's position before God and the cosmos.³³

Knowledge is not value-neutral in this framework but carries metaphysical and moral dimensions. Suppose knowledge is not developed within ethical consciousness and *tawhīd* (divine unity). In that case, it could become a destructive force toward humanity, society, and the environment. For this reason, al-Attas stresses the urgency of reconstructing knowledge in Islam. It entails reestablishing an epistemological framework that harmonizes revelation, reason, and empirical experience and integrates the natural and social sciences with spiritual values.

Al-Attas' critique presents a profound challenge to modern educational systems that often fall into utilitarianism and materialism, pursuing technical efficiency and tangible outputs while neglecting the cultivation of character, life purpose, and intellectual depth. Thus, the challenge facing Muslims is not merely

³³ Makhfira Nuryanti and Lukman Hakim, "Pemikiran Islam Modern Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 22.1 (2020), 73
<<https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v22i1.5531>>.

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to catch up in innovation but to realign the direction and goals of knowledge with the mission of Islamic civilization, grounded in justice, truth, and the common good (*maṣlahah*).³⁴

Meanwhile, Seyyed Hossein Nasr warns that the modernist project of scientific development in the West has brought serious consequences for humanity and the environment. He observes that the secularization of knowledge has stripped science of its sacred and spiritual dimensions. As a result, modern science has developed in a reductionist fashion, evaluating reality only in quantitative and material terms, without consideration of metaphysical realities or ultimate purpose. According to Nasr, this is the root cause of the ecological crisis, humanity's alienation from nature, and the misuse of technology that has led to massive disruptions in the order of life.³⁵

Nasr calls for a revival of sacred science, a paradigm of knowledge that integrates revelation, reason, and spiritual intuition in understanding reality.³⁶ Within this perspective, nature is not seen as a lifeless object to be exploited but as a manifestation of divine signs (*āyat*) filled with meaning and deserving of reverence. Science must not be separated from the principle of *tawhīd* so that its development and application remain within an ethical and spiritual framework. In this way, knowledge does not merely function as a tool for dominating nature but as a means of drawing closer to God and fulfilling humanity's trust as stewards (*khalīfah*) on Earth.

In today's global crises—such as climate change, environmental degradation, and ethical dilemmas in biotechnology and artificial intelligence—Nasr emphasizes that Islamic knowledge systems can offer an alternative paradigm that balances rationality and spirituality. Islam, through its holistic scientific tradition and orientation toward *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law), can contribute significantly to developing a sustainable and dignified civilization of knowledge.

Jasser Auda, a contemporary thinker in Islamic law, offers a transformative approach through the reconstruction of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as a methodological foundation for responding to the challenges of the modern age. According to Auda, traditional rigid approaches to *maqāṣid* often fail to address the realities of a rapidly changing world. Therefore, he proposes a systemic and multidimensional

³⁴ Ahmad Ahmad, "Konsep Ta'dib Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Dan Implikasinya Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *AN NUR: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 13.1 (2021), 32–50 <<https://doi.org/10.37252/an-nur.v13i1.98>>.

³⁵ Abduh Muhammad and Kerwanto, "Relevansi Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr Tentang Integrasi Islam Dan Sains Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *EDUMULYA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 1.2 (2023), 8–24 <<https://doi.org/10.59166/edumulya.v1i2.105>>; Nadhif Muhammad Mumtaz, "Hakikat Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *JURNAL INDO-ISLAMIKA*, 4.2 (2020), 169–78 <<https://doi.org/10.15408/idi.v4i2.17393>>.

³⁶ Zein Muchamad Masykur, Syamsun Ni'am, and Ngainun Naim, "Scientia Sacra Seyyed Hossein Nasr Perspektif Filsafat Lingkungan Dan Kontribusinya Pada Pengembangan Kajian Ekologis," *Substantia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 25.2 (2023) <<https://doi.org/10.22373/substantia.v25i2.20121>>.

framework emphasizing flexibility, contextuality, and the ethical relevance of the *sharī'ah*. In this perspective, *maqāṣid* is not merely understood in textual or legalistic terms but also functionally and visionarily as a normative framework that guides social transformation and the advancement of knowledge.³⁷

Auda emphasizes that the core values of the *sharī'ah*—such as justice (*'adālah*), freedom (*hurriyyah*), human dignity (*karāmah*), welfare (*rahmah*), and sustainability (*isti'mār*)—must serve as foundational principles in shaping an Islamic scientific ethic. It means that every academic discipline, whether in the social sciences, humanities, or natural and technological sciences, should be assessed based on how it contributes to realizing these *maqāṣid*.³⁸

This approach paves the way for a critical and creative integration between Islamic values and modern fields of knowledge, such as economics, ethical technology, inclusive healthcare, and environmental protection. By making *maqāṣid* a dynamic and responsive value framework, Auda encourages Muslims to actively engage in global knowledge production without abandoning their religious identity and principles. In his view, Islam is not an obstacle to innovation but a source of inspiration for a civilization of knowledge that upholds humanity and divinity.

Nevertheless, several fundamental challenges continue to hinder the revival of Islamic knowledge. One of the main issues is the persistent epistemological dichotomy between religious sciences (*'ulūm al-dīn*) and worldly sciences (*'ulūm al-dunyā*) within the educational systems of many Muslim-majority countries. This separation obstructs the integration of revelation and reason and confines religious knowledge to ritual and worship. In contrast, secular knowledge becomes detached from Islamic ethical and spiritual values. As a result, a generation of experts in one area emerges, fragmented intellectually yet lacking the ability to bridge knowledge and values.

On the other hand, the dominance of secular scientific paradigms rooted in modern Western traditions also presents a significant challenge. While modern science has achieved technical and empirical successes, it often neglects human existence's transcendental and spiritual dimensions. This narrative has reduced knowledge to an instrument of power and exploitation, contributing to global crises such as environmental degradation, social inequality, and moral decline.

In this context, Muslims face a crucial task: reconstructing a holistic epistemological framework that harmonizes revelation and reason, ethics and technology, as well as spiritual purpose and material well-being. This effort requires a renewal of educational curricula, the development of scientific methodologies based on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and the intellectual courage to formulate knowledge paradigms rooted in the classical Islamic tradition while remaining open to

³⁷ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shari'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (Herndon: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2010); Jasser Auda, *Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah Ka Falsafah Li Al-Tashrī' Al-Isāmī*, I (Virginia: Al-Ma'had al-'Alamī li al-Fikr al Islāmī, 2012) <https://www.jasserauda.net/images/Kamil_Maqasid_falsafatan_Arabi.pdf>.

³⁸ Syahrul Sidiq, "Maqasid Syari'ah & Tantangan Modernitas: Sebuah Telaah Pemikiran Jasser Auda," *Jurnal Agama Dan Hak Azazi Manusia*, Vol. 7, No. 1. November, 2017, 21.

contemporary scientific discoveries. Thus, Islam can be positioned not merely as a religious tradition but as a conceptual framework capable of providing direction and meaning in advancing global knowledge.

Amid global challenges such as climate change, identity crises, geopolitical conflict, and social inequality, Islamic scholarship is expected to emerge as an alternative solution emphasizing ethical values, sustainability, and public welfare. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate an intellectual ecosystem that supports interdisciplinary research grounded in spirituality and moral responsibility.

In this light, reflecting on the golden age of Islamic scholarship should not remain nostalgic. However, it must become a strategic foundation for rebuilding a dignified knowledge civilization. Islam is expected to answer scientific questions and provide direction and meaning to knowledge within the framework of *rahmah lil-'ālamīn* (mercy to all creation).

4. Addressing the Knowledge Dichotomy: Contemporary Models of Islamic Education

One of the significant challenges facing contemporary Islamic education is the dichotomy between religious sciences (*'ulūm al-dīn*) and worldly sciences (*'ulūm al-dunyā*). The legacy of colonialism and secularization has institutionalized and epistemologically separated these two domains, resulting in a fragmented education system. This fragmentation has produced generations of specialists with narrow academic focuses, often lacking comprehensive value awareness and spiritual integrity. In response, various Islamic educational institutions worldwide have begun developing integrative models that bridge this knowledge divide.

In Indonesia, UIN Walisongo Semarang has advanced the “Unity of Sciences” (*Wahdatul 'Ulūm*) approach, which seeks to integrate all branches of knowledge within the framework of *tawhīd*. Here, *tawhīd* is positioned not merely as a theological doctrine but as the foundation of epistemology and axiology. The curriculum is designed to unify Islamic, social, and natural sciences through an integral theoretical and practical perspective. This initiative aims to produce Muslim scholars with holistic thinking rooted in Islamic values.³⁹ Meanwhile, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta promotes the “Integrative-Interconnective” model, which encourages critical dialogue between Islamic sciences and contemporary knowledge through multidisciplinary research that dismantles traditional boundaries in academic inquiry.⁴⁰

³⁹ Abdul Muhaya, “Unity of Sciences According to Al-Ghazali,” *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 23.2 (2015), 311 <<https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.23.2.281>>; Junaidi Abdillah, Mahdaniyal Hasanah Nuriyyatiningrum, and Nafila Inarotussofia Miftahunnaja, “Unity of Sciences (UoS) as a Paradigm For Indonesian Islamic Family Law Reconstruction,” *Al-Adalah*, 19.1 (2022), 99–122 <<https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v19i1.10189>>.

⁴⁰ M. Iqbal Lubis, “Implementasi Paradigma Integratif Interkoneksi Dalam Pembelajaran Akuntansi,” *Eklektik: Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi Dan Kewirausahaan*, 4.2 (2021), 96 <<https://doi.org/10.24014/ekl.v4i2.15599>>; Luthfi Hadi Aminuddin, “Integrasi Ilmu Dan Agama: Studi Atas Paradigma Integratif Interkoneksi UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta,” *Kodifikasia: Jurnal Penelitian Islam*, 4.1 (2010) <<https://doi.org/10.21154/kodifikasia.v4i1.746>>.

At the global level, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) has become a leading international proponent of knowledge integration. Through the spirit of “Islamization of Knowledge,” IIUM seeks to reconstruct the epistemological foundations of modern science based on Islamic principles. Arabic and English are the primary languages of instruction, bridging classical Islamic scholarship with global academic discourse. IIUM emphasizes theoretical integration and cultivating an Islamic academic culture in campus life and research.⁴¹

Another example is Al-Quds University in Palestine, particularly through its College of Islamic Studies, which introduced the “Islamic Integrated Curriculum.” This approach aims to align Islamic sciences with the contextual challenges of Palestine and the broader Muslim world, including issues such as justice, human rights, technology, and social development. It positions *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* as the main framework for curriculum design and research orientation.

These models demonstrate that reforming Islamic education toward knowledge integration is a long-term civilizational project. The success of such approaches lies not only in curriculum design but also in institutions' ideological, political, and cultural commitment to upholding an Islamic scientific paradigm that is holistic, ethical, and responsive to contemporary challenges.

D. CONCLUSION

The Islamic scholarly tradition since the classical era has laid the foundation for the development of global knowledge, contributing significantly to various fields such as medicine, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, the arts, and geography. Islamic epistemology is inherently integrative, uniting revelation, reason, and empirical experience within a value-laden framework. However, modern challenges—such as the dichotomy of knowledge, the crisis of meaning, and the dominance of secular epistemology—have shifted the direction of scientific development in the Muslim world. Thinkers such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, and Jasser Auda offer alternative approaches that emphasize the importance of *adab*, spirituality, and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* as the ethical and philosophical foundations for knowledge development.

In response to these challenges, various Islamic educational institutions have begun to implement integrated knowledge models, such as the “Unity of Sciences” at UIN Walisongo, the “Integrative-Interconnective” model at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and the *‘Ulūm Taqwīmiyyah* model at UIN Malang, as well as international efforts at IIUM Malaysia and Al-Quds University in Palestine. These initiatives signal the resurgence of an Islamic knowledge paradigm responsive to modern contexts and faithful to Islam's transcendental values. Thus, the reconstruction of Islamic knowledge requires more than institutional reform; it also demands epistemological and ethical renewal capable of addressing the modern world's spiritual, ecological, and social crises in a holistic and visionary manner.

⁴¹ Mohammad Firman Maulana, “The Islamization of Knowledge (IOK) An Experience of International Islamic University Malaysia,” *Journal Of Creative Writing (ISSN-2410-6259)*, 3.2 (2017), 23–41 <<https://doi.org/10.70771/jocw.v3i2.32>>.

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