

AN ATTEMPT TO AN INTELLECTUAL REVIVAL OF ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

The Muslim World has been upholding the Tawhidic concept over the entire historical period, spurring the rise of the great Islamic civilization. In presenting the intellectual revival, Arabic epistemology in Islamic sciences is categorized based on the directions of its various aspects. However, without the appropriate division of sources in Islamic sciences, the combination of theory and practice has failed to bring the desired results. The Islamic sciences, as presented currently, are not commensurate with their magnitude, depth and brilliance as can be unveiled of Islamic Knowledge from many sources in the Muslim World. The gigantic sources in Islamic sciences, such as books, film, journals, manuscripts, inscriptions, etc., need to be discovered seriously and rearranged based on current requirement through re-paraphrasing the record or data collection to unleash the understanding of Arabic epistemology since the beginning of Abbasid caliphate. A significant revelation is necessary for developing a genuine Muslim scholar in attempting an intellectual revival of Islamization of Knowledge. Unfortunately, very few scholars nowadays can directly refer to and read the original from this kind of source. The inability to draw information from Classic Arabic sources has dire consequences, as the translation may not be consistent with the seeds. It is not to deny translation sources' prominent role and contribution in transferring classical knowledge. Without the translation, many sources, either in Arabic classic or standard or any other sources, would not be able to reach the new generations. The descriptive and analytic approaches demonstrate how Islamic sciences have been eclipsed, thereby diminishing its actual worth as the world's pioneer in the science of knowledge.

Keywords: Arabic Epistemology, Gigantic Islamic Sources, Revelation, Translation, Sciences of Knowledge

MAJOR ISLAMIC SOURCES

The most authentic sources in Islam are the Quran and *Hadith*. The Quran was revealed from God to Prophet Mohammad directly in different methods, either in whispers, inspiration or sometimes via *Gibril* live. However, some Western scholars are denying the authenticity of methods mentioned above. To them, the concept of transmission directly from God to a person is questionable as they have declared in their analysis on the authenticity of Ibn Abbas in *Tafsir at-Tabari*.¹ The exegesis of the Quran is a vital aspect in understanding the authenticity of the *Hadith*. The attack on Ibn Abbas as a most authentic person that can be relied on because of his status as an eyewitness companion makes him a micro system to the other transmitters of the sources. Both these authentic sources (Quran and *Hadith*) have become the literature that serves as a basis of Islamic understanding in laying a monotheistic law as foundation of the *Tawhidi* concept. Other Islamic sources focus more on constructing the development of Islamic law such as *Qiyas (analogy)* and *Ijma'(consensus)*. These four sources have become the main references of Islamic Law with the Quran preceding the *Hadith* in priority. However, these sources still need to be explained by the exegesis approach, either for the Quran or *hadith*. Those who are against Islamic Law have tried to pinpoint the inadequacy of these sources as well as the Quran and *Hadith*. They reject all reports that relate to the recording and compilation of the Quran during Prophet Muhammad's lifetime and have even denied any final compilation that occurred during Abu Bakr's reign. However, the way of Bible's compilation and authorship is still debated, thus, it is actually difficult to assign their writing and impossible to definite the accurate dating. As mentioned by M.Azami "strangely, many biblical scholars deem the text of the Old testament to be historically viable even though some of the OT books were maintained purely as an

¹ Herbert Berg (2000), *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam*, Britain: Curzon Press, pp. 3, 65, 129.

oral tradition for up to eight centuries”.² To highlight issues in association with the biblical study, the research discussion will elaborate on a fundamental level of understanding in a timeline historical discussion.

The Muslim World is already providing enough space to those interested in Islam, such as the Quranic and Hadith epistemological originality to establish a revealed knowledge³. What is the meaning of Quranic epistemology? It is the understanding of the Arabic language including syntax, morphology, rhetoric and the ability to recite the Quran properly. This epistemology – without doubt – has created an Islamic culture indirectly, which cannot be found in western universities. The revealed knowledge deals with theories to propagate the concept while the Islamic culture is a model to be propagated. In other words, without a strong fundamental theory in the Islamization of knowledge, research on the theory is lacking and it becomes an issue to be speculated. This positive aspect, however, becomes problematic when a superficial understanding of Islamic culture and propagation results in a misinterpretation of certain Islamic epistemologies.

The greatest task confronting the Muslim Ummah is to establish the Islamic curriculum. The present dualism in Muslim education is marked by bifurcation into Islamic and secular system. Both of these systems must be integrated with the philosophy from established Islamic sources providing as the main platform. The Islamic institution comprises elementary, secondary, college, and universities must focus on *Tawhid* by introducing the Quranic way of life without ignoring the contemporary subjects. The notion that Islamic schools merely serve for the teaching of memorization of *Qur'an* and teaching religious subjects such as Hadith, Fiqh, Tawhid, etc is a misconception that should be corrected. Hence, the stereotyped style of teaching in religious studies should be modified creatively. To uphold a more refined system, the contemporary study of Islamic civilization is a vital project⁴.

The Islamic Institutions should be well-preserved and prepared for microteaching of the blueprint on Kitab Turath (traditional books), without ignoring the modern system that could be merged. How do you prepare for the most effective presentation of Kitab Turat's blueprint? The definition of the term epistemology must

² M.M. Al-Azami (2011), *The History of the Quranic Text*, Second Edition, UK: UK Islamic Academy, p. xviii.

³ Ibid, p.128.

⁴ Al Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge*, IIIT 1982, p. 11.

be based on the term's derivation. There must be significant consideration given to the persistent changing of the morpho system in Islamic sources. It must be regarded as an important aspect to look into. The great Islamic scholars not only having the general principles of knowledge as their benchmark but the ability to expand the ideas via critical thinking supported by their strong of Islamic identity. The morpho system cannot be separated from syntax. Both of the language concepts have to be merged to become one.

PRIMARY ISLAMIC SOURCES TO BE REFERRED

The translation is a vital instrument to disseminate knowledge and serve as a platform in the academic world. The translated knowledge was transferred into different ways either via writing or verbal communication⁵. Both are recognized modes in the academic world. However, the ideal form of writing is in the form of 'book'. Could you imagine how you would feel if the book you are reading supposedly to tell the truth contains concealed untruth or inadvertent error? The transfer of information from one form to another must be based on sincerity for the sake of promoting the truth. But there will be an anxiety if a translator discussed the issue without having the ability in expressing ideas. Insufficient ability to transfer true knowledge to the next generations is disastrous and tragic resulting in half-cooked knowledge in the academic world. The role of translators is an important aspect in knowledge transfer. The traditional books in Islam or the Islamic sources were well written in Arabic classic. Unfortunately, very few scholars now days can directly refer and read the original from this kind of sources. The inability to draw information directly from Classic Arabic sources has dire consequences as the translation may not be consistent with the sources. This is not to deny the prominent role and contribution of translation sources in transferring the classical knowledge. Without the translation, many sources either in Arabic classic or standard or any other sources such as Greek and Latin would not be able to reach the new generations. However, a translation must be at an acceptable level to be useful. The flaw in translation stems from the inability to make appropriate accommodation from the language used and the loyalty to the contents of the text. Language and content are two different issues. It could probably be that language used in the translation is excellent but, unfortunately, the

⁵ Solehah Yaacob, *Linguistic Argumentation and Logic: An Alternative Method Approach in Arabic Grammar*. *Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal*, 3(2), 2013, pp. 409-410.

content is unsatisfactory and unreliable exemplified by the translation of a book 'Sirah an-Nabawiyah' by Ibn Ishaq⁶ into English by Alfred Guillaume on the topic 'The life of Muhammad'⁷. The language used is excellent, but the translator has twisted the fact stating that such as in the first section so chosen as mentioned by Abdul Latif Tibawi⁸ on 'The Beginning of Christianity in Najran,'⁹ in the paragraph, آخر ملوك حمير is translated as 'the last of Yamani Kings,' which in this context refers to Faymiyun, and not to both him and his admirer Salih, is translated as 'they buried him,'¹⁰ which should be 'he buried him.' For the phrase في بعض الشام 'somewhere in Syria' but Professor Guillaume has translated 'through Syria'; for بعض أرض العرب he has translated 'the land of the Arabs', and for سيارة من العرب he has simply translated 'a caravan.'¹¹ In another section 'The Affair of the Bani Qaynuqa.'¹² The word 'affair' is used wrongly 'attack' in the table of contents. Dr. Tibawi suggested the word *muḥāṣara* 'siege'; which is more accurate than 'attack'¹³. The mistranslation also mentioned in quoting al-Zuhri¹⁴, the expression used by Ibn Ishaq is *za'ama al-Zuhri* وزعم الزهري عن سعيد بن المسيب which means in this context 'al-Zuhri said on the authority of Sa'id b. Musayyab.' However, Professor Guillaume translated 'al-Zuhri alleged as from Sa'id ...'¹⁵ he dogmatically states in footnote that 'the verb implies grave doubt as to the speaker's veracity.'¹⁶

Another case in point was the translation of a book written by al-Anbari '*al-Insof Fi Masa'ila al-Khilaf*'¹⁷ by Gotham Weil into German¹⁸. There is a factual error in his introduction where his translation gave the impression that the basic idea in '*al-Insof Fi Masa'ila al-Khilaf*' stated that the Kufan School was not established by the Kufans. His evidence was that all the controversial issues among the grammarians especially between Kisaai, Fara', Khalil and Sibawayh were traced to their famous

⁶ See Ibn Ishaq, *al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, edit. Ahmad Farid al-Mazidi, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2004.

⁷ Alfred Guillame, *The Life of Muhammad*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

⁸ <http://icraa.org/the-life-of-muhammad-a-critique-of-guillaumes-english-translation/>

⁹ Alfred Guillame, *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 14-16.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.15.

¹¹ Ibid, pp.15-16.

¹² Ibid, pp. 363-364.

¹³ <http://icraa.org/the-life-of-muhammad-a-critique-of-guillaumes-english-translation/>

¹⁴ Alfred Guillame, *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 183.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 183.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 183 in footnote no. 4.

¹⁷ See the introduction of *al-Insof Fi Masa'ila al-Khilaf* by al-Anbari, 2002.

¹⁸ The first translation of *al-Insof Fi Masa'ila al-Khilaf* into Germany Leiden Publisher 1913. See Introduction in *al-Insof Fi Masa'ila al-Khilaf*, p, 11. Also see Shawqi Daif, *al-Madaris an-Nahwiyyah*, pp.155-159.

teacher Yunus Bin Habib the Basran. His arguments on the evidence mentioned by al-Anbari in the book indicated that the Kufans followed the Basrans. In fact, he only mentioned not more than four times out of one hundred twenty-one cases! In other cases, the critiques on the Arab genealogy were flawed. The Arabs can be divided into three major groups; namely the 'lost Arabs' (*al-'arab al-ba'idah*), second the 'true Arabs' (*al-'arab al-'aribah*), and third the Arabized Arabs (*al-'arab al-musta'rabah*). Evidence of these divisions are recorded in Ibn Ishaq's and Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet (al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah)*¹⁹ and Tabari's *History of the Communities and Kingdoms (Ta'rikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk)*²⁰. Most of the evidence were narrated by prominent scholars, collectors, and biographers such as 'Abd al-Salam al-Jumahi²¹, Ibn Nadim²², Ibn Ishaq²³, Hassan bin Thabit²⁴ and etc. However, the Orientalist claims that other scholars such as 'Abd al-Salam al-Jumahi (a critic of early poetry) disagreed with Ibn Ishaq that poems by Ad and Thamud proved the existence of the Arabs as a people before the time of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s). The biographer Ibn Nadim considered the verses cited by Ibn Ishaq as fraudulent and not genuine²⁵. It is a well-established fact that the corpus of ancient Arabic poetry had suffered a lot at the hands of forgers, plagiarists, misguided philologists, and dishonest narrators. For instance, a number of poems were falsely ascribed to Hassan bin Thabit, Prophet's poet. In fact, early modern Western scholarship has studied the history of the Arab people prior to Islam, as evidenced by Caussin de Perceval's *Historie des Arabes avant l'Islamisme* (1848) which took its interested readers back to the forebears of the Muslim tribes in Arabia²⁶. Another interesting work on Arab antiquity is Muller's *Realencyklopadie der Altertumswissenschaften* (1896). Even though the information contained therein has to be considered outdated, it remains a useful source for the study of the classical texts on Arabia²⁷. An attempt at compiling a complete survey of Arabs before Islam was written by D.O'Leary (1927) which is noteworthy for its inclusion of the city

¹⁹ See Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet (al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah)* Ibn Hisham, 1996. *al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, edit. Umar Abd Salam Tadmor, Beirut: Darul al-Kitab al-Arabi.

²⁰ See At-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk*, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1979.

²¹ See 'Abd al-Salam al-Jumahi, *Ṭabaqat as-Shu'ara'*, edit. Al-Lujnah al-Jami'iyah, Beirut: Dar an-Nahdah al-Arabiyyah, 1968.

²² See Ibn Nadim, *Al-Fihrist*. Tunis: Dar al- al-Ma'arif, 1994.

²³ See Ibn Ishaq, *al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah*, edit. Ahmad Farid al-Mazidi, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2004.

²⁴ See Hassan bin Thabit, Hassan Thabit, *Diwan Hassan Thabit*, edit. Wailid 'Urfat, Beirut: Dar as-Saḍir, 1974.

²⁵ Solehah Yaacob, *The Origin of Arab: A Critical Evaluation of The Sources*, Vol 58, no 2, 2014, p. 95.

²⁶ Jan Retso, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p.105.

²⁷ Ibid, p.107.

cultures which existed in ancient Yemen²⁸. Montgomery (1934) wrote his history of Arabia from an exclusive Old Testamentary viewpoint²⁹. Unfortunately, the study of pre-Islamic Arabia conducted by West scholars has suffered much from the point of its desired objectivity as it was done within such a narrow framework. This situation had occurred because the orientalist had researched well in the field but they were not detached from their needs and intentions. Regrettably, it did not fully reflect the Muslim World.

ISLAMIC EPISTEMOLOGY ESTABLISHED FROM ARABIC PRIMARY SOURCES

We should revise and reflect on the theory of Islamization of knowledge by considering the ideas and thoughts of respective prominent scholars such as Syed Naquib Al-Attas³⁰, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi and Fazlur Rahman. They have different understanding and approaches on how to “Islamize” contemporary knowledge or secular disciplines. The study of their views is important to identify the common essence and synthesis, so that a mutual understanding of Islamization of knowledge could be achieved. For instance, Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi perceives Islamization of knowledge as the integration of new knowledge into ‘the corpus of the Islamic legacy by eliminating, amending, reinterpreting and adapting its components to the worldview of Islam and its value dictates the exact relevance of Islam to the philosophy-the method and objectives of the discipline should be determined.’³¹ In other word, the Islamization of knowledge mainly involves integrating all subject disciplines into the Islamic *Weltanschauung*. Thus, the main focus of every educational activity is to instil the essence of Islamic values and beliefs which are derived from the *Quran* and *Sunnah*. All the Conferences on Islamic Education have emphasized this single criterion to assess the extent of Islamization of the goals, objectives, curricular and instructional material of an educational system. Thus, we need to reflect on this theory of Islamization of knowledge. Therefore, disintegration

²⁸ Ibid, p.106.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 106.

³⁰ see Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *The Concept of Education in Islam*. (Kuala Lumpur: The International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization,1991). *Aims and Objectives of Islamic EducationIslam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement Malaysia, 1978).

³¹ *Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective*, 14

of knowledge from its 'unitary form' will lead to 'compartmentalization of knowledge' that is contradictory to Islamic tradition.

Fazlur Rahman believes that modern knowledge has no fault, but it is not applied in the right way. He suggests that 'it is the upholders of Islamic learning who have to bear the primary responsibility of Islamizing secular knowledge by their creative intellectual efforts'. For him, the target of Islamizing several fields of learning cannot be really fulfilled unless Muslims effectively perform the intellectual task of elaborating Islamic metaphysics based on the *Qur'an*.³² It is a fact that secular western education which deals with fully acquired and human made knowledge always promotes alien ideas such as multiculturalism and tolerance that influence the learners to perceive religion as an individual's private domain, and not for their public life. Thus, the practice of this kind of knowledge should be revised meticulously from the Islamic point of view.

The Islamic epistemology is a branch of philosophy or intellectual discourse that concerns with the theory of Islamic knowledge (الإسلامية المعرفة). It discusses its sources, natures, types, branches, aims and objectives, and it can be acquired. The epistemology reflection of Quranic knowledge should rely on the relationship between syntax and semantic, but this has not been effectively clarified within the framework of traditional Arabic grammatical theory until the existence of theory of Nazm introduced by al-Jurjani³³. The purpose of the theory is to differentiate between meaning and form in a sentence. The combination of grammar and literary theory in Quran is to precisely merge the translation and stylistic in illustrate the meaning of inimitability. Means the production of eloquence or *fasahah* is not depended on single words only in producing a meaning. Thus, his major contribution to the discussion about the *'ijaz al-Qur'an* he concentrated on *ma`ani* (meaning) and *lafz* (expression). Both concepts have been subject to debate between logicians and grammarians. According to logicians, the meanings are the logical ideas that were signified by the expressions. Otherwise the grammarians concentrated on the functions of the words. According to him, *ma`na* was what determined the quality of style, and it would be absurd to attribute qualities of eloquence to the expression.

³² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

³³ Jurjani, *Dalail al-'ijaz*, 1960, p.66-67.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, the semantic technically relies on the syntactical aspects of language, as mentioned by al-Jurjani and as-Sakkākī both of whom define semantics and rhetoric as a full expression concept of knowledge. The knowledge of the expression of one meaning in multiple ways serves to avoid mistakes in the application of speech to the full expression. So, the importance of meaning can be easily demonstrated by way of relating it to the syntactical rules of declension and agency with respect to the short-vowel endings, which is affected by the governors, especially both figurative governors mentioned above: moral governor or oral governor. Thus, the inimitability of the Quranic language merges both the meaning and eloquence. The excellent combination of both theories produce the most excellent interpretation as well as the translation. The significant and remarkable combination between both concepts: syntax and semantic rigorously demonstrated the genuine product of Islamic Epistemology in Islamization Theory.