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## The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization

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### Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to demonstrate the effects of the existence and development of religion on Islamic civilization. It employs the analytical and descriptive method to analyze the data. The Islamic civilization starts from the seventh century A.D. as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born in 571 and started his mission in 610 A.D. The paper found that religion was at the heart of every civilization and has been an integral, a constitutive element in all past civilizations. A close study of the history of the civilization of mankind in the world yields one the idea that it has been religion, which is solely responsible for moderating and organizing human behaviour. It is religion, which controls and moderates the human behaviour and instincts in the social life, and obliges its followers, with a set of laws and commandments, to submit to restraint. The only internal and external agent that prevents any exercise of barbarism and savagery is definitely religion. It seeks, by encouraging and impelling man, to remind him of his dignity, self and talents, and of his role in bringing them to bud and blossom and to perfection. It makes man

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**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

enjoy a just relationship, a reasonable freedom, a safe economy, sovereign humanistic values, and on the whole, the sublime spiritual and material state. This matter is evident in crucial role of religion in setting up Islamic Civilization and its development both in religious thoughts and the manner of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

**Keywords:** Religion, Islam, Civilization, Human Being, the Prophet of Islam (PBUH).

**Introduction**

An investigation into the development of the concept of "Civilization" throughout history seems to be of great importance and can help to develop sound approach to world civilization in order to understand their genesis and characteristics. Civilization is a refined and sophisticated way of leading life. It is a polished and elegant mode of living distinct characteristic of a society. It refers to the composite system by which a society operates, attains the ideals which it cherishes and trains its members to adore the same ideals, work and live according to them as well as maintain, promote and preserve them. On that basis we differentiate people and group and identify them as savage, barbarian and modern and developed. On the other hand, Religions are deeply established patterns of life that have been distilled over centuries and eons of ongoing cultural evolution and experimentation. Religious worldviews attempt to get to what is most fundamental in human culture and human reality. They are alternative, narrative, corporate expressions of what is profoundly first, the vital core of our cultural life. Therefore, Civilization and religion and the relationship between them, are of great importance in human life. Building a civilization is a complex

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

endeavour that encompasses various factors, including economic resources, political systems, moral traditions, science, and the arts. The role of religion in the civilizational process is a fundamental concern for all thinkers. For Toynbee, an eminent British scholar who surveyed history to discover trends and laws of civilizational organization, religion took "The central place in [his] picture of the universe." (Montague, 1956: 6)

Religion is at the heart of every civilization. A creative religion promotes a creative civilization; a fragmented religion results in a fragmented civilization. This is just as true now at the beginning of the third millennium as it was six thousand years ago at the dawn of the first civilization at *Sumer* in the Fertile Crescent. According to a lot of scholars, religion was a prerequisite to the rise of any civilization. It was religion that gave man, time, and soil the spark to start a cycle of civilization (Bennabi, 1979: 45). In the early civilizations, religion, agriculture, and technology were closely intertwined. In all civilizations, cities, as opposed to villages, begin as religious centres. In all past civilizations, religion has been an integral, a constitutive element. Among other things, religion supplied the ethical basis on which the authority of the state and law was built. As a result, in all past civilizations there has been a very intimate relationship between religion and state. According to *Ibn Khaldūn*, the rise and fall of societies have been due primarily to changes in beliefs and ideas. Ideas play a major role in modifying an individual's behavior and appearance. As he says: "Only by God's help in establishing His religion do individual desires come together in agreement to press their claims, and hearts become united. The secret of this is that when hearts succumb to false desires and are inclined toward the world, mutual jealousy and widespread differences arise. When they are turned

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

toward the truth and reject the world and whatever is false, and advance toward God, they become one in their outlook. Jealousy disappears. Mutual co-operation and support flourish. As a result, the extent of the state widens, and the dynasty grows." (Ibn Khaldūn, 2005: 4, 125-126).

When Islam appeared, therefore, the Realm of Ideas developed, and social relationships between the different tribes evolved in accordance with the new ethics and values. Both *al-Muhajirun* and *al-Ansar* contributed to the improvement of the Realm of Figures, which appeared to be more functional and creative.

The religious idea that pushed society towards such a cycle of development proliferated various social, political and economic jurisdictions and pressures. Islam was what organized the biological energy of pre-Islamic society and made it responsive to the demands of history (Bunabi, 1971: 62). Islam was the 'compound' of civilization that both generated and unleashed the intellect in order to construct a Realm of Ideas through the Realm of Figures. (Bunabi, 1979: 46)

A glance at the history of mankind reveals the fact that man has, throughout history, been religious. All communities not only believed in religion but were religion-based as well, apart from their culture, spirituality, ethics, and philosophy, the material and economical and even constructional structure of ancient cities were of religious significance (Shariati, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 2, 30).

Sociologists believe that it has ever been religion that has been responsible for establishing the relationship among people, ownership, inheritance, judgment, and, generally speaking, laws. It is through the advent of credos that human communities are shaped and it is also through the shift in credos

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

that communities undergo transformation. They believe that the rise and the fall of a nation depend on its forwardness and backwardness in the realm of religion; they declare that the loss of religion is the loss of all the sublime civilizations (Kosemihal, 1977 AD/1357 SH: 569-578).

Toynbee believes that all the cultural and social activities had been of religious significance before the advent of the sublime religions distinguished religious activities from those secular. Breeding animals and plants, as an instance, was of both economic and religious importance. The agricultural- pastoral revolution might not have been realized if it had not been religious (Toynbee, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 57). Without a living religion the equilibrium of social life is soon disturbed and the society is inflicted by chaos, pessimism and despair.<sup>4</sup>

This paper attempts to study the crucial role of religion in setting up Islamic Civilization and its development both in religious thoughts and the manner of the prophet of Islam and to answer these questions: What were the characteristics and factors that led to the rise of Islamic civilization? What kind of relationship was between Islamic religion and civilization and how is such a relationship established?

#### **1. Methodology**

This study is fundamentally based on library research. It undertakes extensive study on the works on Islamic sources, with principle focus on the religious thoughts and the manner of the prophet of Islam about the essence of Islamic civilization. It will employ the analytical and descriptive method

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<sup>4</sup>- Arnold Toynbee, the great historian and the author of monumental "Study of History of civilization" in 10 volumes, after surveying all human civilizations, has reached the following conclusion: "Civilization should follow religion. The great tragedy of modern civilization is that it has broken away from religion."

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

to analyze the data. The data were reviewed and investigated in three stages; general, explorative, and focus study. This constitutes comprehensive material in an attempt to summarize the finding and conclude the result.

**2. Research Background**

A literature review similar to the current study shows that the following studies have been authored on this topic. Vahidi Manesh (2007 AD/1386 SH), in a study titled "Civilization-Building Elements of Islam," examined the civilizational elements of Islam, such as rationalism, justice, ethics, etc. Alwiri (2012 AD/1392 SH), in a study titled "The Relationship between Religion and Civilization in the Thought of Malik Ibn Nabi," criticized Ibn Nabi's theories. Velayati (2002 AD/1381 SH), in a study titled "The Role of Religion in the Creation and Continuation of Civilization," considers religion to be one of the factors and elements of civilization, and this is because the influence of religion on human societies is an undeniable fact. Mukhlisi (2001 AD/1380 SH), in a study titled "Religion, Culture, and Islamic Civilization," discusses the role of religion in the creation of civilization. The historical study of civilizations in this study showed that religion came into being first, then civilization, and with regard to the elements that created civilization, religion emphasized all of them and encouraged humanity to build civilization. Of course, it is needless to say that this article takes a new perspective and approach to this issue that is not seen in them.

**3. Religion**

Scholars writing about the meaning of religion often start by stating that it is not possible to give a definition of religion, and then often follow that up with quotations of a number of descriptions by other scholars, and end up

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

nevertheless offering their own description, or perhaps tentatively a working definition. In an optimistic we can say that: "Religion basically can be defined as: "An explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly." Normally all religions contain the four "C's": "Creed, Code, Cult, Community-structure, and are based on the notion of the Transcendent."

First a few words recalling how the term religion is understood here:

Creed refers to the cognitive aspect of a religion; it is everything that goes into the "Explanation" of the ultimate meaning of life.

Code of behavior or ethics includes all the rules and customs of action that somehow follow from one aspect or another of the Creed.

Cult means all the ritual activities that relate the follower to one aspect or other of the Transcendent, either directly or indirectly, prayer being an example of the former and certain formal behavior toward representatives of the Transcendent, like priests, of the latter.

Community-structure refers to the relationships among the followers.

The Transcendent, as the roots of the word indicate, means that "Which goes beyond" the every-day, the ordinary, the surface experience of reality. It can refer to spirits, gods, a Personal God, an Impersonal God, Emptiness, etc. (Swidler, 2014: 7-8)

Also apparent in this definition is that religion offers an explanation of the ultimate understanding of life; but it is an explanation of the meaning of Ultimate Reality and how Ultimate Reality relates to all finite reality, and most especially to us humans. The ancient Greeks spoke of Ultimate Reality as Theos, God. Religion is much more than just an intellectual explanation of the ultimate meaning of life; it Religion is much more than just an

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

intellectual explanation of the ultimate meaning of life. For example, in the three Semitic, or Abrahamic, religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all the following terms mean the way. In Islam, the traditional way to live a correct life was to follow the *Shar'ia*, an Arabic term for the way—specifically the path to find water in the desert; it also, analogous to *Halacha* in Judaism, came to mean the myriad legal decisions that should be followed by the devout Muslim. Much the same is also true for the major religions that come out of India—Hinduism and Buddhism- and far east-Taoism and Confucianism (ibid: 9-10).

Religion can be defined as belief in a supernatural power to be obeyed and worshipped and its expression in conduct and ritual. Here I use religion in the broad, functional sense as referring to those worldview beliefs that determine cultural values and individual motivation and behavior.

**4. Civilization**

The term "civilization" is widely used by historians, anthropologists, and other workers in the social sciences, but it has no single, fixed meaning. Thus, any discussion of the concept must begin with the question of definition.

Literally speaking, the root of "civilization" in Greek is to lie, lie outstretched, and be located. A city is thus a *lie*, in which the citizen makes his bed on which he must lie down. The term civilization is also derived from the Latin word *civites* which means a city and *Civis* which means the inhabitant of a city, or *Civilis* that means civility or what is related to the inhabitant of a city. It means also a citizen (Weinert, 1973: 613; Edwards, 1967: 273; Coomaraswamy, 1989: 1).

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

In modern English, it derived its meanings from its Greek-Latin roots as well as the cultural traditions of the West. *The Oxford Thesaurus* helps in clarifying the meanings of civilization in English usage. In this book, five terms are interlinked; first, the city which is the metropolis, the municipality, the town. Second is the citizen who is the resident, the inhabitant and the dweller of the city or the town. Third is civility which means courtesy, politeness, respect, urbanity, amiability... fourth is civilization which has two meanings; on the one hand, it is refinement, cultivation, enlightenment, edification, sophistication, polished. On the other hand, it is culture, mores, customs. Fifth, is the verb "Civilize" which means enlightened, refined, polished, edified, educated and acculturate on the one side. On the other side, it means to tame, domesticate, broaden, elevate, and acculturate (Urdang, 1992: 62).

In the Islamic scientific context, literal and terminological definitions are discussed in order to follow the line of development in the usage of terms which denote civilization. To begin with, in Arabic, the current usage of the term *hadharah* is used as a synonym of the English word "Civilization". In the famous traditional dictionary of the Arabic language *Lisān al-'Arab*, it means presence as opposed to absence...Sedentary vis-a-vis Bedouin. It has a relationship with the term *hadhirah* which means a city or big community (Ibn Manzur, 1968: 4, 196-197). It also means staying in a city as opposed to Bedouin...also the inhabitant of the cities and villages (Bustani, 1970: 175).

"The Persian intellectuals have coined two terms for civilization, namely, *Madaniyat* and *Tamaddun*... the Turks, on the other hand, use the term *Medeniyet* and also *Medeniyeti* in the meaning of civilization... in East Africa, the speakers of the Swahili language have been using the term

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

*Utamaduni* (derived from Arabic *Tamaddun*) as the term for civilization... in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh there is no universally accepted term for civilization. The speakers of Urdu and Bengali have been using two words (sometimes interchangeably) to express the sense of culture and civilization, viz., *Tahdhīb* (*Tahdhīb*) and *Tamaddun*. Some Pakistani Urdu lexicographers use the term *Tahdhīb* in the dual sense of culture and civilization, but they restrict the use of *Tamadun* in the sense of civilization... Bangali Muslim intellectuals have used the word *Tamadun* in the sense of culture. They also use the word *Tahdhīb* in the sense of civilization... on the other hand, the Malays of Malaysia and Indonesia unanimously use the word *Tamaddun* (popularly spelt as *Tamaddun*) as the term for civilization." (Beg, 1982: 20)

Historically speaking, one could mention the first changes brought to the Arab society by the coming of Islam, especially by the migration (*Hijra*) of the prophet Mohammed (PBUH) from *Mecca* to *Madinah*. He changed the name of the city of *Yathrib* to *Madinah* (a city). Furthermore, he made changes in the basis of the social relationships. Instead of the tribal based relationships, he based it on an idea. It is the religious idea of brotherhood that brought together different people from a different social status and different ethnic groups to form a new web of social relationships. This later transformed the culture of people from Bedouin, tribal paganism into a civil ideational Islamic culture, which made the input for a new civilizing process and new civilizational entity (cf. Benlahcene, 2006: 50-60).

In other words, the city is the starting point of any civilizing process, and there are arguments amongst archaeologists, pre-historians, ancient historians and sociologists over the origins of civilization and the place of

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

cities within the civilizing process (Holton, 1986: 2). Thus, the Prophet (PBUH), as the founder of a new society and a new civilization, realized that there must be some development of urban society. That is, of city life, so that the culture is not nomadic, tribal, dispersed, and thus unable to leave significant and surviving physical remains of its presence. In this regard, he established the city of *Madinah* since his first day of migration, for *Madinah* was meant to be the nucleus for the civilizational transformation that took place after the advent of Islam.

In cultural terms, it is evident that the notion of "City," as being indicative of a discrete way of life, was available throughout the history in the Muslim world since the establishment of *Madinah*. In this regard, there can be little doubt that Islamic as well as all civilizations in world history have developed significant central places in which key social functions are located and where the population have congregated. For example, we can mention the establishment of *Koufah*, *Basrah*, *Damascus*, *Baghdad*, *Cairo*, *Bukhara* and other cities in the Muslim world, for these cities to be centers of civilized sedentary life. Furthermore, it is clear also that many Islamic traditions are focused on the city (or *Madinah*) with its mosque, bathhouse, and markets as the locality wherein a devout life could be achieved (Holton, 1986: 120-121).

### **5. The Relationship between Religion and Civilization**

According to the material that has been discussed in explaining the nature of religion and civilization, the relationship between these two categories and their limits and boundaries also become clear. As it turned out, religious thought in its broadest sense establishes the foundation of civilization and, fundamentally, civilization would not be possible without it; because if

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

civilization is a set of material and spiritual factors in which individuals can provide all the collective tools and platforms necessary for progress, this would not be possible without the presence of a comprehensive and organizing idea. Therefore, one of the most important aspects of religion in civilization is presenting the idea and thought of civilization, which religion in every sense has the ability to do.

On the other hand, religious teachings, rituals, ceremonies, practices, orders, and laws are directly present in the structure of civilization, and aspects of civilization are formed accordingly. Such civilizational influence in religion is possible in its second meaning, because human schools, due to their denial of holiness and lack of belief in the sacred, do not have specific religious rituals, behaviors, laws, etc. that can be observed in a civilizational context.

Another aspect of the relationship between religion and civilization is the manifestations of civilization that have emerged in line with the implementation of religious teachings and related requirements. For example, mosques, churches, and temples are manifestations that are created due to the fulfillment of religious worship and prayer; the category of art has a different appearance in interaction with the teachings of different civilizations, and in fact, the religious thought regarding the said civilization determines its limits and boundaries.

If we call civilization the embodiment of the creativity of mankind and a manifestation of his taste and capability, and if we interpret civilization as the external manifestation of man's internal needs, and if we regard civilization as the performance of systematic designs of human thought, we

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

shall certainly find out that civilization is the essence and the product of man's thought (Zarrinkoob, 1369: 27).

If religion is what Allah sent to man through His Prophets as the Guides of the Path, to render him prosperous and perfect in this world and in the afterlife, one cannot, therefore, accept that religion whose aim is but to lead man to multi-dimensional maturity and perfection, is not first and foremost in establishing culture and civilization. Islam<sup>5</sup> presents man as Allah's caliph on the earth, and obliges him to bring prosperity to the land and commands him to think, meditate and ponder prudently on all the various arenas of the existence. It ever attempts to create the background for the formation of individual dual talent to make man demonstrate his own aptitude, creativity, and innovation through learning and education, in skills and crafts.

Civilization is "a developed or advanced state of human society; a particular stage or a particular type of this". It is also the humanization of man in society ... to civilize is to bring out of a state of barbarism, to instruct in the arts of life and thus elevate in the scale of humanity; to enlighten, refine, and polish. In another instance, to civilize is to domesticate. It is the act of

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<sup>5</sup>- There is a distinction that it is important to make in any discussion of Islam. The word '*Islam*' is used with at least three different meanings, and much misunderstanding can arise from the failure to distinguish between them. In the first place, *Islam* means the religion taught by the Prophet Muhammad and embodied in the Muslim revelation known as the Qur'an. In the second place, *Islam* is the subsequent development of this religion through tradition and through the work of the great Muslim jurists and theologians. In this sense, it includes the mighty structure of the *Shari'a*, the holy law of Islam, and the great corpus of Islamic dogmatic theology. In the third meaning, *Islam* is the counterpart not of Christianity but rather of Christendom. In this sense Islam means not what Muslims believed or were expected to believe but what they actually did, in other words, Islamic civilization as known to us in history." (Lewis, 1990: 20)

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

domestication. Religious beliefs are the "compound" of civilization, since it stimulates the spirit to elevate society above the status quo. As religion was a prerequisite for all civilizations, an element assimilated by society before any civilizational cycle could begin. Civilizations have ever been indebted to their respecting man and discovering his needs and meeting those needs in the course of development and evolution.

Civilization in an Islamic perspective is a broad concept. It relates to the entire phenomenon of human life, its origin, purpose and ... In Arabic, the two words: *Thaqafa* and *Hadara* are used to signify culture and civilization. *Thaqafa* is "an equivalent to the German *Bildung*, came to stand for culture, normally taken to designate intellectual and artistic life in a manner strongly elitist in character, and *Hadara* was used for civilization, taken as more general concept indicating the entire life of a society including material life." (Al-Azmeh, 2001)

**6. Man and His Role in Making Civilization**

Man occupies a central position in making Civilization. He is "the primary society device; if he moves, society and history will move, but if he pauses, society and history will pause." (Bennabi, Hadith, 50) Thus the challenge faces by Muslims is to create men who could use soil, time, and their own creativity to reach their goal in history (Bennabi, 1979: 75).

Man has two identities. The first, fixed and unaffected by history, is that of a natural creature honoured by his creator.<sup>6</sup> The second identity, changeable

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<sup>6</sup>- The honor (*takrim*) of man is a purely Islamic concept. According to Islamic doctrine, man was created of two contradictory elements: mud and the spirit of God. In addition to his two dimensional nature, man was given a brain, his means of learning, thinking, and deciding. Therefore, he attained superiority over all other creatures, including angels, and became God's vicegerent.

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

and influenced by history and social circumstances, is that of a social entity (Bennabi, 1977: 180). It is the socio-historical structure of man which has the greater importance. Throughout history man has interacted with time and space not as a natural creature but as a social personality.

Therefore, what is crucial to civilization is man. Man is the greatest, the most important, and the most essential factor for the stability of culture; and the light and brightness of civilization lie in its view of the dignity and the rights of man; the development and the continuity of the civilization, however, depends on its paying homage to the dignity of man. Man is that complex being who constructs civilization. But man is also a product of civilization, a result of both its material and non-material aspects. Man affects his society through intellect, knowledge and labour. By using these interrelated areas, one may create a human centered development (Bennabi, 1979: 77). It can be said that civilizations have ever been indebted to their respecting man and discovering his needs and meeting those needs in the course of development and evolution.

#### **7. The Dignity of Man**

With regard to religious thoughts originating from the Qur'an and Tradition, man has a unique and dignified state; man is Allah's caliph (Qur'an 2:30) with a miraculous greatness deserving the prostration of all the angels (Qur'an 18:50). He knows all the names of Allah (Qur'an 2:31); he was granted the knowledge, which even the angels lack (Qur'an 2:32). Anyone granted knowledge has indeed been granted a great good (Qur'an 2:269). He is the one created in the best make (Qur'an 95:4). God taught him the mode of expression (55:3-4). God made what is in the heavens and what is in the

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**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

earth subservient to him (Qur'ān 31:20). Man has so great a dignity in Islam that the holy prophet says to people that he demands of them no recompense for his carrying out the mission (Qur'ān 42:23). God would have never created the world if it had not been for the sake of the Holy Prophet. He was not like the companion of the fish, who abandoned his people (Qur'ān 68:48).

In the Islamic teachings it is taken for granted that the Islamic civilization is man - centered. It was because of the dignity that Islam gave to man, the worthless people of the Peninsula, most of them baser than animals, then, found suddenly themselves honored and freed. They made attempts to make and develop their civilization as a result.

**8. Significance of Knowledge in Islam and Its Role in Making Civilization**

The history of human social evolution is also a history of knowledge development. Throughout history there has existed an essential linkage between knowledge and the growth of civilizations. Civilizations have always been enriched, and not weakened, by the exchange of knowledge and arts. Civilization essentially is a knowledge structure crystalized from human practice. The subject of civilization is humanity itself, as humans are the agents of practice. The ultimate cognitive achievements of human practice are condensed into a knowledge system, where knowledge guides practice and is continuously improved through practice. In terms of assessing a civilization, technology, institution, and culture all ultimately condense into a knowledge system, reflecting the level of progress in human understanding across multiple dimensions. As for the achievements of civilization, the fundamental achievement of human civilization lies in the

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

formation of a knowledge system. Furthermore, this knowledge system can be inherited and accumulated across time and space, allowing human civilization to advance along the path of knowledge.

That is why; the dignity of man in Islam is based on his degree of knowledge. In no religion or religious school has knowledge ever been much recommended than it has been in Islam. Throughout all its chapters and verses, the Qur'an emphasizes the significance of knowledge and encourages Muslims to learn and to acquire knowledge not only of God's laws and religious injunctions, in a language rich in its varied terminology, to the importance of seeing, contemplating, and reasoning about the world of creation and its diverse phenomena. It places the gaining of knowledge as the highest religious activity, one that is most pleasing in God's eyes. That is why wherever the message of the Qur'an was accepted and understood, the quest for knowledge flourished.

The Qur'an repeatedly invites people to think and meditate on the universe and to reflect on the secrets of the divine signs (Qur'an 7:185). The greatest reverence is for the learned; In the Qur'an those who know and those who do not know are not alike (Qur'an 39:9). "Allah will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees; and Allah is aware of what of what you do." (Qur'an 58:11) The witness of those possessed of knowledge is beside the witness of Allah and that of angels (Qur'an 3:17). The Qur'an gives good news to those who listen to other's ideas and opinions and accept but the best of them (Qur'an 39:18). Following what is not based on knowledge is repudiated (Qur'an 17:36). There should be no talking of what one has no knowledge of (Qur'an 11:46). One should not obey one's parents if they contend with one that one

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

should associate with Allah what one has no knowledge of (Qur'ān 31:15). There are verses in abundance on the significance of knowledge and the dignity of the learned. The Holy Prophet regards the learned as those on who are bequeathed the knowledge of the prophets (Ghazzali, 1973: 1, 5). He also compares seeking knowledge to worshipping Allah (Haji Khalifa, 1992: 1, 13). It was these recommendations and encouragement (Kulaynī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 1, 27) that caused the Muslims to be enthusiastically burning with the desire to learn and to tolerate all the difficulties so that no setback could hinder them from realizing their ambitions.

**9. The Role of Islamic Teachings in Making Civilization**

Of the features of learning, acquiring, adapting, and publishing knowledge is to have tolerance. The following are some illustrations. "Seek knowledge even if it is in China." (al-Ghazzali, 1973: 1, 14) "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim." (Kulaynī, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 1, 30) "Knowledge is the lost property of a believer. Thus, acquire it even if it is in the hands of the polytheists." (Ibn 'Abd al-Birr, 1994 AD/1415 H: 1, 122) This kind of learning and publishing various types of knowledge with no prejudice expounds the nature of the Holy Prophet's granting freedom to any captive who could in the Battle of Badr teach reading and writing to any ten children of Madinah. Moreover, he encouraged his companions to learn Arabic and Syriac to translate scientific texts (Ibn Athīr, 1864 AD/1285 AH: 2, 222).

The Tradition quoted from the Holy Prophet that any one setting out in search of knowledge is equal to a wagger of a holy war in the path of Allah and he is a martyr if he dies during the mission (Rey Shahri, 1984 AD/1363 SH: 6, 465), motivated Muslims even in the early Islamic period to make

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

journeys in pursuit of knowledge. The belief of the Muslim that knowledge is infinite was the reason why they made use of the current knowledge of the age adding their own theories and discoveries to it in the meantime, enhancing the status of knowledge as a result, which reached its apex of development in the 11th century A.D. During most of its history, Islamic civilization has been witness to a veritable celebration of knowledge. That is why every traditional Islamic city possessed public and private libraries and some cities like Cordoba and Baghdad boasted of libraries with over 400,000 books. Such cities also had bookstores, some of which sold a large number of titles. That is also why the scholar has always been held in the highest esteem in Islamic society.

Islam is a religion for all people from whatever race or background they might be. That is why Islamic civilization is based on a unity which stands completely against any racial or ethnic discrimination. Such major racial and ethnic groups as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese and Malays in addition to numerous smaller units embraced Islam and contributed to the building of Islamic civilization. Moreover, Islam was not opposed to learning from the earlier civilizations and incorporating their science, learning, and culture into its own world view, as long as they did not oppose the principles of Islam. Each ethnic and racial group which embraced Islam made its contribution to the one Islamic civilization to which everyone belonged. The sense of brotherhood and sisterhood was so much emphasized that it overcame all local attachments to a particular tribe, race, or language-all of which became subservient to the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Islam.

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

The global civilization thus created by Islam permitted people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to work together in cultivation various arts and sciences. Although the civilization was profoundly Islamic, even non-Muslim "People of the book" participated in the intellectual activity whose fruits belonged to everyone.

The global civilization created by Islam also succeeded in activating the mind and thought of the people who entered its fold. As a result of Islam, the nomadic Arabs became torch-bearers of science and learning. The Persians who had created a great civilization before the rise of Islam nevertheless produced much more science and learning in the Islamic period than before. The same can be said of the Turks and other peoples who embraced Islam. The religion of Islam was itself responsible not only for the creation of a world civilization in which people of many different ethnic backgrounds participated, but it played a central role in developing intellectual and cultural life on a scale not seen before.

The Abbasids employed translators such as from *Hunayn* household to rend the rational and philosophical sciences from Greek and Syriac into Arabic. They also supervised the translation into Arabic of the Iranian medicine, the Indian and the Chinese mathematics and geometry by employing the Iranian translators. Muslims then according to their religious teaching's emphasis tried to learn and develop sciences. After a few centuries, especially after the Crusade, Europeans received these sciences from Muslims by way of *Sicily*, and Spain. These "Sciences" were among the important factors, which brought Middle Ages to an end (Ghonaim, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 73). Islam's encouraging people to learn knowledge regardless of considerations of religion, race, and language made Muslims learn all the sciences from

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

non- Muslims and non- Arabs with an exemplary tolerance and teach them to others without receiving any recompense. In the history of science in Islam, there are numerous instances of teachers who taught students all the sciences accessible to them without receiving any wages. The same spirit was the root cause of establishing schools of higher education in Islamic territories: "Nizameyyah schools, al-Azhar University, and Qrouyiyeh School are of those inaugurated before the establishment of the universities of Paris and Oxford in the twelfth century." (ibid: 152).

The growth of knowledge seeking and spread of it among Muslims was so remarkably astonishing that it would be interpreted as a grand movement or a scientific revolution: The emergence of wisdom-houses, libraries, handscripts, the distribution of copies throughout the Islamic territories, developing ophthalmology and the emergence of various kinds of clinical sciences in medicine such as treatment of smallpox, measles, cardiovascular ailments, bubonic plagues, leprosy, and manufacture of different kinds of syrups and drugs and carrying out different surgical operations are all signs of the Muslims undertaking the development of science and its different branches (Kisā'ī, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 164).

The tendency of Muslims towards tourism industry and empirical-objective investigation of historical-subjective phenomena brought about the appearance of numerous books in geography such as *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* (the roads and the countries), *al-Buldān* (the regions), *al-Amsar* (the cities) and *Ahsan al-Taghasim*-the best classification (Maqdisī, 1906: 96). In chemical sciences Muslims also did much, as *Jābir Ibn Ḥayyān* was the pioneer of the alchemists. In mathematics, Muslims had remarkable works too, as *al-Khārazmī* was the founder of algebra and author of the

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

book *Jabr wa Mughabilah* (algebra and contrast); the name of the science of algebra in European languages was derived from the name of his book. Publishing some books on theological, philosophical and astrological concepts was an embodiment of tolerance among Muslims; it also showed their fascination with types of different sciences (Hitti, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 967).

The following are of the manifestations of the Islamic civilization and its growth. The creation of different advanced kinds of administrative systems, establishment of *Divans* (offices) like the army office, the judiciary office, the revenue and tax office, the police office and the establishment of a regular system of post and communication, employing pigeons and special messengers, introducing the archives system for keeping the records and copies of the Caliphs decrees and commands for future reference, establishment of tax-collection system and spending those taxes on the construction of public places such as *Karavansaras* (inns), bridges, schools, hospitals, mosques, roads, etc (Ibrahim Hassan, 1987 AD/1366 SH: 55).

Possibly one can say that Islamic civilization had access to the ancient cultures of the East and the West, but neither did it imitate nor did it extend the already-existing cultures; rather it only blended and made them perfect which unfortunately was terminated by the Mongol invasion. It was a period of construction and perfection- it was the time to make a universal and human culture.

In the realm of such a prevailing Islamic civilization, various elements did certainly share: Hebrew, Greek, Indian, Iranian, Turkish and even Chinese. However, the original resource of this newly emerged civilization called the Islamic culture and civilization, which was divine, and in the service of

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

man, was simply Islam; it was neither of the East nor of the West. The Islamic community having witnessed the preceding civilizations was a harmonious one and the Qur'an oriented. The center of this civilization was not *Sham* (Syria) or Iraq. Since the spirit of this culture and civilization was Islamic, the very spirit united different peoples such as Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Indians, the Chinese, Mongols, Africans, etc. It transferred the advantageous achievements of each people to the others, thus making a unique civilization (Zarrinkoob, 1990 AD/1369 SH: 29-31).

On the whole, it can be concluded that the role of religion and religious teachings in making the Islamic civilization and its advancement was vital and indispensable. These religious teachings imposed restraints on and brought order to the uncontrolled manners of the all-wide people. Those oppressors who used to violate the rights of people underwent (led by religion), a character transformation honoring the rights of people as a result. The religion made the Arabs experience civilization both internally and externally.

**a) The internal one:** The religious teachings moved the people to accept justice and truth by promising the pious paradise and the eternal blissful abode, and by threatening the wicked with Hellfire where they shall remain.

**b) The external one:** these teachings punished the oppressors and honored the pious by enactment, which emancipated man from barbarism and led him to moderation and temperance, so this temperate man could make the civilization.

### **10. The Prophet's Manner**

It becomes crystal clear, through a survey of the Prophet's Tradition that his greatest social miracle, second only to the Qur'an, is his founding the

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

Islamic civilization. In Madinah, the Prophet established the first Islamic society which has served as the model for all later Islamic societies. Having been invited to Yathrib by the ever-quarrelling tribes, namely *Aws* and *Khazraj*, he emigrated from Mecca to Madinah; initially, he undertook to introduce the legislation entitled "*The Law of the Society*" in the light of which the quarrels were removed.

The first stone of the foundations of a civilization is, without dispute, law that distinguishes civilization from barbarism. It was a miracle to establish the law in a community to which lawlessness was the absolute value; the enforcement of law was still greater.

The Holy Prophet turned Yathrib into Madinah by the law. A survey of the law comprising of 54 articles renders some important points to us such as the following.

- 1) Equality of all the citizens concerning Muslims, Jews and Christians before the law.
- 2) The citizens' enjoying an equal and fair right regardless of their race, language, and religion.
- 3) Emphasis on the dignity of man and regarding him with reverence.
- 4) Emphasis on the enforcement of law and punishing lawbreakers.
- 5) The submission exclusively of the enforcement of law to the central state and eradication of the tribal system.

The Prophet attentively and scrupulously pursued the law enforcement. Since he was the most faithful one to the law and practiced more than everyone did, in him was the excellent exemplar for others and in him was the absolute epitome of good manners. Therefore, abiding by the law, which is the basis of civilization, flourished as a good manner throughout so that

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

the Arabs who used to avoid any law, now asked the prophet for the manner of drinking water, sleeping, and walking. This mannerism in the Islamic teachings is known as the Prophet's Tradition and manners.

The Madinah period of the Prophet falls into three phases:

1. The legislation period;
2. The law enforcement period;
3. The Islamic state formation period.

The state as an embodiment of civilization founded by the Prophet brought Arabia out of the age of ignorance and barbarism into the light of civilization.

The Holy Prophet did, moreover, by encouraging Muslims to pursue knowledge and to develop a sense of liveliness, blow a spirit of cooperation and tolerance into the body of the society, which removed all the ancient worldly fanaticism. He enjoined the right path on Muslims to facilitate the progress and perfection of knowledge against the monastic life of the Church, which commended leading the life of a recluse to the people. The spirit of tolerance and moderation had departed from the world when Islam entered. Of the two great powers of the period, Rome was keeping aloof from knowledge and philosophy fanatically and was seeking in an ever-increasing obsession. The closing down of philosophical activities by Justinian was the embodiment of the impending severance of the world of Rome with civilization and knowledge. The situation in Iran of that time was not good either. To the world enthralled by religious and tribal fanaticism, Islam inspired a new spirit. Establishing the seat of Islam, which was the Qura'n-oriented, ended the tribal – racial fanaticism through a kind of “the world as home” treatment and against the religious fanaticism the

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

Christians and the Zoroastrians it enjoined tolerance and respecting covenant to people concerning the Followers of the Book. It was this unique tolerance and unprejudiced outlook that brought forth cooperation and collaboration among various nations and tribes in the realm of Islam; it was required for the development of the real civilization and provided a peaceful coexistence among heterogeneous characteristics.

**11. Key Characteristics of Islamic Civilization**

Islamic civilization refers to the cultural, social, intellectual, and artistic achievements and developments that have emerged within societies that are predominantly influenced by Islamic principles and values. It is important to note that Islamic civilization is not confined to a single geographic location or time period; rather, it encompasses a wide range of societies and periods throughout history that have been shaped by Islamic beliefs, practices, and teachings. Islamic civilization exhibits distinctive features that have contributed to its enduring legacy. The following are key **characteristics** that define the Islamic civilization:

**11.1. Monotheistic Foundation**

At the core of Islamic civilization lies the concept of monotheism. Islam proclaims the belief in the absolute oneness of God, free from any partners or associates in His rule. This unique understanding of monotheism liberates the human intellect from servitude to earthly powers and religious authorities, fostering an intellectual environment conducive to exploration and progress. The Islamic civilization was built upon the teachings of Islam, as laid out in the Quran (the holy book) and the Hadith (the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad). The concept of monotheism (belief in one God), ethical guidelines, and the principles of social justice and

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

compassion formed the basis of this civilization. These were reflected in Islamic art, literature, and philosophy, emphasizing unity and oneness. Islamic art across diverse regions shares a common style and character, reflecting the vertical direction pointing upward towards unity.

#### **11.2. Universality and Human Inclination**

The Islamic civilization's universal outlook recognizes the inherent unity of humankind despite differences in race, nationality, and ethnicity. The Quran explicitly acknowledges the oneness of humanity. Islam upholds the values of equality, justice, dignity, and goodness as the cornerstones of its civilization. This inclusive message attracted brilliant minds from various backgrounds, contributing to the intellectual richness of Islamic civilization.

#### **11.3. Moral Foundation**

The Islamic civilization places strong moral principles at the heart of its systems, whether political, economic, familial, scientific, or military. Moral values guide legislation, governance, and interpersonal relationships. This emphasis on ethics distinguishes civilization from approaches that prioritize expediency over principles. The legacy of Islamic morality reinforces the idea that the ends do not justify the means.

#### **11.4. Quest for Knowledge**

One of the hallmarks of Islamic civilization is its unwavering pursuit of knowledge across disciplines. This pursuit engages both rational and emotional faculties, fostering a balanced intellectual environment. Islamic civilization nurtured an intellectual framework grounded in truth, justice, religion, and belief. Islamic civilization is renowned for its emphasis on education and the pursuit of knowledge. Islamic scholars preserved and

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyedeh Suzan Anjomrooz**

expanded upon the works of ancient civilizations like Greece, Rome, Persia, and India.

The establishment of madrasas (educational institutions) facilitated the transmission of knowledge in fields such as theology, philosophy, law, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and more. The dissemination of knowledge from centres such as Cairo, Cordoba, Damascus, Baghdad, and Granada had a global impact. Knowledge was accessible to all seekers, irrespective of social status, clergy, or wealth.

**11.5. Religious Tolerance**

Islamic civilization stands out for its exceptional religious tolerance. Despite being rooted in a single religion, it embraced and respected diverse beliefs and invited people of different faiths to coexist harmoniously. Unlike instances of religious persecution or discrimination, the Islamic civilization demonstrated a commitment to treating individuals of various or no beliefs with equality and justice. This tolerance exemplified the greatness of civilization. Islamic civilization often exhibited cultural tolerance, allowing diverse groups to coexist and contribute to the overall fabric of society. This inclusivity allowed for the assimilation of various artistic, scientific, and intellectual traditions (Ashimi, 2016: 181-2).

**Conclusion**

Historical observations show that religion, even in its most limited sense, has been related to civilization and has played a fundamental role in building civilization. The history of Islamic civilization is the most important evidence of this. The essential point is in the way in which religion has been present in civilization and plays its role. What seems to be

### **The role of religion in the formation of Islamic civilization**

that if religion can lead to the creation of a flourishing and developed culture through the passage of culture and create a constructive interaction between cultural elements, it will go beyond the scope of its culture and geography and will gradually create its own civilization. Because culture is the origin of civilization, which flows like blood in its body, and because it contains religious thought, it is not a mere human acquisition, but the environment for man and the framework in which he moves. It is this religious thought that, as the main essence of culture, provides the basis for its expansion to the level of civilization by producing a superior culture. Of course, the characteristics and components of such religious thought are also important in accomplishing this task. Because there are so many cultures that have remained at the cultural level, and this is because of the type of religious thought that has failed to make it flourish.

It was in Islam that man embraced dignity and undertook to make civilization. The Prophet made *Madinah* the centre of Islamic state in accordance with the religious teachings for the first time. This state was considered as an illustrative manifestation of civilization and the Muslims took up, following the example of the Prophet, to seek and spread knowledge, which was the foundation of the Islamic civilization. What helped Muslims in their pursuit of knowledge was their spirit of tolerance and ease, which would never hinder them from learning knowledge and techniques from non- Muslims. It was also the very spirit that brought about peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-muslims. It was in itself the immediate cause of the removal of all the quarrels and conflicts, which eventually led to establishing a society cherishing security, peace and welfare indispensable for making civilization and to its continuation. In this

**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

way, Islam created a civilization with characteristics such as monotheistic foundation, universal outlook, moral principles, pursuit of knowledge, and religious tolerance. These features not only contributed to the civilization's intellectual and artistic achievements but also set it apart as a beacon of humanity and progress. The legacy of Islamic civilization continues to inspire and shape the world, reflecting its commitment to unity, justice, and knowledge for all.

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**Ghorban Elmi, Masoumeh Fat'hi, Seyyede Sazan Anjomrooz**

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