

The Intellectual-Religious History of Haramayn in the Late Medieval Period

Intan Permata Sari Zega

¹ intan3003233029@uinsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The 17th to 19th centuries marked a significant period in the intellectual and religious development of Makkah and Madinah, the two holy cities known as Haramayn. During this era, Hijaz was under the control of the Ottoman Dynasty, which had a considerable influence on the political stability and security of the region. Despite facing various challenges, including political instability and security issues, Makkah and Madinah remained important centers for intellectual and religious activities, particularly in the study of hadith and the development of Sufism. This research aims to explore how intellectual and religious dynamics evolved in Haramayn from the 17th to the 19th centuries and the impact of cosmopolitanism resulting from the Hajj pilgrimage on the characteristics of intellectual and religious activities in the region. The activities of hadith studies and the harmonization between Sharia and Sufism were the main focus of intellectual development in Haramayn. The scholars in Haramayn, who came from various geographical backgrounds, played a significant role in spreading reformist thoughts throughout the Islamic world. The cosmopolitanism that emerged due to the Hajj pilgrimage also influenced the development of intellectual activities in Haramayn, making it a rich center of cultural and intellectual exchange. Through this research, it is hoped to reveal how the interactions between pilgrims from various cultural and geographical backgrounds contributed to shaping the cosmopolitan character of Haramayn and its important role as an intellectual and spiritual center in the Islamic world. This research provides an in-depth insight into the role of Makkah and Madinah in the intellectual-religious history of Islam and how the dynamics of cosmopolitanism influenced this development.

Keywords: History; Haramayn; Intellectual; Religious

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aspects of Islamic history and culture, according to Harun Nasution, are divided into three periods: the classical period from 650-1250 CE, the medieval period from 1250-1800 CE, and the modern period from 1800 CE. The medieval period can also be divided into two phases, namely the Period of Decline I and the Period of the Third Great Kingdoms (Nasution, 2011). Mecca and Medina during the medieval period were under the rule of the Ottoman Dynasty. Upon learning of the death of Sultan al-Ghawri and his deputy Thawman Bay, Mecca's ruler, Barakat bin

Muhammad, immediately pledged allegiance to Sultan Selim I and handed over the keys of the Ka'bah to him along with some ancient relics (Al-Shalabi, 2003).

Mecca and Medina, often referred to as Haramayn or the "two sanctuaries," play a crucial role in Islam and the lives of Muslims as they are the places where Islam was revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Mecca and Medina also hold immense historical significance for the Muslim community. In Mecca, Islam was born, and in Medina, Islam flourished. In ancient times, entry into Mecca was possible only through three routes: the Northern Pass at the foot of Mount al-Falj, the Western Pass leading towards the Red Sea, and the Southern Pass towards Yemen (Aidah, 2008).

The fragmentation of the Abbasid Dynasty in the 9th century led to a dramatic deterioration of the political situation in Hijaz, particularly in Haramayn. Political instability and insecurity had a significant impact on the economic, social, and educational life in Haramayn. Furthermore, there was a noticeable decline in the number of students of knowledge, and the enthusiasm of non-Hijazi pilgrims to stay longer in Haramayn after the Hajj season seemed to diminish (Aidah, 2008).

In this paper, we discuss matters related to the intellectual-religious history of Haramayn in the Late Middle Ages. Specifically, we will examine how intellectual and religious activities developed in Mecca and Medina from the 16th to the 19th century; how the cosmopolitanism of Haramayn, brought about by the Hajj pilgrimage, influenced the characteristics of intellectual and religious activities; and how the intellectual-religious discourse of Haramayn evolved.

The objective of this research is to identify issues related to the dynamics of intellectual and religious development and the cosmopolitan impact resulting from the Hajj pilgrimage from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Additionally, the aim of this research is to understand how the development of intellectual and religious activities occurred in Mecca and Medina from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Through this research, it is hoped that the rapid development of intellectual and religious dynamics in these two holy cities and how interactions among Hajj pilgrims from various cultural and geographic backgrounds contributed to shaping the cosmopolitan character of Haramayn will be revealed. This study will provide profound insights into the role of Mecca and Medina as significant intellectual and spiritual centers in the Islamic world.

2. METHODS

This research employs a historical approach to examine the intellectual-religious developments in Haramayn (Makkah and Madinah) during the late medieval period (13th-16th centuries). It is a qualitative study utilizing literature

review methodology, relying on primary sources such as classical manuscripts, as well as secondary sources from modern studies of Islamic history. Data collection involves historical documents, manuscripts, books, and scholarly articles, which are then analyzed using content analysis and historical methods. The study highlights Haramayn as a center of Islamic intellectuality and analyzes how socio-political conditions influenced intellectual and religious developments in that region.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Development of Intellectual and Religious Activities in Makkah and Madinah in the 17th-19th Centuries

Hijaz and Iraq were two of the most important centers for scholarly activity. Hijaz ranks first due to the many companions born in that region (Pradja, 2002). Several studies have been conducted to examine the intellectual tendencies of specific scholars during certain periods in Islamic history. The scholars involved in different networks varied not only in their geographical backgrounds but also in their religious-intellectual preferences, which were reflected in their affiliations with legal schools and Sufi orders (Azra, 2013).

It is noteworthy that in the 18th century, several scholars from Haramayn sought to develop the study of hadith with the aim of reviving the tradition of *ijtihad*. They did not merely accept interpretations and studies of hadith from previous eras. This directly impacted their teachings of Sufism and their religious experiences. Recently, this group of scholars has become significant figures in spreading reformist ideas to various regions of the Islamic world and are often referred to as the reformers of Haramayn by their students (Asari, 2007).

There are several forms of intellectual activity development in Haramayn, including:

a. Activities in Hadith Studies

The first branch of Islamic religious knowledge to develop was Hadith studies, which evolved through transmission as the precursor to historical writing (Yatim, 1997). Since the early years of Islam, Haramayn has been recognized as a primary center for Hadith. It is where Islam was established and taught. Furthermore, two of the four main Islamic legal schools, namely Maliki and Hanbali, are also known as *ahl al-hadith* (Azra, 2013).

The Maliki hadith scholars, mostly residing in Egypt and North Africa, were among the most influential in spreading Hadith. Research by Azyumardi

has demonstrated that most chains of transmission (isnads) within the scholarly network were disseminated through leading hadith scholars of the 15th and early 16th centuries in Egypt, such as Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d. 853 AH/1449 CE), Jalal al-Din al-Suyuthi, and Zakaria al-Anshari. These prominent scholars are regarded as some of the most sought-after isnads by later scholars within the network (Azra, 2009).

As a result of this development, since the late 16th century, relationships among scholars in Haramayn began to emerge due to the expanding expertise in Hadith. It is clear that one of the most esteemed isnads (superior isnad or isnad 'ali) brought to Haramayn was that of Shams al-Din al-Ramli, a prominent Islamic reformer (mujadid) of the 10th Hijri century, who is also known as the Minor Shafi'i (al-Shafi'i al-Shaghir) (Azra, 2009).

The relationship between the prominent scholars of Haramayn and al-Sha'rani, who represented neo-Sufism, was not merely a link in the dissemination of certain Hadiths or as a source for studying Hadith literature. The specific meanings these scholars attributed to Hadith reflect their conscious efforts to ensure that the practices of the Prophet—alongside the teachings of the Qur'an—were not only a source of law but also an endless inspiration for appropriate moral conduct (Azra, 2009).

b. Activities in the Study of Shari'ah in Sufism

Neo-Sufism teaches that the practice and implementation of Sufism are only valid when carried out with full commitment and total adherence to Shari'ah (Azra, 2009). Ahmad al-Qusyasyi played a crucial role in reorienting the Shathariyah order by emphasizing the importance of Islamic legal doctrines in the mystical path. He explained that there can be no genuine maqam or ahwal (stages in the mystical journey) without adequate knowledge ('ilm) and good deeds ('amal), as taught by the Qur'an and Hadith (Azra, 2013).

Ibrahim al-Kurani underscored the significant meaning of Shari'ah without dismissing his love for Sufism. Ahl al-Kasyf, those with intuitive knowledge, adhere to their own understanding of the meanings of the Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet. It is clear that for al-Kurani, the reconciliation between Shari'ah and Sufism should not be taken lightly.

c. Neo-Sufism and Activism

Ahmad al-Qusyasyi is reported to have encouraged Muslims with adequate knowledge ('ilm) to understand both the literal and inner meanings of the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith. He urged people to dedicate themselves

to religion (*faqaha fil al-din*) in order to engage in *ijtihad*. Not all figures within the scholarly network were prepared to present lengthy and complex arguments to foster activism in their communities. An exception to this trend is Sulayman al-Maghribi, who was indeed considered a "radical" scholar (Azra, 2013).

d. The Development of Madrasahs in Haramayn

The return of Sunni scholars to promote the dissemination of Sunni knowledge reflects the active development of intellectual activities in Haramayn. Al-Suyuti noted that the term "madrasah" began to be used more widely since the ninth century. Around the first quarter of the 11th century, institutions now known as madrasahs were established in Nishapur, Iran. Mosques, madrasahs, ribaths, and even the homes of teachers are examples of religious and educational social institutions closely associated with the academic traditions of scholars throughout Islamic history. With its cosmopolitan character, the existing network of scholars also provided broader opportunities for students of knowledge to receive diverse education and learning from scholars who differed in their expertise and specialties. Furthermore, the acquisition of knowledge through contact and interaction with scholars who came to the holy cities to perform the pilgrimage and did not stay long in Makkah and Madinah was a common practice among students of knowledge (Azra, 2009).

The term madrasah originates from Nishapur. Before the development initiated by Nizam al-Mulk in 495 AH/1067 CE, there were several madrasahs. One of them was the madrasah al-Bayhaqy, founded by Bayhaqy (d. 458 AH/1066 CE), and the madrasah al-Sa'diyyah, established by Nasr bin Sebuktigin, the governor of Naysabur, in 389 AH/999 CE. The activities of madrasahs that developed in Makkah and Madinah are as follows (Aidah, 2008):

1) Activities of Madrasahs in Makkah

When "Ibn Jubayr" was in Makkah during 579-80 AH/1183-4 CE, he witnessed various intellectual activities at the Masjid al-Haram. People were reading the Qur'an and copying religious texts. He observed many individuals engaged in religious and scholarly activities every night. Some of them formed halaqahs with religious books and the Qur'an, while others were engrossed in worship (Azra, 2013).

From this period to the present, the relationship between the scholars of Haramayn and the two holy mosques, along with their affiliations with madrasahs and ribaths, has been a defining characteristic of the scholarly network in Makkah and Madinah. These madrasahs have educated many prominent scholars in Makkah. One such scholar was Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Saghani, the Hanafi Qadhi al-qudhah of Makkah, who was born in 749–825 AH/1348–1422 CE. He studied the doctrines of the Hanafi school at the Madrasah A'zham Shah and later at the Masjid al-Haram. At that time, the authorities did not oversee education in the madrasahs of Haramayn. Nevertheless, the teachers in the mosque were responsible for the instruction there. These teachers received funds for education from waqf donations, particularly from the pilgrims coming from various parts of the world (Aidah, 2008).

B. How Cosmopolitanism in Haramayn Resulted from the Hajj Pilgrimage

The Ottoman rulers, who appointed their governor in Madinah in the early 16th century, implemented many policies regarding Makkah and the Hajj pilgrimage, which accelerated the growth of the scholarly network in Haramayn. By the end of the 15th century, specifically in 904 AH/1498 CE, the Ottoman Empire began deploying a naval fleet in the Indian Ocean. From the early 16th century, the presence of the Ottoman dynasty became increasingly significant in the Indian Ocean, but more importantly, it enhanced the security of shipping routes to the holy land (Azra, 2009).

The scholarly network in Haramayn included numerous prominent scholars from various regions of the Islamic world, who then settled in Haramayn, either permanently or for several years. Most of these scholars came to Haramayn to perform the Hajj. After completing their pilgrimage, many decided to reside in Makkah or Madinah to pursue knowledge for those who fell into the category of students, or to teach for those who were already established as scholars. The core of the scholarly network centered in Haramayn consisted of popular and influential scholars in Makkah and Madinah.

Participants in this scholarly network hailed from diverse birthplaces and educational backgrounds, including Hijaz, Persia, Turkey, Kurdistan, Egypt, other North African countries, India, and Indonesia. Most of them received education in various places and studied under multiple teachers before arriving in Haramayn. Some had also taught in several locations before finally

settling in the holy land. Very few received their education in only one or two places.

4. CONCLUSION

The intellectual activities during that period were more inclined toward the study of Hadith, focusing on high or superior isnads ('uluw al-isnad or al-isnad al-'ali), given that Makkah and Madinah were primary centers for Hadith. Another intellectual activity involved harmonizing Shari'ah (fiqh) and Sufism. This movement became known as neo-Sufism, a term coined by Fazlur Rahman. He defined neo-Sufism as a renewed form of Sufism, primarily stripped of its ecstatic and metaphysical characteristics and replaced with content rooted in the principles of orthodox Islam.

The Sufi activities occurring in Haramayn were influenced by the cosmopolitanism brought by Muslims from various parts of the world who came to perform the Hajj and settled there, bringing with them their mystical traditions from their homelands.

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