

Issues of Disagreement and the Treasury of Islamic Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

Khilafiyah, or differences of opinion in Islam, is an inherent phenomenon in the history of Islamic thought. This study aims to explore the dynamics of khilafiyah and its contributions to enriching the Islamic intellectual tradition. Using a qualitative approach based on literature review, this research examines classical and contemporary sources to identify the causes of differences of opinion, the methodological frameworks of scholars, and the relevance of khilafiyah in addressing modern issues. Findings indicate that khilafiyah not only broadens the intellectual horizons of Muslims but also serves as a crucial foundation for the development of disciplines such as fiqh, usul fiqh, hadith studies, and theology. Amidst the challenges of globalization and pluralism, khilafiyah remains relevant as an adaptive and solution-oriented tool for contextual ijtihad. However, critical awareness is needed to prevent polarization of the ummah due to the misuse of differences. Thus, khilafiyah must be understood as an intellectual heritage that reinforces the values of moderation, tolerance, and diversity within the framework of ummah unity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Differences of opinion or khilafiyah are an integral part of the dynamic development of Islamic scholarship. Since the era of the Prophet and the Companions, khilafiyah has been an integral part of understanding and interpreting religious texts derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. The differing perspectives among the companions, such as Umar bin al-Khattab and Ali bin Abi Thalib in addressing legal issues, serve as historical examples that Islam allows for pluralistic interpretations as long as they are grounded in intellectual honesty and the purity of intent to seek truth [1]. In this

context, differences of opinion should not be seen as weaknesses, but rather as intellectual wealth that reflects Islam's flexibility in responding to diverse social and cultural contexts [2].

Along with the expansion of the Islamic caliphate, cultural diversity and social conditions influenced the emergence of various schools of fiqh. The emergence of the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali schools was not merely the result of differences in understanding the text, but also a response to the realities of life in various geographical regions [3]. For example, the dominant use of the qiyas method in the Hanafi school reflects a rational approach to legal issues, while the

Maliki school relies more on the practices of the people of Medina as a representation of prophetic tradition [4]. Therefore, khilafiyah became the foundation for the development of a dynamic and contextual Islamic scientific heritage [5].

In contemporary society, khilafiyah is often narrowly perceived as a source of conflict or justification for exclusive and fanatical attitudes towards certain schools of thought. However, earlier scholars established ethical principles for addressing differences, such as tolerance, respect for valid evidence, and recognition of legitimate *ijtihad* [6]. Ironically, the spirit of dialogue and mutual respect that characterized classical Islamic intellectualism is now often eroded by divisive rhetoric cloaked in authoritarian interpretations. This highlights the urgency of re-examining the role of khilafiyah as a means of maturing Islamic reasoning and strengthening moderate perspectives amid the plurality of Islamic thought [7].

Khilafiyah also plays a crucial role in the development of various branches of Islamic scholarship, such as *usul fiqh*, *tafsir*, *hadith*, and *kalam*. Classical debates in understanding legal evidence and contextual frameworks have produced robust and applicable methodological frameworks that remain relevant today [8]. Furthermore, in addressing contemporary issues such as bioethics, Islamic finance, and human rights, the legacy of khilafiyah serves as an important reference for modern scholars to engage in contextual *ijtihad* that remains rooted in the principles of *sharia* [6], [9]. Therefore, positioning khilafiyah as an intellectual resource is highly relevant in formulating solutions to the complex and dynamic challenges of the modern era.

Based on this background, this study seeks to analyze khilafiyah not merely as a difference of opinion, but as a scientific heritage that enriches Islamic knowledge. Through a literature review of classical and contemporary works, this paper aims to show that khilafiyah is a vital element in the construction of Islamic thought that is

rational, moderate, and responsive to the developments of the times.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Definition and Concept of Khilafiyah

Etymologically, the term khilafiyah comes from the Arabic root word *khilaf* (خلاف), which means difference or contradiction. In the context of Islam, khilafiyah refers to differences of opinion in the interpretation or application of Islamic teachings by scholars of the primary sources of law, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Khilafiyah can be classified into two broad categories: khilafiyah in matters of *ushul* (principles) and in *furu'* (branches). Differences in *furu'* are generally accepted as normal, even considered a blessing, while differences in *ushul* are more sensitive because they concern principles of faith [1].

In Islamic scholarship, scholars not only accept the existence of khilafiyah, but also developed methodologies to manage it systematically. Imams such as Abu Hanifah, Malik bin Anas, Syafi'i, and Ahmad bin Hanbal formed distinctive approaches based on the method of *istinbath* (derivation of law), social context, and epistemological structure of their time [3], [10]. This approach reinforces the position of khilafiyah as an integral part of the Islamic scholarly tradition that values dynamism rather than rejecting plurality of understanding.

2.2 Sources of Khilafiyah in Islam

Differences in interpretation in Islam are closely related to the multi-interpretative nature of religious texts and the complexity of Islamic legal sources. The Qur'an, which contains verses that are *muhkamat* and *mutasyabihat*, opens up space for diverse interpretations (Q.S. Ali Imran [3]: 7), while the Hadith has varying degrees of validity (*shahih*, *hasan*, *dhaif*), which influences its acceptance in legal rulings [11]. Additionally, the methods of *ijtihad* used by scholars, such as *qiyas*, *istihsan*, and *maslahah*, produce diverse yet valid legal outcomes within the tradition of *fiqh* [12].

Differences also arise from external factors, such as geographical, cultural, and

political backgrounds. The Hanafi school, for example, developed in Iraq, which has a pluralistic and rationalistic society, thus more accommodating a rational approach (ra'yu) in law. Conversely, the Maliki school, which emerged in Medina, emphasizes local practices of the Medina community as a form of continuity of the prophetic tradition [4], [10]. Historical conditions such as political conflicts following the death of the Prophet Muhammad also gave rise to theological variants such as Sunni, Shia, and Khawarij, which later developed based on their own epistemological foundations [5], [8].

2.3 The Role of Khilafiyah in the Development of Disciplines

Khilafiyah became the main driving force behind the development of Islamic disciplines such as ushul fiqh, ilmu kalam, and ilmu hadis. In the field of ushul fiqh, debates about shar'i arguments, the validity of ijtiḥad, and methods of legal deduction created a methodological framework that is still used today. Imam Shafi'i, in his work *Al-Risalah*, emphasized the importance of consistency in the method of legal inference, which became a milestone in the standardization of *usul al-fiqh* [13]. The science of *hadith* also developed due to the need to distinguish authentic narrations amid numerous differences in understanding and chains of transmission. The works of Imam Bukhari and Muslim serve as important examples in the effort to verify *hadith* as a response to the phenomenon of *khilafiyah* *riwayat*.

Meanwhile, in the field of theology, *ilmu kalam* developed as a response to internal conflicts and interactions with Greek philosophy [5], [14]. The literature on *fiqh al-ikhtilaf* or *fiqh* differences of opinion also emerged as a form of respect for the diversity of *ijtiḥad*. The works of Ibn Rushd, Bidayatul Mujtahid, and Syathibi in *Al-Muwafaqat* provide a comparative approach to various *madhhab* opinions to find common ground in differences [3], [10]. This literature not only reconstructs the law but also introduces a humanistic and solution-oriented ethics of difference.

2.4 Khilafiyah and Contemporary Islamic Challenges

In the current context, *khilafiyah* is not only concerned with issues of *fiqh ibadah*, but also extends to the fields of bioethics, human rights, and sharia economics. Issues such as the use of medical technology, digital transactions, and sharia finance present new challenges for Muslims. For this reason, contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, and Mohammad Hashim Kamali have developed the *maqashid syariah* approach as a framework for addressing global issues while maintaining the substance of Islamic values [9], [12], [15].

Contemporary differences of opinion also require wise management to prevent them from escalating into division. In the era of social media, differences of opinion can go viral and lead to sharp social segregation. Therefore, public education emphasizing moderation, tolerance, and appreciation of the *khilafiyah* heritage as a unifying rather than divisive legacy is crucial [7], [16].

3. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research design. This approach was chosen because the study focuses on conceptual exploration of the phenomenon of *khilafiyah* and its contribution to shaping Islamic knowledge from classical to contemporary times. The qualitative approach allows researchers to analyze the differences in opinions among scholars in depth by considering the historical, social, and methodological contexts that underlie them [17]. The main data sources in this study consist of classical and contemporary literature, both in the form of *madhhab* books such as *Al-Umm* by Imam Syafi'i, *Al-Muwaththa* by Imam Malik, as well as theoretical and analytical works such as *Ihya Ulum al-Din* by Al-Ghazali and *Bidayatul Mujtahid* by Ibn Rusyd. In addition, modern academic works such as *Islamic Jurisprudence* by Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee, *The Formation of Islamic Law* by Wael B. Hallaq, and *Islam and the Challenge of*

Modernity by Tariq Ramadan are used to examine the relevance of khilafiyah in responding to contemporary challenges.

The analysis procedure is carried out using a thematic and hermeneutic approach. The researcher grouped major themes such as the definition of khilafiyah, sources of differences of opinion, the role of khilafiyah in the development of knowledge, and the dynamics of differences in the modern context. Each theme was then critically analyzed to identify patterns of thought and their connection to the social and historical development of Muslims. In conducting the interpretation, this study uses the principles of classical hermeneutics, namely understanding the text through its context and the original author's intention, as well as paying attention to the *istinbath* method used in each legal product or view being studied [12], [16]. Thus, this literature review method enables researchers to comprehensively examine the contributions of khilafiyah to the intellectual dynamics of Islam and demonstrate that differences of opinion are an integral part of the richness and flexibility of Islamic law.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Differences in Islamic Thought

Differences of opinion have been an important part of the construction of Islamic thought since the time of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad. Differences of opinion, for example between Umar bin al-Khattab and Ali bin Abi Thalib on various legal issues, are evidence that Islam has accommodated plurality of views from the beginning, which arose from differences in context and interpretation of the main sources of law [1]. This diversity later gave rise to schools of jurisprudence, such as Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali, each of which brought a unique methodological approach to formulating law [3].

The Hanafi school, for example, is widely known for its rational approach and use of *qiyas* (analogy), while the Maliki school emphasizes *amal ahl al-Madinah* or the practices of the people of Medina [4]. The

Shafi'i school emphasizes the importance of consistency in the method of *istinbath* through the monumental work *Al-Risalah*, while the Hanbali school is more textualist and cautious in accepting *qiyas*. These four schools of thought not only demonstrate methodological diversity but also illustrate how dynamic Muslims' efforts to understand God's law have been across different times and places [10].

4.2 Sources and Causes of Differences of Opinion (Khilafiyah)

Khilafiyah arises from several primary sources. First, the nature of sacred texts as *zanni* in *dalalah* (indication of meaning) opens room for interpretation. The *mutasyabihat* verses in the Qur'an and hadiths with *ahad* status often become the starting point for differences [12]. Second, differences in the method of establishing law. For example, Imam Malik regarded the practices of the people of Medina as a source of law, while Imam Shafi'i emphasized the strength of textual evidence [13]. Third, social, cultural, and geographical factors also influence interpretation. In Iraq's pluralistic society, the more rational Hanafi approach became relevant, while in the more conservative Medina, the traditionalist Maliki approach was more accepted [5].

Historical context also shapes the formation of schools of thought. The early political conflict between Ali and Muawiyah, as well as the emergence of Sunni, Shia, and Khawarij sects, demonstrates that doctrinal differences are not merely legal but also theological and political [8]. In the field of theology (*kalam*), the debate over whether the Qur'an is created or eternal gave rise to sharp differences that led to the formation of specific doctrinal schools [14].

4.3 Contribution of Khilafiyah to Islamic Knowledge

Khilafiyah encouraged the emergence of various structured and methodological Islamic disciplines. In the science of hadith, the need to verify the *sanad* and *matan* of hadith gave rise to monumental works such as *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. In the field of *usul fiqh*, scholars

developed systematic theories of legal deduction. Imam Shafi'i, through *Al-Risalah*, introduced the concept of *istidlal*, which became the basis for formulating laws [13].

Khilafiyah also enriched comparative literature, such as Ibn Rusyd's *Bidayatul Mujtahid*, which not only explains differences of opinion but also compares the reasons behind these differences. This literature is important because it makes Muslims aware of the ethical principles in dealing with differences: mutual respect, scientific argumentation, and avoiding fanaticism [2], [3].

Beyond legal and theological aspects, khilafiyah also expands the discourse in economics, education, and spirituality. In Islamic economics, debates about *riba* and *muamalah* law laid the groundwork for the emergence of Islamic banking and *sukuk* [18], [19]. In spirituality, khilafiyah enriches understanding of diverse Sufi practices, *zikr*, and *tarekat* across the Islamic world [2].

4.4 Relevance of Khilafiyah in the Contemporary Context

In the modern era, khilafiyah continues to play an important role. Differences of opinion are no longer limited to issues of worship, but have spread to contemporary issues such as bioethics, democracy, gender equality, and human rights. Contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Taha Jabir al-Alwani offer a *maqasid al-shariah* approach to address these issues in a more contextual and responsive manner [9], [12].

For example, on issues such as the use of contraceptives, organ transplantation, and bank loans, there are differences of opinion among scholars. However, an approach based on the objectives of Islamic law (*maqashid*) allows these differences to be examined rationally and constructively without losing sight of Islamic ethical principles. The concept

of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat* developed by al-Qaradawi also provides new room for *ijtihad* for Muslims living as minorities [11], [15].

However, the biggest challenge of contemporary khilafiyah is the polarization of the *ummah* due to differences that are provocatively disseminated on social media. Sectarian fanaticism and claims of sole truth often narrow discussions and create fragmentation among the community. Therefore, religious education emphasizing tolerance, respect for *ijtihad*, and strengthening Islamic moderation is crucial [7], [16].

5. CONCLUSION

Khilafiyah in Islam is an expression of intellectual dynamics that has been ongoing since the time of the companions until the contemporary era. Differences of opinion arising from differences in methodology, socio-cultural contexts, and the characteristics of religious texts have given rise to extraordinary scientific wealth in Islam. *Fiqh* schools, *usul fiqh* frameworks, *hadith* methodology, and theological thought are manifestations of productive and constructive khilafiyah. In the modern context, khilafiyah remains relevant not only for addressing contemporary issues but also as a foundation for developing new approaches rooted in the *maqashid syariah*. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that khilafiyah must be managed with principles of scientific ethics, tolerance, and respect for *ijtihad*, so that it does not become a source of division but rather a unifying force for the *ummah*. By understanding the nature and function of khilafiyah, Muslims can develop contextual, moderate, and inclusive thought, and preserve the integrity of Islamic teachings amid changing times.

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