

HISTORY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION DURING THE Umayyad DYNASTY

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Abstract

The development of Islamic education during the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 AD), from its early stages, the process of territorial expansion, to its golden age and decline. During this period, Islamic education underwent a major transformation in line with territorial expansion into North Africa, Andalusia, Persia, and Central Asia. This expansion brought about extensive interaction with great civilizations such as Greece, Persia, Rome, and India, which ultimately enriched Islamic intellectual traditions. The Arabization policy of administration under Abdul Malik bin Marwan was an important factor that encouraged the advancement of Arabic language education and gave birth to great scholars such as al-Farahidi and Sibawaih. During the reigns of Al-Walid and Umar bin Abdul Aziz, educational institutions such as kuttab, mosques, and halaqah became increasingly institutionalized, while the codification of hadith by al-Zuhri became a milestone in Islamic scholarship. The sciences of tafsir, fiqh, hadith, and language developed rapidly in response to the social and administrative needs of the state. However, in the late period of the dynasty, internal political conflicts, the dissatisfaction of the mawali groups, and the rise of the Abbasids led to a decline that affected the state's attention to education. This article concludes that the Umayyad period was an important foundation for the development of education and science, which later reached its peak in the Abbasid era.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Umayyad Dynasty, Arabization.

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education is an important aspect of the development of Islamic civilization since its early emergence after the period of the Khulafaur Rasyidin.¹ The Umayyad dynasty (661–750 AD) emerged as the first major power to establish a centralized system of government and expand its territory extensively. This period was not only marked by political and military developments, but also by major transformations in the field of education. At its inception, the Islamic education system was still simple and not yet formally institutionalized. Education mainly took place in mosques, kuttab, and assemblies of knowledge.² However, as administrative needs and the demands of a more complex government increased, Islamic education began to undergo more systematic reforms.³ The Arabization policy implemented

¹ Ahmad Syalabi, *History of Islamic Education* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1997), 45.

² Munir, *Islamic Education Through the Ages* (Bandung: Rosdakarya, 2012), 61.

³ Azyumardi Azra, *Islamic Education: Tradition and Modernization* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2012), p. 21.

by Abdul Malik bin Marwan, for example, had a major impact on the development of Arabic language education and linguistic studies.⁴ In addition, during certain periods, especially during the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz, religious education underwent significant development through the codification of hadith led by Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri. This event became an important milestone in preserving the authenticity of Islamic teachings and laid the foundation for the development of hadith science in the following period.

The development of education during the Umayyad period was also evident in the emergence of various disciplines such as tafsir, fiqh, qiraat, language, and early science.⁵ Large mosques functioned as centers of learning comparable to universities, while the caliph's palace became a center of education for the elite. However, entering the 8th century AD, this dynasty faced political decline which also affected the development of education. Internal conflicts, social unrest, and pressure from the Abbasid movement weakened the government's focus on education, ultimately leading to the dynasty's collapse in 750 AD.

RESEARCH METHOD

This scientific article employs a qualitative historical research method with a literature study approach, utilizing library research to analyze the development of Islamic education during the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 AD). The data sources consist of primary sources including classical Islamic historical works such as Al-Tabari's *Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk*, Al-Baladzuri's *Futuh al-Buldan*, and hadith collections, as well as secondary sources derived from modern scholarly books and journal articles on Islamic history, education, and civilization. The data collection technique involves documentation, namely gathering and identifying relevant texts from various references that discuss the political history of the Umayyads, territorial expansion, educational institutions, policies such as Arabization and hadith codification, and key intellectual figures of the period. The collected data is then analyzed using historical analysis methods, including heuristic (source collection), source criticism (verification of authenticity and credibility), interpretation (understanding the meaning and context of historical facts), and historiography (writing the narrative systematically). The analysis is conducted using historical-interpretive and descriptive-analytical approaches to trace the chronological development of education, identify its characteristics and methods,

⁴ Harun Nasution, *Islam Reviewed from Various Aspects* (Jakarta: UI Press, 2011), 78.

⁵ M. Mustafa al-A'zami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1978), pp. 45–47.

examine the influence of political policies and cross-cultural interactions, and synthesize the findings to draw conclusions about the Umayyad period's role as a foundational era for Islamic educational and intellectual traditions that later flourished during the Abbasid dynasty.⁶

DISCUSSION RESULTS

A. History of the Establishment of the Umayyad Dynasty

The Umayyad dynasty was established in 661 AD after the end of the Khulafaur Rasyidin period. The establishment of this dynasty did not happen suddenly, but through a long process influenced by the political, social, and military conditions of Muslims after the death of Caliph Uthman bin Affan. After Uthman's death and the political turmoil during the reign of Ali bin Abi Talib, the Islamic world entered a phase of great turmoil that caused serious divisions among the people.⁷ The conflict between Ali's faction and the group led by Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan, the then Governor of Sham, became the starting point for the birth of a new power structure that later became known as the Umayyad Dynasty.⁸

Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan came from the Quraish tribe, Bani Umayyah, one of the strongest and most influential tribes in Mecca. During the time of the Prophet, his family held a high social position in Quraish society. After converting to Islam, Muawiyah became a companion of the Prophet and held an important position in the government, especially during the reign of Caliph Umar and Uthman. He was entrusted with the governorship of Sham and had a stable political and military power base in the region.⁹ When conflict arose after the assassination of Caliph Uthman, Muawiyah demanded justice for Uthman's killers, a demand that ultimately led to the Battle of Siffin between Ali's army and the army of Sham.¹⁰

After Ali's death in 661 AD, Muslims were faced with a political vacuum. Ali's son, Hasan bin Ali, was elected caliph, but he prioritized unity among Muslims and avoided further war. Therefore, Hasan made a peace agreement (Shulh Hasan-Muawiyah) with

⁶ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), hlm. 6.

⁷ Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad: A Study of the Early Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 140–145.

⁸ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, trans. Ghufuron A. Mas'adi (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2000), p. 50.

⁹ Ath-Thabari, *Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk*, Volume IV (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah), pp. 410–415

¹⁰ Ahmad al-Usa'iry, *History of Islam from the Time of Prophet Adam to the 20th Century*, trans. Samson Rahman (Jakarta: Akbar Media, 2015), pp. 198–199.

Muawiyah, with the condition that there would be no revenge and that the stability of the Muslim community would be maintained.¹¹ Thus, Muawiyah became the sole leader of the Muslim community. The year Muawiyah ascended to power became known as 'Am al-Jama'ah or "Year of Unity," marking the unification of Muslims under one leadership after a period of prolonged conflict.¹² With Muawiyah's ascension as caliph, the system of government changed from a consultative caliphate, as it had been during the reigns of Abu Bakr and Umar, to a dynastic monarchy passed down from father to son.¹³ This was one of the main characteristics of the Umayyad Dynasty. Muawiyah established a centralized government in Damascus and organized a professional administrative structure. He retained many of the Byzantine and Persian systems of government, such as the diwan system, administrative writing system, and division of power.

After Muawiyah, leadership was handed over to his son, Yazid bin Muawiyah. This was the first time that succession was carried out from generation to generation, marking a major change in the political structure of Islam. The system of government also changed to a dynastic monarchy that was inherited from generation to generation.¹⁴ Although this move was controversial, especially among supporters of the Ahlul Bait and some of the companions, this dynastic monarchy model was maintained for nearly a century. During their reign, the Umayyads succeeded in expanding the Islamic territory to include North Africa, Spain, Persia, Transoxiana, and most of Central Asia, making it one of the largest empires in world history.¹⁵

The Umayyads reached their peak during the reigns of Abdul Malik bin Marwan and al-Walid bin Abdul Malik, but then experienced political decline due to internal conflicts, dissatisfaction among the mawali, and growing opposition from the Abbasids. In 750 AD, the Umayyad Dynasty officially collapsed after power was taken over by the Abbasid Dynasty through the Abbasid Revolution. However, one branch of the Umayyad family fled to Spain and established the Umayyad II Dynasty in Andalusia, which later became one of the greatest centers of knowledge in Islamic history.

B. Territorial Expansion during the Umayyad Dynasty

¹¹ Syalabi, *History and Culture of Islam*, Volume I (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Husna, 1997), pp. 285–286.

¹² Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk*, Volume V (Beirut: Dar al-Turath, 1967), pp. 158–160.

¹³ Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 110–112.

¹⁴ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), 54.

¹⁵ Al-Baladzuri, *Futuh al-Buldan* (Beirut: Dar wa Maktabat al-Hilal, 1988), pp. 230–245.

The expansion of territory during the Umayyad Dynasty was one of the greatest achievements in Islamic history, as during this period Islamic power expanded from the Arab region to cover three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.¹⁶ The massive expansion began during the reign of Caliph Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan, but reached its peak during the reigns of Abdul Malik bin Marwan and Al-Walid bin Abdul Malik. During this period, Islamic forces conquered North Africa as far as Morocco, then continued their expansion into Europe through the conquest of Andalusia (Spain) in 711 AD by Thariq bin Ziyad.¹⁷ In the East, the Persian region was completely conquered, including important areas such as Khurasan, Fars, and the Transoxiana region, which now includes Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and southern Kazakhstan. This expansion was led by the famous general Qutaibah bin Muslim, who played a crucial role in opening Central Asia to Islamic missionary work.¹⁸

Additionally, expansion was also carried out into the Sindh region of India under the command of Muhammad bin Qasim in 712 AD, which opened up a channel of interaction between the Islamic world and South Asia. This expansion brought interaction with Greek, Persian, and Roman civilizations.¹⁹ The Mediterranean region was also conquered through the development of a strong naval fleet, enabling the Umayyads to challenge Byzantium and control several important coastal areas. This major expansion not only extended political power but also had a direct impact on the development of education and science. Interaction with highly cultured nations such as Persia, the Eastern Roman Empire, and India enriched the intellectual heritage of Islam, introducing the traditions of philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and modern administration to the Islamic world.²⁰ This territorial expansion ultimately became the foundation for the formation of an Islamic civilization that was cosmopolitan, politically strong, and advanced in science.

C. Characteristics of Education During the Umayyad Period

Islamic education during the Umayyad period had characteristics that marked an important transformation from a simple education system to a more organized one.

¹⁶ Badri Yatim, *History of Islamic Civilization* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2018), pp. 47–48.

¹⁷ Muhammad bin Jarir ath-Thabari, *Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk, Volume V* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), pp. 215–220.

¹⁸ Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 103.

¹⁹ Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 33.

²⁰ Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspeknya (Islam Viewed from Various Aspects)*, (Jakarta: UI Press, 2011), p. 145.

During this period, education developed through kuttab institutions, mosques, and palace education.²¹ Kuttab developed not only as a place for learning to read and write and memorizing the Qur'an, but also began to teach basic mathematics, calligraphy, and social ethics, so that its functions expanded according to the needs of society. Mosques also played a greater role as centers of learning, especially in Damascus, Basra, and Kufa, where various religious and language study circles were held regularly.

Elite education in the palace was another prominent feature. The children of the caliph and nobles were educated by a mu'addib who taught the Qur'an, manners, history, and leadership. This system prepared educated future leaders, especially during the reign of caliphs who cared about the ethics of government, such as Umar bin Abdul Aziz. The Arabization policy of Abdul Malik bin Marwan was an important factor that encouraged the development of language education. When Arabic became the official language of administration, the need for linguists increased rapidly, giving rise to advances in nahwu, sharaf, and literature, with great figures such as al-Farahidi and Sibawaih.²²

Another characteristic was the strengthening of religious education through the codification of knowledge, especially when Umar bin Abdul Aziz ordered Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri to write down the hadith in order to preserve its authenticity. This became the starting point for the systematization of hadith knowledge.²³ In addition, the vastness of the territory brought Islamic education into contact with various civilizations such as Greece, Persia, and India, so that Islamic knowledge began to include science, medicine, and astronomy.

D. Educational Methods During the Umayyad Dynasty

During the Umayyad dynasty, the Islamic education system experienced significant development not only in terms of institutions, but also in terms of teaching methodology. The methods applied in this period reflect efforts to accommodate the increasingly complex needs of society, ranging from basic education to higher education, as well as answering the growing administrative demands of the state. Broadly speaking, there are three main methods that characterize education in this era:

1. The halaqah method, which is a circular teaching system in mosques, where a teacher (ustaz or ulama) sits in the middle and students surround him. This method was very

²¹ Mahmud Yunus, *History of Islamic Education* (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 1990), 102.

²² Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 1* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 276–279.

²³ Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Tarikh al-Madzhahib al-Islamiyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr), 112.

effective because it allowed for intense interaction between teachers and students through questions and answers, open discussions, and direct explanations of religious texts. The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the Kufah Mosque, and the Basrah Mosque became centers for large halaqah that developed like early universities in Islamic civilization.²⁴

2. The kuttab method was also very dominant, especially in basic education for children. In kuttab, the memorization (tahfiz) method was used systematically to teach the Qur'an, hadith, prayers, and Arabic grammar. During this period, kuttab began to introduce the method of writing (kitabah) due to the increasing administrative needs of the state, so students were taught how to write Arabic letters, basic calligraphy, and copy texts.²⁵ The main focus of kuttab was the formation of discipline and morals, so the educational method was not only academic but also moral.
3. The method of recording and documenting knowledge, especially after the policy of codifying hadith by Umar bin Abdul Aziz as a form of knowledge preservation. This writing method later became the basis for the birth of the tradition of scientific books in Islam.²⁶ Thus, the learning method did not only involve memorization, but also written documentation. This process marked the transition of Islamic education from an oral tradition to a text-based scientific tradition.

E. Islamic Education Figures and Scientists during the Umayyad Period

During the Umayyad period, a number of prominent figures emerged who made important contributions to the development of education, science, and Islamic scholarship.

1. Hasan Al-Bashri

Hasan al-Bashri, a charismatic scholar from Basrah, was known as a great teacher in the fields of ethics, early Sufism, and theology. His thoughts had a strong influence on the formation of Islamic intellectual tradition.²⁷

2. Abdullah bin al-Mubarak

²⁴ Ahmad Syalabi, *History of Islamic Education*, (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1997), p. 45.

²⁵ Muhammad Munir, *Islamic Education from Time to Time*, (Bandung: Rosdakarya, 2012), p. 63

²⁶ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, (Jakarta: Serambi, 2005), p. 254.

²⁷ Abul Hasan Ali al-Nadwi, *Rijal al-Fikr wa al-Da'wah* (Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 2001), 56.

Abdullah bin al-Mubarak was one of the great scholars who lived at the end of the Umayyad period and the beginning of the Abbasid period. He was known as an expert in hadith, fiqh, zuhud, and was also a prolific writer.

3. Khalid bin Yazid

Khalid bin Yazid was an Umayyad prince who was nicknamed "Hakeem Bani Umayyah" because of his love of knowledge. He was the first figure in the Islamic world to encourage the translation of foreign works into Arabic.²⁸

4. Imam Abu Hanifa

Imam Abu Hanifa was the founder of the Hanafi school of thought, one of the largest schools of jurisprudence in Islam. He lived during the late Umayyad period and had a major influence on the development of jurisprudence.²⁹

5. Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri

was a prominent hadith scholar during the Umayyad period. He played an important role in the codification of hadith, especially during the reign of Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz. Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri is considered a key figure in the development of written hadith science.³⁰

6. Khalid bin Yazid bin Mu'awiyah

Prince Bani Umayyah, who had a deep interest in science. He was known for developing chemistry and medicine, and initiated the translation of Greek scientific works into Arabic. He, Khalid bin Yazid bin Mu'awiyah, is known as the pioneer of science in Islamic civilization.³¹

7. Ja'far ash-Shadiq

was an expert in fiqh, philosophy, and natural sciences who lived at the end of the Umayyad dynasty. His thoughts and teachings had a major influence on the development of Islamic science in later periods. Therefore, Ja'far ash-Shadiq is known as a multidisciplinary scientist who made extensive contributions in various fields of science.³²

²⁸ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 88.

²⁹ Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

³⁰ Muhammad Ajjaj al-Khatib, *Ushul al-Hadith*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1989, p. 74.

³¹ Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London: Macmillan, 1970, p. 312.

³² Ahmad Amin, *Fajr al-Islam*, Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1965, p. 268.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education during the Umayyad dynasty underwent significant development following the establishment of this dynasty in 661 AD and the expansion of Islamic territory to North Africa, Spain, Persia, and India. This expansion had a major impact as Muslims interacted with various advanced civilizations such as Greece, Persia, India, and Rome, thereby enriching Islamic intellectual tradition.

The characteristics of education in this era began to shift from a simple system to a more structured one. Kuttab developed with a broader curriculum, mosques became centers of organized learning, and palaces functioned as elite educational institutions. The Arabization policy encouraged great progress in language and administration. In addition, the codification of hadith during the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz became a major milestone in religious education.

The Umayyad period was an important period in the development of Islamic education and science, marked by the emergence of great figures who contributed to various fields of science. Hasan al-Bashri strengthened the aspects of morals and Sufism, Abdullah bin al-Mubarak and Imam Abu Hanifa played a major role in the development of hadith and fiqh, Ibn Syihab az-Zuhri pioneered the codification of hadith, while Khalid bin Yazid bin Mu'awiyah and Ja'far ash-Shadiq encouraged the advancement of science and multidisciplinary intellectual traditions. This shows that the Umayyad period did not only focus on politics, but also laid a strong foundation for the development of Islamic education and civilization in the future.

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