Studying Islam in an age of disruption: towards knowledge integration

Asfa Widiyanto
State Islamic University (UIN) Salatiga, Indonesia
Email: widiyanto_asfa@daad-alumni.de

Abstract

This paper tries to offer an approach to studying Islam in the contemporary age by taking into account the socio-political contexts which surround the present-day Muslim communities. Islamophobia, post-truth, the era of identity, and post-orientalism pose new challenges to Islamic studies. The interdisciplinary approach is thus a necessity, in line with the complexity of the problems of contemporary Muslim societies. This study strives to investigate two main research problems, namely: (a) in which ways current socio-political circumstances pose challenges to the content and methodology of contemporary Islamic studies; (b) what kind of knowledge integration can be brought forward in response to these changing contexts. This paper argues that contemporary Islamic studies should move towards *al-dirasa al-Islamiyya al-muwassa'a* (Islamic studies in its widest sense) by integrating Islamic and modern scholarship. This knowledge integration is strategic in producing knowledge that is both up-to-date and deep-rooted in society. It should also involve the integration of perspectives and worldviews so that it may lead to the production of balanced knowledge, in the sense of not being trapped in apologetics and excessive criticism. This knowledge integration will be more embedded in society if it is developed into a knowledge culture.

Artikel ini mencoba menawarkan pendekatan studi islam di era kontemporer dengan memperhatikan konteks sosio-politik yang ada pada masyarakat Muslim masa kini. Islamofobia, pasca-kebenaran, era identitas dan pasca-orientalisme menimbulkan tantangan baru bagi studi islam. Dengan demikian, pendekatan

interdisipliner menjadi sebuah keniscayaan sejalan dengan kompleksitas permasalahan masyarakat Muslim kontemporer. Studi ini diarahkan untuk mengungkap dua masalah utama, yaitu: *pertama*, bagaimana keadaan sosial-politik saat ini menimbulkan tantangan pada konten dan metodologi studi Islam kontemporer, dan *kedua*, integrasi pengetahuan semacam apa yang dapat dikembangkan sebagai upaya menanggapi konteks yang berubah. Studi ini berpendapat bahwa studi islam kontemporer sebaiknya bertransformasi menuju *al-dirasa al-Islamiyya al-muwassa'a* (studi Islam dalam makna yang luas) dengan mengintegrasikan keilmuan Islam dengan keilmuan modern. Integrasi pengetahuan ini sangat strategis dalam menghasilkan pengetahuan yang mutakhir dan mengakar di masyarakat. Hal ini juga mencakup integrasi sudut pandang dan pandangan dunia sehingga mengarah pada produksi pengetahuan yang seimbang, yang tidak terjebak dalam apologetika dan kritik yang berlebihan. Integrasi pengetahuan ini akan semakin mengakar di masyarakat apabila dikembangkan menjadi 'budaya pengetahuan'.

Keywords: *Knowledge integration, Interdisciplinary Islamic studies, Balanced knowledge, Post-truth, Post-orientalism, Age of disruption.*

Introduction

Islamic studies should not become a narrow knowledge discipline, most specifically when one notices that the context of contemporary Islamic studies has also changed, which is distinct from that of medieval Islamic studies. One of the necessities in this contemporary era is the integration between Islamic sciences and secular sciences. The integration project presupposes the existence of a bridge that could connect and combine the two axes of knowledge, so that has an impact on solving theoretical and practical problems related to Islam and Muslim communities.

In the context of global discourse, there are two main competing paradigms, namely the paradigm of 'Islamisation of science' and the paradigm of 'scientification of Islam'. The paradigm of 'Islamisation of science' was brought forward by such scholars as Ismail Raji al-Faruqi (1921-1986) (see: Al-Faruqi 1982) and Taha Jabir al'Alwani (1935-2016) (see: al'Alwani 1995), whilst the paradigm of scientification of Islam was raised by such scholars as Fazlur

Rahman (1919-1988) and Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010) (see: Miftahuddin 2016). In response to these competing paradigms, the paradigm of integration came to the fore, which was ventured by such a scholar as Amin Abdullah (b. 1953).

In the current context, it is not appropriate to oppose diametrically Islamic sciences (*al-'ulum al-Islamiyya, al-'ulumu al-naqliyya*) and secular sciences (*al-'ulum al-kawniyya*). This integration begins with the mentality of acknowledging something different from what one has been learning. This mentality is significant in developing the awareness of the limits of one's knowledge and our scientific disciplines; so that he/she appreciates and learns other scientific disciplines, to provide solutions to increasingly complex social and religious problems.

This paper seeks to examine the new directions and approaches of Islamic Studies in the contemporary era, most specifically in the disruptive age. The age of disruption is an effect of digital regulation (also known as the fourth industrial revolution) which becomes a global concern most specifically since 2011. Stiegler (2019) argues that the current era is marked by profound disruption and detachment, since the people live in an absence of *epokhē,* in the sense of losing their path of being and thinking.

The digital revolution followed by widespread automation has had a social and psychological impact, especially in causing the loss of reason and the loss of the reason for living. This can be seen from the fact that some people are now overwhelmed by a large amount of digital information and the speed of digital flow. This kind of technological flow produces a kind of Wild West technology, where they find themselves increasingly helpless, fueled by a lack of agency to the point of insanity (Stiegler 2019).

Some studies have been devoted to investigating interdisciplinary Islamic studies. Ernst and Martin (2010), for instance, underline that the study of Islam in the West has been co-opted by two competing traditions, namely religious

studies on the one hand, and orientalism and area studies on the other hand. There are some attempts, however, to bridge between these two traditions, which have an impact on the increasing tendency of interdisciplinary Islamic studies. Abdullah (2020) underlines the necessity of multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary approaches in studying religion and Islam in the contemporary world. The present study is in line with previous studies which underline the need for establishing interdisciplinary Islamic studies to respond to the changing contexts and challenges. To the best of my knowledge, however, there is no detailed study which addresses the significance of the integration of perspectives and worldviews in studying Islam, so that it may lead to the production of balanced knowledge, in the sense of not being trapped in apologetics and excessive criticism. This present study strives to remedy this deficiency.

An increasingly visible tendency of contemporary Islamic studies is interdisciplinary. Islamic studies in its widest sense (*al-dirasa al-Islamiyya al-muwassa'a*) are thus a necessity. Refreshment of the contents and approaches of Islamic studies, by considering the changing contexts, has to be undertaken. Integration is an interesting tendency since it will lead to the emergence of something which is both hybrid and embedded in the religious culture and knowledge culture in the country in question.

To begin with, this paper will explore the contemporary contexts of studying Islam, which is distinct from the contexts of the pre-modern era. It also identifies some sources and approaches to studying Islam. Then it discusses the normativity and facticity in contemporary Islamic studies. The main part of the paper is devoted to the elaboration of the proposal for integrating knowledge disciplines and perspectives.

Islamic studies: changing contexts

The context of Islamic studies in the contemporary era is distinct from that in the medieval era, even from that in the first half of the twentieth century. In Islamic legal tradition, we encounter a principle *al-hukm yaduur ma'a al-'illa wujudan wa 'adaman* (the law is dynamic and dependable on its cause). Islamic studies may also change because of the shifting contexts. There are at least four main contexts of Islamic studies in the contemporary era, namely, (1) terror and Islamophobia, (2), post-truth, (3) identity era, and (4) post-orientalism.

The **first context** of contemporary Islamic studies is terror and Islamophobia. In some countries, Islamic studies were too much to do with Islamophobia and terrorism. In the USA for a certain period, for instance, presenting an empathic study of Islam is problematic. If a scholar conducts research that demonstrates his empathy towards Islam, he/she will be designated as 'not neutral' by his/her colleagues. For some of them, what is considered neutral is that a scholar carries out a study that shows his/her negative standpoint toward Islamic tradition and culture (Hammer, 2016; Hughes, 2012).

In Europe, classical orientalism tends to be prejudiced and degrading toward Islamic culture, either knowledge culture or religious culture. This stands in contrast to such a contemporary orientalist as Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003), who shows her appreciation and empathy toward Islam. This can be observed for instance in her books like *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* and *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Schimmel, 1975, 1985, 1992). Schimmel, who wrote around thirty books on different facets of Islamic tradition, presented Islam from an empathic standpoint. Such works cannot emerge if Schimmel approaches Islam merely from the outsider's perspective. These works are the results of her efforts in approaching Islam from an insider's perspective.

Schimmel read a lot of classical and contemporary Islamic literature, which were written in Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Ottoman Turkish. This enables

Schimmel to develop an empathetic standpoint toward Islamic tradition. This is due to the consideration that learning a language is a bridge to learning culture. Studying a language is not only learning a language structure but also learning 'grammar of mind', a structure of thinking and cultural structure. Proficiency in Eastern languages and the comprehension of Eastern culture will help scholars to overcome the gap between researchers and the subject of research.

What needs to be developed by the researchers is to immerse themselves in the perspectives of their subject of research (*emic* perspective), by postponing their judgment (*epoche*). In this context, they have to nurture empathy. The next step is for the researchers to analyse the problems from the outsider's perspective. In this vein, the researchers have to venture into dialectics, going back and forth between the outsider's and the insider's perspectives.

The **second context** of contemporary Islamic studies is post-truth. The word 'truth' here is understood most notably as its correspondence with fact. In this vein, we may comprehend why the Germans address it as *post-faktische Zeitalter* (post-factual era). This is due to the consideration that, in this era, empirical and logical things are defeated by personal emotions and inclinations (Lewandowsky et al., 2017; Strong, 2017). In consuming information, some people tend to confirm something (Heit, 2018; Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017; Webb & Photos, 2017) if it is in line with their emotions and beliefs. Although the source is unclear and not supported by the facts, as long as it is following their personal beliefs and tendencies, they consider this information true.

In studying Islam in this post-truth era, one has to consider both normativity (*al-mi'yariyya*) and facticity (*al-waqi'iyya*). Normativity refers to the spectrum of sources of Islamic teachings, which includes the Qur'an, hadith, *ijma'* (consensus) and *fatwa* (Islamic legal opinion). The facticity in the contemporary context can be either virtual or actual. Actual facticity refers to the reality in the real offline world, for instance, the phenomenon of some people who neglect health protocols during the covid-19 pandemic. Virtual

facticity is related to reality in cyberspace. This can be observed for instance from the phenomenon in social media in which some educated people challenge covid-19 health protocols, by stating that covid-19 is an awful hoax or a form of conspiracy, without being supported by adequate facts.

The **third context** of contemporary Islamic studies is the era of identity. In the modern world, group identity is getting stronger. Group identity may eventually have an impact on group fanaticism and social cohesion. In medieval Islamic scholarship, we come across such a scholar as Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), who brought forward the concept of *'asabiyya.* '*Asabiyya* in Ibn Khaldun's conception refers to group fanaticism and social cohesion.

What can be developed by the scholars in Islamic higher education is the integration of Islamic scholarship and Western scholarship (Abdullah, 2017). In analysing socio-religious issues in Indonesia, the scholars in Islamic higher education should not only refer to Western social sciences and humanities (sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy and history) but also have to come across the rich treasures of Islamic scholarship. This could constitute the distinction of the scholars in Islamic higher education.

In interpreting and analysing contemporary religious issues in social media, these scholars should be able to integrate Islamic scholarship and Western scholarship. The notion of 'followers' in Twitter, for example, can be seen its parallels with medieval Islamic scholarship, in which such notions as *mustami'un* (audience), *jama'a* (inner circle)*, muqallidun* (followers), and *khawwas* (elites) are known.

In the perspective of social sciences, there is no single identity, because it is always liquid and multiple or even hybrid. For instance, a person at one time could be a modern Javanese Indonesian Muslim. Becoming Muslims accordingly does not necessarily mean denying Indonesian values, Javanese culture and modernity.

The strengthening of identity politics is inevitable in the era of identity. Identity politics refers to the tendency of certain religious or ethnic groups to form political alliances on the ground of that identity and this becomes a problem in democratic experiments in the country in question. Groups that have conservative religious ideologies create their parties or at least mobilise political movements and alliances; as happened to other groups with other ideologies. These ideologies may trigger tension and conflict if this is not handled properly. This can be observed for instance in Indonesia, in which a certain party has been established on a certain religious ideology. Some parties strive to maximise their votes during the election by 'exploiting' religious identities as well as ethnic identities of the potential voters, which in some cases may pose challenges to the unity of the nation.

One of the challenges in the era of identity is the existence of insider's and outsider's perspectives. Researchers have to place their identities flexibly and fluidly. This is in some ways different from the general public which rigidly understand these identities so that it may lead to tension and conflict.

In this digital platform, perceiving identity rigidly also afflicts some educated people, and this becomes a problem in their communication with others. Some of our educated groups prefer to think and behave within the framework of their respective religious organisations and are reluctant to think in a broader context, namely in the context of nationhood and humanity. This tendency can be observed for instance in social media, in which some educated people seem to be polarised, most notably during the general election. The rest of the educated people however still maintain their integrity by showing their commitment to nationhood. They do not see 'being religious' and 'being nationalist' as two conflicting entities.

It is interesting to examine how Islam is understood in the context of the nation-state. The notion of *khilafa* (caliphate) refers to a very broad concept of the state. Since the 20th century, the world entered the era of the nation-state,

but some Muslims strive to counter the mainstream by reviving the *khilafa* system. There are several concepts in classical Islamic studies which need to be considered in the era of the nation-state, for instance, the notions of *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) and *dar al-harb* (abode of warfare). We encounter *ijtihad* (independent legal reasoning) from some contemporary Muslim thinkers, for instance, the scholars in the circle of Muhammadiyah and Nahldlatul Ulama brought forward the notion of *dar al-'ahd* (abode of agreement), whereas Tariq Ramadan (Ramadan, 2004) put forward the notion of *dar al-shahada* (abode of testimony).

The **fourth context** of contemporary Islamic studies is post-orientalism. Post-orientalism was built upon Eastern intellectual tradition, which serves as an antithesis to classical orientalism. There is also a tendency which was developed by Western orientalists themselves, which is called 'after orientalism' (Pouillion, 2015). The context of these two paradigms is a bit different. 'After orientalism' is an intrinsic development in the study of the East which is driven by Western orientalists themselves, and its later developments show its empathy towards Islamic tradition. This can be seen in the writings of Annemarie Schimmel, John R. Bowen (b. 1951) and other Orientalists. Post-orientalism is a venture which is undertaken by Eastern scholars to pose criticism (Dabashi, 2008; Heidemann, 2012) and antithesis to classical orientalism, which tends to claim an authority in explaining and interpreting the 'East'. Inherent in classical orientalism are the concepts of 'power' and 'domination'.

It is worth remarking that post-orientalism is trying to create an independent mode of production of knowledge which is independent of the shadow of Western power (Dabashi, 2008). Post-orientalism is thus in harmony with the spirit and tendency of post-colonial theories. Post-colonial theories may serve as an alternative to the knowledge tradition and character which developed in Europe. These theories represent an effort of resistance from countries that had experienced colonialism (third world countries) by trying to

build their theories, both theories of sociology, anthropology, politics, history and so on. They refuse to adopt the Euro-centric Western scientific tradition law because, in a euro-centric Western perspective, Eastern and Islamic cultures are considered full of myths and backwardness.

What is developed by post-orientalism is the exilic mentality of 'alienated intellectuals' (Dabashi 2008). The notion of 'exilic mentality' is rooted in medieval Muslim scholarship, most specifically in the book *Hikmat al-israq*, which was written by Suhrawardi al-Maqtul. Suhrawardi puts forward the notion of *al-ghurba al-gharbiyya* (occidental exile), namely feeling alienated in the West (Suhrawardi, n.d.). Scholars are to engage themselves with society, but at some point, they have to keep a certain distance from the community, to be able to analyse social problems critically and pose solutions correspondingly. In the context of post-orientalism, scholars have to keep a certain distance from hegemonic Western theories and try to counter the knowledge production and provide an alternative discourse to Western knowledge traditions, for example, by explaining in a balanced way the relationship between Islam and terrorism.

Post-orientalism is an effort to decolonise thought style and conceptual framework, by developing local knowledge heritage, to build intercultural communication (Dabashi, 2008). One of the fundamental problems of scholars in third-world countries is how to overcome the 'colonial mentality'. This can be observed, for example, from the phenomenon in which opinions of Western scholars are confirmed without criticism, whereas when Eastern scholars express an opinion, they will be criticised substantially by their fellow Eastern scholars.

It would be better if Muslim scholars try to see the problem of Islam and nationhood from their perspective, based on their knowledge and cultural tradition, then they strive to make cross-cultural discourse. How they perceive their own specific culture, for example, *slametan* (Javanese communal feast), to be understood across cultures. *Slametan* can be comprehended in the context of

social cohesion or solidarity (*'asabiyya*). It is significant to highlight how locality is understood and communicated in enriching globality. In some cases, the distinction between locality and globality is fluid, and much more a matter of perspective.

Sources and approaches of Islamic studies: the need for knowledge integration

In investigating socio-religious phenomena in Indonesia, the scholars in Islamic higher education should not only rely merely on modern social sciences, without trying to consult classical Islamic scholarship. These scholars have to pay attention both to *al-thurath* (classical Islamic scholarship) and *al-hadatha* (modern scholarship). These two things should be combined to produce up-to-date knowledge without losing the roots of tradition.

Classical Islamic scholarship (*al-turath*) should be the **main source** of Islamic studies. *Al-turath* here includes *fiqh* (Islamic law), *usul fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *'ulum al-hadith* (the sciences of hadith), *'ulum al-Qur'an* (the sciences of the Qur'an), *tasawwuf* (Sufism), *'ilm al-kalam* (Islamic theology), philosophy, history and classical social sciences.

Fiqh refers to formal rules in Islamic law, but *fiqh* cannot be understood properly if one does not comprehend *usul fiqh*. *Usul fiqh* represents modes and principles of reasoning in Islamic law. *Usul fiqh* in its formative period was the result of a dialogue between the founders of Islamic legal schools and the tradition of *al-mantiq al-yunani* (Greek logic tradition).

Usul fiqh is accordingly not purely developed within the Islamic tradition, but a marriage between the Islamic tradition and the Greek logic tradition. Those who have learned logic, and then learn *usul fiqh*, may come across similar predispositions between these two disciplines. Such principles as *al-hukm yaduur ma'a al-'illa wujudan wa 'adaman* (the law is dynamic depending on its cause) and

al-asl fi al-amr li al-wujub (in principle, the command is to show the obligation) are built on the principles of syllogism in the Greek logic tradition.

The sciences of the Qur'an (*'ulum al-Qur'an*) are to be consulted as sources of contemporary Islamic studies and these are important, most specifically in studying and interpreting the Qur'an. Without adequate methodological tools, people are often involved in understanding and interpreting literally, without seeing the complexity of the Qur'an and Arabic language, which often imply multiple meanings (*mushtarak*). This is in line with the statement of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (2000) that "the verses of the Qur'an contain various meanings".

We need to examine what is the role of the sciences of the hadith (*'ulum al-hadith*) in the post-truth era. The hadith sciences continue to find their relevance in the digital age and this is due to the consideration that hadith's methodology is relevant to counter viewpoints which are based on personal beliefs or tendencies, which is particularly getting stronger in the post-truth era. The sciences of hadith can thus be developed for the context of digital literacy.

What Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim carried out when they collected hadiths is to filter out which hadiths are *sahih* (authentic), *hasan* (good), or *da'if* (weak), which constituted a difficult methodological work. In that era, there were abundant of hadiths, nevertheless Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim only included a few thousand in the *Sahih Muslim* and *Sahih al-Bukhari*. External criticism (*naqd al-sanad*) and internal criticism (*naqd al-matan*) are still relevant to be applied in filtering information in the digital age although with some adjustments and development.

Islamic theology is a rich scholarly tradition and needs to be considered as a source of contemporary Islamic studies. As a case in point, we can consider whether we can study the problem of contemporary Islamic education without considering Islamic theology. Studying Islamic education without considering Islamic theology, will lead to an artificial study. Researchers who investigate 'Integrated Islamic School' (*Sekolah Islam Terpadu*) in Indonesia, but do not

understand the theological roots of this education system, will describe this as a merely Islamic school which runs its education programme from morning to evening. Researchers who comprehend Islamic theology can explain that Integrated Islamic School is rooted in the concept of *Islam kaffa* (Total Islam). *Islam kaffa* is a notion which was put forward by the Muslim Brotherhood, which was then brought to Indonesia by the sympathisers of the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS). In Malaysia, we come across a similar education system which has been developed by the Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS). Nurdin (2009: 66) underlines that there are some parallels between the PKS and the PAS. This can be observed from the phenomenon in which both the PKS and the PAS are deeply influenced by the teachings of Abu al-A'la al-Maududi (1903-1979) and Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), so the books of these two personages have become the main sources of their members' training.

Sufism is a rich scientific tradition that needs to be developed especially in the post Covid-19 era. We should also pay our attention to the treasures of Islamic philosophy, to enrich contemporary Islamic studies. Studying Islam without considering Islamic philosophy and Sufism will only present Islam descriptively, without depth of thought.

Islamic history and social sciences are also part of Islamic scholarship, but unfortunately, these two are sometimes neglected. Islamic history was developed by such scholars as Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839-923) and Ibn 'Asakir (1106-1176), whilst social sciences in Islamic tradition were initiated by Ibn Khaldun, with his monumental work *al-Muqaddima li Kitab al-'Ibar* (often known as *al-Muqaddima*). Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was recognized by some specialists as one of the forefathers of modern sociology. *Al-Muqaddima* which was written extensively actually served as an introduction to the book of history, but its contents were theories of social sciences (Widiyanto 2018). Ibn Khaldun taught at al-Azhar University, and we may imagine how the depth of

his thought still shows its relevance to the present day, although there must be some refreshment and contextualisation.

Some contemporary Muslim scholars are reluctant to refer to the works of Ibn Khaldun, because these works require adaptation and contextualisation to become an established analytical framework. The case becomes different when these scholars read the works of Max Weber (1864-1920), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), Karl Marx (1818-1883) or Jose Casanova (b. 1951), which are ready to be applied in studying contemporary socio-religious issues. Reading Ibn Khaldun's conception of *'asabiyya* requires contemplation and contextualisation, to be transformed as an analysis tool for contemporary social problems.

Studying the Qur'an requires an understanding of history and social sciences. If we study the development of Shi'ite exegesis, for example, we may observe that the interpretation of Shi'ite scholars towards the verses of the Qur'an moves between the pendulum of extremism and moderatism. Classical Shi'ite exegeses tend to be extreme, most specifically underlining the rejection of the caliphate of Abu Bakr, 'Umar ibn Khattab and Uthman ibn' Affan. Shi'ite exegesis demonstrates its moderatism in the middle ages, especially during the Seljuk Dynasty, because at that time this particular dynasty was very appreciative to the Shi'ites (Widiyanto 2021).

The **second** main source of Islamic studies is modern scholarship (*hadatha*). Modern sciences (social sciences, humanities and natural sciences) are important for the development of Islamic studies in Islamic higher education. Islamic studies will be more revealing if the researchers can combine Islamic scholarship with modern scholarship (most notably sociology, anthropology, political science, history, philosophy and psychology).

There is an interesting example from another tradition, namely Judaism. Abraham Heschel (1907-1972) was a Jewish rabbi, who certainly understands Jewish scholarly tradition, on the one hand (Heschel, 1967, 1976), but he also

masters modern social sciences, on the other hand. This enables Heschel to present Jewish teachings with rich sociological nuances, which constitutes a rare combination. Studies with such perspectives are hardly presented by orientalists or modern sociologists. Sociologists and orientalists often portray Jewish tradition from the outside, whereas Heschel can portray it from both inside and outside.

Modern social sciences help us to enrich Islamic studies so that become more anthropocentric. Islam is indeed normative teaching but its audience (*mukhatab*) is human beings, most specifically the Muslim community. Islamic teachings accordingly need to be comprehended from the perspective of social sciences, to shed light on how these teachings are interpreted and implemented within society.

In studying the hadith, we need the perspective of social sciences, so we do not understand the hadith literally. The literal tendency in understanding hadith can be seen for instance in the way some people interpret the hadith about pandemic (*ta'un*). Some Muslim scholars in Indonesia reject to include covid-19 into the category of a pandemic because according to them, a disease is considered a pandemic if its victims have reached tens of thousands. They argue that at the end of March 2020, the number of Covid-19 victims in Indonesia was only hundreds, so it was not included in the category of the pandemic, which has been indicated by the Prophet in the hadith. Based on these arguments, these Muslim scholars encouraged Muslims to carry out congregational prayers, especially Friday prayers which are obligatory.

Studying hadith from the perspective of social sciences will lead us to be aware of the context of interpretation and implementation of hadith. In this vein, it is also of interest to consider whether the formality of Islamic teachings must be carried out under any conditions, or we must also pay attention to the *maqasid al-shari'a* (objectives of Islamic law). The concept of *maqasid al-shari'a* which has been developed by such scholars as Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi (1320-

1388), Muhammad al-Tahir ibn 'Ashur (1879-1973) and Jasser Auda (b. 1966) are relevant to be employed as a basis in understanding the hadith.

Natural sciences are also needed to enrich the studies on Islam. It is difficult, however, to integrate Islamic scholarship with the natural sciences, since it requires extra energy and capacity. Up to now, there are few Muslim thinkers which are able to combine these two disciplines. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) belongs among these few Muslim scholars. In the circle of Islamic higher education, integrating Islamic scholarship with modern social sciences cannot be done by all faculty members, let alone integrating Islamic scholarship with natural sciences. Integration here is more fundamental, not just looking for the basis of the verses of the Qur'an and the hadith on the concepts in natural science, but how to combine the paradigm of natural sciences with the paradigm of Islamic sciences.

The relevance of Islamic thought

Islamic thought (*al-fikr al-Islami*) is still relevant and occupies an important position in Islamic studies, especially as a frame of thought, which may enrich the scholars' perspectives in investigating Islam and Muslim society. In the faculty of political science in Europe, we come across the chair of 'political theory and history of ideas', for instance at the University of Marburg, Germany. This was later adopted by the scholars in the field of Islamic studies, so that emerged the chair of history of Islamic ideas (*Islamische Ideengeschichte*) for instance at the Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany.

History of ideas is mainly concerned with how an expression of continuity and change in human thought over a long duration of time. This can be applied in Islamic studies, for instance, how to investigate how the concepts of *khilafa* (caliphate) and *bid'a* (innovation) evolved in the classical, medieval and modern era. We may mention for instance an interesting study with the approach of the history of Islamic ideas is Michael Cook's *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*

in Islamic Thought. This work seeks to examine the concept of *al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (commanding right and forbidding wrong) across Islamic history. In this book, which comprises of more than 600 pages, Cook also captures the context of the implementation of commanding right and forbidding wrong (Cook, 2004). This notion was once employed in the context of opposition to the government, as can be observed for instance during the Umayyad dynasty.

Normativity and facticity in contemporary Islamic studies

Normativity here is not understood in its pejorative sense, which means something rigid, but comprehended in the context of religious studies. Normativity refers to the spectrum of doctrines, teachings and norms which underlie a particular religion. The Qur'an is the main source of Islamic teachings, and accordingly constitutes the main reference of Islamic normativity (Abdullah, 2017).

There is a tendency among contemporary researchers to study the Qur'an from the perspectives of anthropology and sociology. The concept of 'living Qur'an' is trying to see how the Qur'an is applied in implemented in everyday-life experiences (Junaedi, 2015). The notion of 'living Qur'an' thus demonstrates the dialogue between normativity and facticity.

In the domain of Islamic law, normativity embraces the Qur'an, hadith, *ijma'* (consensus), and *fatwa* (Islamic legal opinion). This becomes a very rich spectrum of normativity which have to be considered when one investigates Islamic law and its implementation in society. In Aceh (the westernmost part of Indonesia), for example, we cannot ignore Islamic legal normativity which is very rich. Researchers who do not understand this normativity will pay attention to its sociological or anthropological dimensions of Sharia-compliant legal regulations (*perda syariah*) without trying to dialogue these with Islamic legal normativity.

What becomes the problem is if someone understands normativity in its narrow sense, namely formal rules which can be applied directly. It is vital to make dialectics between normativity and facticity. How the normativity in the texts of Islamic law can be dialogued with the facticity which we encounter in the implementation of Islamic law in society.

If one could make dialectics between these two things properly, it will constitute a significant contribution to the advancement of Islamic studies. To integrate between normativity and facticity, one needs an analytical tool, namely Islamic thought and modern social sciences. Without Islamic thought, one will understand normativity in its rigid sense, and without social sciences, one will not be able to understand properly the nuances of the implementation of Islamic law in society.

Islamic normativity is a spectrum of texts (Abdullah, 1996) which inspires religious practices which develop dynamically in the tradition of Islamic thought. In the context of Islamic law, *fatwa*s can also be perceived as part of normativity. In the context of Indonesia, we know the existence of *fatwa*s issued by The Council of Indonesian Muslim Scholars (MUI), the Nahdlatul Ulama and the Muhammadiyah. In this vein, we may see that normativity is rich and varied, and forms the basis for religious experience.

Almost all texts which become sources of Islamic teachings are full of ambiguity. Normativity in Islamic tradition is accordingly plural. There was a tendency toward ambiguity tolerance in the classical period of Islam, either in terms of politics, law, language, literature, perceptions about sex, or in terms of relations with strangers. However, ambiguity tolerance is decreasing in the contemporary era (Bauer, 2011).

Facticity is much richer than normativity because it involves real experiences in the application of Islam in many aspects of life, which, of course, vary among individuals. The task of the researchers is to make a dialogue

between normativity and facticity so that it becomes their unique scholarly contribution and leads to the nurturance of the common good.

Integrating knowledge disciplines and perspectives

There is a tendency among human beings, including scholars, to confirm something which is under their beliefs. This tendency is called confirmation bias as can be observed from the attitude of the researchers in dealing with the data. They will only search for data which are in line with their beliefs or inclination, by suppressing the data which run counter to their beliefs.

The projects of integration between Islamic and modern scholarship will cease to be a sort of 'justification project', if the researchers are not able to overcome the confirmation bias within themselves. Researchers have to look at these two scholarships in a balanced way. Otherwise, they will be trapped in justification, by stating that classical Islamic scholarship has discussed the same thing, and then matched with modern theories.

Knowledge integration is part of the process of knowledge production, which relies on the ventures looking for truth, which implies the awareness that truth is not in one's hands. Looking for data in the field is carried out to find the truth. Knowledge is the result of searching for pieces of information and data that one collects in several places. This data is then developed into knowledge. Knowledge production is not a venture of justifying the truth which has been present in one's mind. He/she has believed that truth, he/she needs to take these opinions or data, to be in harmony with his/her truth.

What becomes a problem in the ambitious project of the integration of Islamic and modern scholarship is mentality and readiness to enrich perspectives. Some Muslim scholars suffer from an inferiority complex in studying and developing knowledge, that they tend to imitate blindly the Western perspective, even in studying Islamic intellectual tradition. They also support the integration of knowledge disciplines, but in the sense of combining

modern Euro-centric social sciences with Islamic scholarship as those understood through a Western perspective. When we look into some doctoral theses which have been submitted to Islamic higher education in Indonesia, one may notice that some of these dissertations have been concerned with the investigation of Islam and Muslim societies from the perspectives of European social sciences, without allotting adequate time to explore the perspectives of Eastern social sciences and Islamic studies. Some others strive to investigate Islam from the perspective of Islamic normativity, without trying to make the dialogues with the theories of social sciences (which develop in the Western and Eastern world).

The integration of knowledge disciplines should be followed by the integration of perspectives and worldviews. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933) asserted that most contemporary Muslim scholars study Islamic philosophy from a Western perspective (Nasr 1964). What they read is the works of Muslim philosophers, but they are often unsure about their perspectives and as a substitute, they rely on Western scholarship to shed a light on the studies of Islamic philosophy. Islamic philosophy will be more revealing if one reads by employing an Islamic perspective, without ignoring the contributions of Western scholars to the studies on Islamic philosophy.

Nasr had experienced such conditions. He began studying Islamic philosophy under the supervision of his professors in the US, but he found something was lacking, namely the Islamic perspective. Nasr then returned to Iran to study Islamic philosophy directly under the supervision of the grandmasters in Iran. His comprehension of Islamic philosophy became unique, which represents a blend of Western and Islamic perspectives.

Contemporary Islamic studies should constitute dialectics so that they become up to date as well as rooted in the scholars' tradition and culture. Dialectics here is not only between insider's and outsider's perspectives when the researchers investigate the phenomena of Islam and Muslim societies, but

also the dialectics between the Islamic and Western perspectives, and the dialectics between Islamic and Western scholarship.

The dialectics between insider's and outsider's perspectives should be performed until the scholars come across a saturation point. In collecting data, especially those using snowball sampling, one recognises the data saturation as well as in analysing the data. One indicator of the saturation point during analysing data in studying Islam is that one has found a meeting point between normativity and historicity, the meeting point between data in the field and texts of Islamic normativity. The meeting point between the text and the context for the reflection is then used to build the main arguments. In this vein, it is interesting to cite Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (Zayd, 2004) who asserts that Islamic civilisation embodies 'civilisation of the text' (*hadarat al-nass*).

The integration of perspectives and knowledge disciplines will not only lead to 'new knowledge' but also more fundamentally lead to the emergence of 'a new knowledge culture'. In the context of Indonesia, knowledge culture is grounded on Indonesian knowledge tradition and Islamic knowledge tradition, by taking inspiration from the Western knowledge tradition. The knowledge culture is built on the virtues of moderatism and cosmopolitanism. By using this knowledge culture, Indonesian Muslim scholars will bring forward knowledge products which are more rooted in Indonesian and Islamic tradition, without being detached from a global discourse, both in the Near East and the West. This is an ambitious venture but not a utopia, and consequently requires ventures from all Muslim scholars in Indonesia.

Conclusion

Islamic studies in the contemporary era are changing because of the evolving contexts. The most visible contexts in this contemporary era are terror and Islamophobia, post-truth, the era of identity and post-orientalism. As a consequence, contemporary Islamic studies should move towards *al-dirasa al-*

Islamiyya al-muwassa'a by emphasising an interdisciplinary approach, which combines Islamic and modern scholarship.

Knowledge integration is thus a necessity so that contemporary Islamic studies could provide a solution to the increasingly complex problems of Islam and Muslim societies, due to changing contexts. One of the challenges of knowledge integration is the confirmation bias which afflicts some researchers, which leads them to be trapped in justification in the process of producing knowledge.

The integration between Islamic and modern scholarship requires the integration of perspectives and worldviews. It combines Islamic and Western perspectives in investigating Islamic and modern scholarship, to produce balanced knowledge. The integration of perspectives and worldviews will be more rooted in society if it is developed into a knowledge culture. One of the main challenges of the integration of perspectives and worldviews is the inferiority complex which is suffered by some Muslim scholars in the third world. This has an impact on their tendency to integrate Islamic and Western scholarship artificially. This can be observed for instance from the case in which some scholars integrate Euro-centric Islamic studies with Euro-centric modern social sciences.

Bibliography

Abdullah, M. A. (1996). *Studi Islam: Normativitas atau Historisitas*. Pustaka Pelajar.

Abdullah, M. A. (2017). Islamic studies in higher education in Indonesia: Challenges, impact and prospects for the world community. *Al-Jami'ah*, *55*(2), 391–426. https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2017.552.391-426

Abdullah, M. A. (2020). *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, & Transdisiplin: Metode Studi Agama & Studi Islam Di Era Kontemporer*. IB Pustaka.

al'Alwani, T. J. (1995). *The Islamization of knowledge: yesterday and today*. American Journal of Islam and Society, 12(1), 81-101.

Bauer, T. (2011). *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (The Culture of Ambiguity: Another History of Islam). Verlag der Weltreligionen.

Cook, M. (2004). *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge University Press.

Dabashi, H. (2008). *Post-orientalism: Knowledge and Power in a Time of Terror*. Transaction Publishers.

Ernst, C. W., & Martin, R. C. (2010). Introduction: Toward a post-orientalist Islamic approach to Islamic religious studies. *Rethinking Islamic studies*, 1-19.

Al-Faruqi, I. R. (1982). *Islamization of knowledge*. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

Hammer, J. (2016). Shifting Boundaries: The Study of Islam in the Humanities. *The Muslim World*, *106*(4), 641–654.

Heidemann, B. (2012). We are the glue keeping civilization together: Post-Orientalism and counter-Orientalism in H.M. Naqvi's Home Boy. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *48*(3), 289–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2012.678713

Heit, H. (2018). There are no facts . . . : Nietzsche as Predecessor of Post-Truth ? *Studia Philosophica Estonica*, *11*(1), 44–63.

Heschel, A. (1967). *Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence*. Ambassador Books Ltd.

Heschel, A. (1976). *Man is not alone: A Philosophy of Religion*. Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.

Hughes, A. W. (2012). The study of Islam before and after September 11: a provocation. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *24*(4–5), 314–336. https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341234

Junaedi, D. (2015). Living Qur'an: Sebuah Pendekatan Baru dalam Kajian Al-Qur'an (Living Qur'an, A New Approach in studying the Qur'an). *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, *4*(2), 169-190.

Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the Post-Truth Era. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, *6*(4), 353–369. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2017.07.008

Miftahuddin, M. (2016). Integrasi Pengetahuan Umum dan Keislaman di Indonesia: Studi Integrasi Keilmuan di Universitas Islam Negeri di Indonesia (Integrating secular and Islamic sciences in Indonesia: a study of knowledge integration in Indonesian Islamic higher education). *Attarbiyah: Journal of Islamic Culture and Education*, 1(1).

Mihailidis, P., & Viotty, S. (2017). Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in Post-Fact Society. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *61*(4), 441–454. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764217701217

Nasr, S. H. (1964). *Three Muslim Sages: Avicenna-Suhrawardi-Ibn 'Arabi*. Harvard University Press.

Nurdin, A. A. (2009). Islamic Political Party and Democracy: A Comparative Study of PKS in Indonesia and PAS in Malaysia (1998-2005).

Pouillion, F. (2015). *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations*. Brill.

Ramadan, T. (2004). *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Schimmel, A. (1975). *Mystical Dimensions of Islam Title*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Schimmel, A. (1985). *And Muhammad is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Schimmel, A. (1992). *Mystische Dimensionen des Islam: Die Geschichte des Sufismus* (Mystical Dimensions of Islam: The History of Sufism). Diederichs Verlag.

Stiegler, Bernard. (2019). *The Age of Disruption: Technology and Madness in Computational Capitalism*. Polity Press.

Strong, S. (2017). Alternative Facts and the Post-Truth Society: Meeting the Challenge. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, *165*(1), 137.

Suhrawardi, Shahab al-Din. (n.d.). *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (Philosophy of Illumination). Manuscript Leiden Or. 753.

Talib, 'Ali ibn Abi. (2000). *Nahj al-balaghah*. Mashhoor Publishing Institute.

Webb, A., & Photos, M. (2017). The Evangelical Roots of Our Post-Truth Society. *The New York Times*, 1–3.

Widiyanto, A. (2021). Between Political Legitimacy and Social Fabric of Society: Imamite-Shiite Interpretation of Qur'anic Verse 16: 90. *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, *17*(1), 28-55.

Widiyanto, A. (2018). Nation-building, belonging and multiculturalism in Indonesia: Contextualising Ibn Khaldun's theories and beyond. *İbn Haldun Çalışmaları Dergisi*.

Zayd, N. H. A. (2004). Rethinking the Qur'an: Towards a Humanistic Hermeneutics. *Universiteit Voor Humanistiek*, 1–63. www.stichtingsocrates.nl/Zayd/SocratesOratie Nasr Abu Zayd.pdf