

THE RELEVANCE OF AL-SYAHRASTANI'S AL-MILAL WA AL-NIHAL METHODOLOGY TO CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyse the methodology and contributions of Al-Syahrastani's book *Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal* in Islamic historiography. This study is a literature review or bibliographic study using a descriptive qualitative approach and research on scientific articles and books relevant to this study. *Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal* by Al-Syahrastani was studied to explore its methodology's relevance and contribution to Islamic historiography. The results of the study indicate that by using a comprehensive descriptive analysis methodology and in-depth comparisons, there are no biased research results, which ultimately led to the book *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* as the first work that objectively and systematically organises and presents the history of various religious sects and philosophical schools of thought. The conclusion of this study states that *Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal* by Al-Syahrastani is a highly significant contribution in maintaining the objectivity of historical writing and can be used as a reference in the study of Islamic historiography.

Keywords: Al-Syahrastani; Al-milal wa al-nihal; Islamic historiography.

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Sects and Doctrines by Abū al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Syahrastanis (Al-Syahrastani, 1951) written in 1153 CE, it is an essential work in Islamic historiography that discusses the religious sects and philosophical schools of thought prevalent during his time. This work, written around 1127–1128 CE, is considered the first comprehensive, systematic, and objective study of religious pluralism and human thought. Al-Syahrastani divided religion into two main categories: those with revelation (such as Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism) and those without revelation (such as atheism, Greek philosophy, and Brahmanism) (Ikhwan, 2025). The Book of Sects and Doctrines is famous in Islamic historiography for its scientific and non-polemical approach. By quoting original sources and following the terminology and methodology of each group, Al-Syahrastani sought to present a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of each sect's views fairly and thoroughly. This method demonstrates Al-Syahrastani's effort to understand and record the diversity of thought and belief within Islamic and non-Islamic societies at the time. The Book of Sects and Doctrines has also been criticised. Some historians argue that Al-Syahrastani's work reflects his affiliation with Ismailism. However, many also argue that Al-Syahrastani successfully maintained his integrity as a Muslim while presenting perspectives from various sects and religions.

This paper examines the historiographical methodology employed by al-Syahrastani in *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, which has not been studied previously in terms of its methods and its contribution to the comparative study of Islamic and religious historiography. It is hoped

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that by using relevant methods, we will gain a better understanding of how al-Syahrastani recorded and analysed various religions and schools of thought at that time.

Several scientific works discuss the same topic, such as “The Influence of Muhammad Abdul Karim Al-Syahrastani's Thought on the Development of Religious Studies in Indonesia (Study of the Book of *Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal*),” which focuses on the influence of Al-Syahrastani's thought on religious studies in Indonesia, meaning that this article only discusses a specific scope (Indonesia) (Ruslan & Rosana, 2020). Another article titled “Cendekiawan Heresiografi Awal dalam Perbandingan Agama: Muhammad: Abd Al-Karim Al-Shahrastani dan Kitabnya, *Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal*” focuses more on the typological nature of religion developed exclusively by al-Shahrastani (Muhammad Azizan Sabjan, 2022). Another article titled “Membincang Historiografi Islam Abad Pertengahan” only discusses how Islamic historiography developed during the Middle Ages without identifying one or two figures or providing detailed explanations about them (Wahyudhi, 2013).

The first study only focuses on how Al-Syahrastani's thoughts influenced the book *Al Milal wa Al Nihal* in Indonesia. The discussion is not universal and focuses solely on one location, whereas the second study examines how Al-Syahrastani developed the typological nature of religion. so there is no detailed and comprehensive explanation of the methodology used by Al-Syahrastani in writing *Kitab Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal* and his contribution to historiography. The third study focuses on Islamic historiography during the Middle Ages, with no detailed explanation of one or more figures who contributed to the field of historiography.

Based on the above literature review, there is a need for further research on the methodology used by Al-Syahrastani in writing *Kitab Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal*. Therefore, this article focuses on Al-Syahrastani's historiographical methods, concentrating on how he categorises and presents religious sects, both those with revealed foundation and those without, and ultimately contributes to the field of medieval Islamic historiography.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a library-based study employing with a descriptive qualitative approach, which involves an in-depth and critical examination of existing and relevant library materials, including international and national articles, as well as related books. This research uses a historical research methodology consisting of four main stages: heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Sukmana, 2021). In the heuristic stage, the primary source used is *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* by al-Syahrastani, supplemented with relevant secondary literature to provide historical and intellectual context (Abdulkhir, 2012). The critical stage focuses on source verification and text reliability evaluation. Furthermore, in the interpretation stage, this research analyses how al-Syahrastani's methodology categorises religious sects, both those with revelation and those without, as well as his interpretation of Greek philosophy and other religions. Finally, in the historiography stage, this study evaluates al-Syahrastani's contribution to the writing of religious and philosophical history and his influence on comparative religious studies and Islamic historiography. This methodology aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the objectivity and contribution of *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* in Islamic historiography.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Structure and Content of Work

Al-Syahrastani, a renowned Islamic intellectual of the 12th century, wrote a major work entitled *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. By examining various philosophical schools and religious sects of his time, this work aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the plurality of beliefs and thoughts in the world from an Islamic perspective. The structure and content of this work are organised systematically and objectively. This approach includes an in-depth examination of beliefs, practices, history, and the differences and similarities between religious sects. To this day, this work remains relevant for the study of comparative religion and Islamic historiography (Hasan, Al-Hasani, & Maola, 2024).

In the opening section of *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Al-Syahrastani explains the methodology he used in writing his work. Al-Syahrastani's writing methodology begins with descriptive analysis, which involves describing and exploring information about phenomena or objects without attempting to identify cause-and-effect relationships or make predictions, with the intention of providing a clear, detailed, and objective picture of the characteristics or properties of the phenomena or objects he studies. Al-Syahrastani emphasizes the importance of presenting the views of each religious sect and philosophical school discussed objectively. He also explains that his aim is not to get caught up in religious or sectarian polemics, but to provide accurate and fair information, referencing relevant sources. With such an introduction, Al-Syahrastani provides readers with the necessary foundation to comprehensively understand how he discusses each sect and school of thought (Maulana, Untung, Nuriz, Awaludin, & Qorib, 2023).

Therefore, he positions his work as a scholarly text that can serve as a reference in comparative religious studies and the history of thought. Religions Based on the Bible (*Ahl al-Kitab*) In its second part, this work discusses religions that have holy books or revelations, which are considered in Islamic tradition to be religions that receive direct revelation from God. Al-Syahrastani studies three major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Each religion is described by mentioning the various sects and groups that emerged within it. Al-Syahrastani records the different beliefs held by each sect, including their understanding of God, revelation, and the afterlife (Al-Syahrastani, 1951).

Not only that, Al-Syahrastani also used the Comparative Methodology by comparing different sects, beliefs, or religions to find similarities, differences, and relationships between them. As a result, Al-Syahrastani successfully wrote about the similarities and differences between the religions and sects he studied, and also explained the causes of these differences in his book *Al-Milal wa Al-Nihal*. With his highly structured and systematic explanations, Al-Syahrastani's methodology remains ideal and relevant today in Islamic historiography.

Al-Syahrastani identifies several sects within Judaism, including the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. He also discusses the differences between them in terms of law, teachings, and religious practices. Similarly, in Christianity, he highlights the differences between sects such as Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and various Protestant groups that existed at the time, as well as their views on the position of Jesus Christ and the concept of the Trinity. Al-Syahrastani, a Zoroastrian priest, discusses the concept of dualism between good and evil, which is deeply rooted in this religion.

Some religions do not have revelations or holy books; these include atheism, Brahmanism, and Greek philosophy. Al-Syahrastani wrote about various philosophical traditions that developed in Greece, especially Neoplatonism, which focuses on the concept of a single infinite reality. In addition, he investigated how Greek thought influenced Muslim thought, especially the rational thinking that emerged in the Islamic world. Al-Syahrastani discussed Greek philosophy, Brahmanism, and various Hindu sects, identifying their differences and their views on karma, reincarnation, and liberation. He also discusses atheism, which at the time was considered a view that rejected the existence of God or belief in revealed religions. The more philosophical and rationalist theories that emerged at the time are discussed in this section.

Al-Syahrastani pays special attention to developing philosophy and rational thought in the Islamic world. He discusses several important schools of philosophy, such as Ismailism, Neoplatonism, and Aristotelian epistemology. Al-Syahrastani also discusses how important philosophers such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and al-Ghazali significantly influenced this development in the Islamic world. Al-Syahrastani also studied the relationship between philosophy and religion in Islamic thought and how philosophers sought to combine rationality with religious teachings. He also discussed how schools of thought such as Ismailism influenced intellectual thought in the Islamic world, particularly in metaphysics and views on revelation (Al-Syahrastani, 1951).

Al-Syahrastani's discovery of religious pluralism and philosophical schools is presented in the concluding section of this work (Yunta, 2024). He emphasises that, although each sect's teachings and practices differ, universal values can be found among them. Al-Syahrastani invites readers to acknowledge and respect these differences while seeking agreement in religious and inter-school discussions. This work serves as a guide to understanding ideological and spiritual diversity within a broader historical context, and also functions as an essential reference in comparative religious studies (al-Shahrastani & Syukur, 2005).

Western intellectuals began to realize the importance of studying world religions comparatively in the 19th and 20th centuries. Al-Syahrastani's work became an important source of this thinking. Several Western historians and comparative religion scholars, such as Edward Said and Ninian Smart, have acknowledged the role of Islamic thought in building interfaith dialogue. Western religious scholars can analyze various theological and philosophical systems in a more open and unbiased manner thanks to the perspective of *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. This has contributed to the growth of comparative religion studies in the West, particularly in understanding the world's significant religions within a broader context (Vencatsamy, 2024).

Al-Milal wa al-Nihal remains a crucial source in modern Islamic historiography, particularly for the study of religious pluralism and interfaith relations. This work is highly relevant in today's increasingly multicultural and religiously diverse world because Al-Syahrastani's objective approach allows readers to understand different religious perspectives without bias or polemics when discussing various religious sects. By allowing for differing opinions, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* helps foster more peaceful and rational interfaith relations. This work has become a valuable reference in the contemporary Islamic world, facilitating religious discussions and promoting social tolerance (Ruslan & Rosana, 2020).

Al-Syahrastani's Writing Method in *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*

Al-Syahrastani was a distinguished Muslim scholar and philosopher recognised for his significant book, *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. This book is a seminal work in religion and theology, comprehensively analysing the diverse sects and belief systems that prevailed throughout its author's day. In composing this work, Al-Syahrastani employed a meticulously structured and methodical approach, integrating descriptive, analytical, and comparative techniques, to facilitate a more precise and thorough understanding of the prevailing doctrines.

Al-Syahrastani's methodology begins with a comprehensive descriptive analysis of each sect studied, including both Islamic and non-Islamic religions. He explains the basic principles of each group while exploring their origins, evolution, and internal differences. For example, Al-Syahrastani identifies the basic principles of the major schools of thought in Islam, such as Sunni, Shia, and Khawarij, as well as the theological differences within each of these schools. For example, al-Syahrastani notes the difference between the Sunni belief that the caliphate is a political matter not bound by lineage, while the Shiites believe that religious leadership should be inherited through the family of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. In *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, al-Syahrastani also explains Judaism, whose fundamental principle is belief in the One God and the covenant between God and the Israelites. However, he also discusses the various sects within Judaism, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, who have differing views on the interpretation of religious law. In Christianity, al-Syahrastani describes that Christianity is rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, but has developed into various denominations, such as Catholicism and Orthodoxy, as well as internal differences related to the concept of divinity (trinity) and the role of Jesus as the savior (al-Fatah, 2006). In addition to the Abrahamic religions (Islam), Al-Syahrastani also discusses other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, which emphasizes the dualism between good and evil, and Hinduism, which believes in reincarnation and karma.

This provides readers with a comprehensive overview of each sect and its historical development and transformations. This approach illustrates Al-Syahrastani's dedication to delivering accurate and analytical knowledge, enabling readers to comprehend the historical and intellectual context surrounding the emergence of diverse sects.

Al-Syahrastani used a fundamental comparative methodology in *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. In his work, he compared various sects within Islam and juxtaposed Islamic doctrines with those of other religions, including Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Al-Syahrastani aims to explain the similarities and differences between various religious doctrines and their mutual influences. For example, al-Syahrastani says that Christianity believes in the concept of the Trinity (God in three persons: father, son, and holy Spirit), while Islam sees God (Allah) as one and indivisible. Al-Syahrastani shows that, although these two religions have different understandings of God, both teach the importance of monotheism in very different ways. In addition, al-Syahrastani compares the doctrines of Zoroastrianism, particularly the concept of dualism between Ahura Mazda (the good God) and Angra Mainyu (the evil spirit), with Islamic theology, which emphasizes that God is one and has no partner. Al-Syahrastani demonstrates how these concepts reveal significant differences in the worldviews of each religion, even though each seeks to explain the origins of good and evil (Syahrastani, 2004).

This method offers insight into the theological differences between these sects and the ideological relationship between religion and the philosophical schools of thought prevalent at the time. The structure of *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* is very systematic, making it easy for readers to understand Al-Syahrastani's thinking (Khalifah, 1976).

The book comprises numerous primary sections, each addressing a specific sect or faith. Each chapter commences with a comprehensive definition of the respective sect or religion, followed by an examination of its principal doctrines. This is succeeded by a comprehensive examination of the sect's history and evolution. This distinct categorisation facilitates readers' comprehension of the interrelations across diverse sects and philosophical schools within religion and philosophy. Al-Syahrastani exercised meticulous discernment in utilising several sources for the composition of *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. He does not depend exclusively on sources from the Islamic realm; instead, he enhances his book with concepts beyond Islam, including Greek philosophy and teachings that originated outside the Islamic context. The ideas of Greek thinkers like Aristotle and Plotinus offer a broader perspective on the evolution of Islamic religion and philosophy. Al-Syahrastani's utilisation of several sources illustrates his intellectual profundity and his synthesis of concepts from other traditions to offer a more holistic comprehension of religious doctrines and sects. A notable characteristic of Al-Syahrastani's literature is his endeavour to eschew polemics and detrimental disputes (Fauzi, 2025).

Al-Syahrastani endeavours to deliver an impartial and equitable examination of each sect and philosophy he addresses, refraining from adopting a stance of defence or criticism towards any specific faction. Consequently, he has created a work that functions both as a theological reference and as a source that offers an equitable and impartial comprehension of diverse sects and philosophical schools. This illustrates Al-Syahrastani's intellectual disposition, emphasising a contemplative and sagacious approach to religion and philosophy.

In composing *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Al-Syahrastani emphasises the importance of logic and reason in understanding religion and its various sects. He contends that religion and theological ideas should be examined through a reasonable lens, necessitating that theological and philosophical interpretations are grounded in explicit and logical evidence. This method demonstrates that Al-Syahrastani aimed to reconcile revelation (religion) and reason (philosophy) in evaluating religious doctrines. This perspective shows a profound comprehension of theology and philosophy, and Al-Syahrastani's synthesis of these elements within his intellectual framework (Ruslan & Rosana, 2020).

Al-Syahrastani's *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* is a text that offers profound insights into diverse sects and religions while exemplifying a meticulously ordered, systematic, and sagacious writing style. Al-Syahrastani's methodology in composing his work exhibits remarkable intellectual profundity and a receptive disposition towards several philosophical traditions. This work retains its significance and functions as a principal reference for individuals aiming to comprehend the dynamics of religious and sectarian comparison and the theological discourse that emerged during that era.

Criticism and Controversy

Ismailism is a branch of Shi'ism that recognises Imam Ismail bin Ja'far as a legitimate imam, unlike the main branch of Shi'ism (Ja'fari), which acknowledges Imam Musa al-Kadhim. Ismailism has a rich intellectual and esoteric tradition, which includes philosophical and mystical ideas that often diverge from mainstream Islam (Andani, 2016). Affiliation with Ismailism is often controversial due to the esoteric doctrines and practices of this sect, which differ from those of the majority of Muslims. Allegations that Al-Syahrastani had affiliations with Ismailism are often based on certain elements found in his works. Some argue that al-Syahrastani demonstrated a greater understanding and appreciation of Ismaili thought, particularly in describing and analysing certain sects in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Several passages in his work express sympathy toward Ismaili teachings, leading to speculation that he may have had an affiliation or closeness to this sect (Terrier, 2020).

In *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, al-Syahrastani mentions many sects within Islam, including Ismailism. He provides fairly detailed descriptions of Ismailism's teachings and highlights several theological ideas that distinguish it from other branches of Shiism. However, some view this approach as indicating that al-Syahrastani was more than just a neutral observer. They argue that al-Syahrastani may have had an affinity or sympathy toward Ismaili thought, which is evident in how he gave more space to explain their teachings, even though other sects were often described more critically.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that al-Syahrastani's presentation of the sects in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* is more objective and does not show clear bias. He strives to describe each sect based on its teachings, even though he is more inclined toward Sunni views. However, criticism of the imbalance in the presentation of these teachings remains, particularly concerning his discussion of Ismailism. Allegations of al-Syahrastani's affiliation with Ismailism stem from conclusions made by several modern scholars and historical researchers who highlight al-Syahrastani's familiarity with Ismaili thought. For example, some aspects of al-Syahrastani's works, particularly those related to esotericism and philosophy, bear a striking resemblance to Ismaili teachings. Additionally, al-Syahrastani spent time at various intellectual centres close to Ismaili thought, which supports the notion that that school of thought may have influenced him. However, it is important to note that these allegations are not universally accepted (Gaiser, 2008).

Some Islamic historians, including those who focus on al-Syahrastani's thought and historiography, argue that he only studied Ismailism and other sects academically and objectively without a direct affiliation with the movement. They say that al-Syahrastani was an intellectual who sought to understand various theological views neutrally without aligning himself with any particular group.

Contribution to Islamic Historiography

The book *Kitab al-Milal wa al-Nihal* by al-Syahrastani is the first work to systematically and objectively present the history of various religious sects and philosophical schools systematically and objectively. For this reason, this book is essential for the study of Islamic historiography. Previously, the writing of religious history was often polemical and biased, but al-Syahrastani sought to elucidate the differences between sects more neutrally. This makes his work a pioneering contribution that introduced the methods of comparative religion and a more scientific analysis of religious sects. In this context, al-Syahrastani's writings serve as a crucial foundation for building a more objective and open historiography of Islam that embraces intellectual pluralism (Muhammad Azizan Sabjan & Akhir, 2015).

In contemporary Islamic historiography, *Al-Milal wa-l-Nihal* offers an insightful perspective on the development of Islamic sects (Ruslan & Rosana, 2020). Al-Syahrastani categorises and analyses various schools of thought within Islam in a systematic manner, identifying how differences between sects developed based on theological teachings and the socio-political contexts that influenced them. This work helps us understand the internal dynamics of Islam, particularly how differences between Sunni and Shia, as well as other groups, are influenced not only influenced

by theological differences but also by broader political and social factors. This is highly relevant for contemporary Islamic historiography, which seeks to reassess the internal development of Islam and view it within a broader global context.

Al-Milal wa al-Nihal has had a significant influence on the Islamic and Western worlds. This work introduced the concept of religious comparison and included an analysis of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Al-Syahrastani sought to explain the theological and philosophical views of various religious sects more systematically and objectively in this work. The concepts introduced in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* later influenced Western religious studies, particularly the development of research on comparative religion and Islamic sects. These ideas also influenced academic studies on religious pluralism and interfaith relations (Mohd et al., 2020).

The work *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* had a significant influence on comparative religious thought in the Western world, particularly through its analysis of various sects within the world's major religions (Chidester, 2018). The concepts introduced by al-Syahrastani regarding inter-sectarian relations and the classification of religions based on specific criteria, such as whether a religion is revealed or not, opened the door for the development of more systematic comparative religious studies.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Western intellectuals began to recognize the importance of studying world religions comparatively, and al-Syahrastani's work became an essential source in developing this thinking. Several Western historians and comparative religion scholars, including Edward Said and Ninian Smart, have acknowledged the importance of Islamic thought in developing interfaith dialogue. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* offers a perspective allowing Western scholars of religion to analyze various theological and philosophical systems more openly and unbiasedly. This has played a role in enriching the study of comparative religion that has developed in the West, particularly in understanding the world's significant faiths within a broader context (Vencatsamy, 2024).

Al-Milal wa al-Nihal remains relevant in modern Islamic historiography, particularly in research on religious pluralism and interfaith relations research. In discussing various religious sects, al-Syahrastani's objective approach allows readers to understand differences in religious views without bias or polemics. This work is highly relevant in the increasingly multireligious and multicultural modern world. *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* helps build more peaceful and rational interfaith relations by allowing different perspectives. This work has become an essential reference in the contemporary Islamic world for building interreligious dialogue and promoting social tolerance (Mutalib & Ramly, 2023). *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* by Al-Syahrastani is one of the most important theological works in Islamic historiography. This work offers a deep understanding of various religious sects, both within Islam and outside of it. It provides a comprehensive overview of the differences and similarities between different religious groups. This work is relevant in contemporary Islamic historiography because it presents a spiritual thought map leading to a more open understanding of religious pluralism and peaceful and rational interfaith relations (Wagay, 2022).

In addition, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* also provides space for the study of other religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Al-Syahrastani not only reviews sects within Islam, but also pays attention to major religions outside Islam. Although he criticizes the teachings of these religions from an Islamic perspective, he still tries to understand them objectively. This is highly relevant to contemporary Islamic historiography, which emphasizes the importance of viewing other religions with a more inclusive perspective and reducing inter-religious tensions that often arise.

A significant contribution of *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* to the study of religious pluralism is its systematic and theological approach to classifying various religions and sects. Although Al-Syahrastani did not employ the concept of religious pluralism in the modern context, he demonstrated that religious differences can be understood scientifically and rationally. This is an essential contribution to understanding religious pluralism, as Al-Syahrastani invites us to not only

focus on existing differences but also seek common ground between religions that can enrich our knowledge. In this context, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* provides space for reflection on how religious differences can be appreciated and understood in depth, without promoting confrontation or tension (Mohd et al., 2020).

Al-Syahrastani's understanding of peaceful and rational interfaith relations is also essential to contemporary studies. Although this work was written in the 12th century, its ideas remain relevant for addressing the challenges of interfaith relations today. Al-Syahrastani demonstrates that rational thinking, rather than fanaticism, is the key to understanding religious differences. This is a crucial message in today's global context, where interreligious tensions often fuel conflict. Al-Syahrastani's thought reminds us that peaceful inter-religious relations are possible and necessary for achieving a more harmonious society (Mohd et al., 2020).

With its contribution to contemporary Islamic historiography, *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* also provides a strong foundation for understanding religious pluralism in the modern world. This work offers valuable insights into building bridges of understanding between religions, emphasising the importance of dialogue and respect for differences. In an increasingly fragmented world, Al-Syahrastani's thinking invites us to see religious differences as an opportunity for enrichment, rather than a source of division.

Al-Milal wa al-Nihal by al-Syahrastani is essential in Islamic historiography because it introduces a systematic and objective methodology for studying religious plurality and philosophical schools of thought. Additionally, this work has had a significant influence on religious studies, both in the Islamic world and the West, and remains relevant for the study of religious pluralism in the modern world (Tumin, Makrufi, & Purnomo, 2021). Al-Syahrastani's scientific and objective approach paved the way for more peaceful and rational dialogue between religions.

CONCLUSION

With a scientific and systematic approach, Kitab *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* by al-Syahrastani provides an objective and comprehensive understanding of the diversity of religions, sects, and schools of philosophy that existed in his time. Al-Syahrastani's writing method is very organized. He examines each religion and sect objectively through a descriptive analytical approach, as well as a comparative approach, resulting in direct comparisons of the teachings of various religions and sects. This work is not only significant in the history of religion but also makes a substantial contribution to comparative religious studies and thought, demonstrating the importance of adopting a free and rational perspective to understand intellectual diversity. One of al-Syahrastani's most significant contributions to the Islamic intellectual tradition is his attempt to avoid debate and provide a more balanced analysis of existing sects and religions. Kitab *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* remains a valuable resource to this day, providing insight into the history of religious thought and philosophy, as well as serving as an exemplar of a scientific and objective approach to various beliefs and ideas. This work offers a crucial understanding of the intellectual and social dynamics that have shaped religion and philosophy throughout history.

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