

THE QURAN STATUS AMID ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION SOURCES

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ABSTRACT

There are many sources for Islamic civilization process in the past and in the present. Some sources are religious that emerged from Kitab and Sunnat, and some other came from human science and experience. These sources in new Islamic world are very complicated so that we cannot be sure about Islamic identity of our civilization process. Now the question arises that what was and what is the grade and place of the Quran among various sources in the history of Islamic civilization (in the precedent) and what class should be specified for the Quran over these complicated many sources today? My thesis here is to declare that the Quran can be in the center of the civilization only when it prevailed other civilization sources in argument (theory) and in reality (practice). The unique way to keep the Quran in the center of Islamic civilization process is tahaddi (that different nations throughout the history are unable to create a word like the Quran and this indicates the miraculous characteristic of the Quran.) in theory and social praxis. Otherwise, other sources will be dominated on Islamic civilization and will change Muslim identity into non-Islamic civilization.

Keywords : Civilization, sources, Quran, *thaddi*,

INTRODUCTION

Civilization is the greatest system of inter-human communication that is based on humanity, morality, and justice. Civilization is most complex and massive humanized communication system that has potency to expand to other nations and lands. There are several components in the essence of civilization:

1. Civilization consists of variety and diversity of religions, cultures, nations, and languages. The plurality and variety is essential for construction of every civilization. The more constructive plurality and variety exist in the civilization, the more perfection it could achieve. (Habibollah Babaei, 2014).
2. This variety and plurality requires comprehensive unit that should include all pieces to create unique identity in civilization. This complexity and gigantic unit is not essentially on geographical scale, rather its greatness could be on small scale in which deep communication system exist. To make this clear, consider an extreme example of small civilization in Carthage (The city in Tunisia that was once the centre of the ancient Carthaginian civilization) before Christ in Rom Empire age.
3. Civilization is not hard and physical matter, it is soft affair that occurs not between human and nature but between human and human. Thus, evaluation of the civilization must be done by human measures not by technological criteria. Based on this, I think the best term in the Quran for civilization is neither City (المدينة) (Yusuf: 30) nor land (بلد) (Ibrahim:35), nor Kingdom (ملك) (Sad:35)

and nor ability (تکون) (Al-An'am: 6) it is Ummah (امت) (Al-Imran:110) that emphasizes on Muslim system communication on huge scale.

4. The nature of civilization arises from the classification and priority system of needs, values and sources. In other words the spirit of civilization depends on the "margin and center" system which brings the identity of civilization. For example the center of Western civilization is money (Georg Simmel's theory) or science (Max Weber's view point) so that other moral and cultural pieces must be recognized in the light of money or science.

Based on above points I think civilization is not univocal (متواطیء) concept in the Logic terminology, civilization is equivocal and hierarchical (مشکک) concept. Thus, there could be several hierarchical civilizations which some is perfect and some others incomplete.

THE MEANING OF CIVILIZATION SOURCE

By "Civilization sources" I mean rational and traditional sources that create the material and the form of civilization (material cause and formal cause of civilization). In other words, civilization source is a source that each civilization depends on it. Based on these sources every civilization can be founded and shaped. This kind of sources in Islamic civilization differs from investigation sources (*masader Ijtihad*) that are for understanding of religious rules and values. Conversely, the sources of Islamic civilization conclude both sources for understanding and for implementation. By investigation sources we are looking for authority and validity of religious verdicts, and by civilization sources we are looking not only for validity but also for possibility in this time and place. In fact, normative and subjective sources vary from objective sources. The normative sources insist on ideals and ultimate goals (as a directing idea of civilization), but the objective sources consider spacio-temporal realities.

Now several questions arise about various sources of Islamic civilization in the past. What were the fundamentals of Islamic civilization? Were they Islamic, Quranic, and divine sources or they were Arabian, Iranian, Indian or Greek sources on which Muslims founded their civilization? If they (Muslims) employed both divine and non-divine sources in their civilization process, then how they combined these different (or paradoxical) sources to generate Islamic civilization?

The most important question is about contemporary pluralistic context that makes it difficult to insist on one source and to leave others in social and civilizational process. There are too many sources today to know, to think and to practice. Now what should be the source of Islamic civilization in the pluralistic world such as ours? How is it possible to protect Islamic identity whereas we face many modern sources including new humanities which are available for every Muslim today?

There are a few books which considered necessity of study of Islamic civilization sources. Bibliography of Islamic civilizations has been neglected by many Muslim scholars. The best one who mentioned to this point is Marshall Hodgson. He proposed very significant question about unifying factor among various nations over the history of Islam. How did Muslims make Islamic civilization while they had serious variety in their nationality, culture and language? What factor made this miracle (and venture) in pluralistic context? Hodgson insisted on the Quran as an effective source over Muslim generation and civilization. He says:

The Qur'an served at once as the inspiration of Muslim life and the commentary on what was done under that inspiration; its message transcended any particular circumstances yet at the same time served as a running guide to the community experiences, often down to seemingly petty details. It was filled With repeated exhortations to support the community efforts. Because of its intimate interaction with the day-to-day destinies of the community, the Qur'an cannot be read as a discursive book, for abstract information or even, in the first instance, for inspiration. The sequence of its bits and pieces is notoriously often lacking in clearly logical order or development. (Marshall G. S. Hodgson.1974).

Mohammad Kazim Makki is another scholar who mentioned to the references of Islamic civilization and culture in Abbasi epoch. Makki sees four sources for Islamic culture and civilization in these ages: 1. Islam (Quran), 2. Greek culture, 3.Persian culture, and 4. Indian culture. He insists on the place of the Quran and prophet narratives in formulation of Islamic culture over this time.(Muhammad Kazim Makki.1420 AH/ 1999).

Some other scholars referred to the sources in Muslim Ummat not Muslim civilization. If Muslim Ummat is the same Muslim civilization or the essence of Ummat is very similar to the nature of civilization, it will be important to consider foundations of Muslim Ummat and to compare it with civilizational bases. Amani Salih and Abdulhabir Ata Mahrous insisted on the basic sources of Muslim Ummat. Based on this, there are historical sources that affected the process of Muslim Ummat. The same sources can affect the contemporary process of Islamic Ummat and civilization. Following cases have been regarded as a Muslim Ummat sources: 1. sacred texts including the Quran and Sunnat, 2. historical memory that is recognizable for all Muslims, 3. Arabic language that is widespread language for all Muslims, 4. variety of nations and races over Muslim world, and finally 5. style of life that is emerged from new Modern context. (Amani Salih and Abdul'khabir Ata Mahrous.1390)

It should be recalled that the accurate place of the Quran in different spheres of Islamic civilization did not be studied yet by Muslim historians. We know that the Quran had many influences on the Islamic civilization, but we do not know that which verses exactly influenced Muslim society, economy, politics and culture. And also we do not know that which verses in the Quran shaped our humanities, philosophy and other Islamic sciences. This is one of very important project to show historical details of Quranization and Islamization of our Arabian and Iranian culture and civilization in the past. I think some verses in the Quran changed the way of Greek philosophy through philosophical points and

ontological questions so that it transferred to Islamic philosophy. The Quran shaped fundamentally Islamic mysticism by proposing mystical principles and ways. And the Quran changed also other sciences over the history of Islam by impacting on thought, faith and culture. This historical process in details has not been described by Muslim scholars. In order to see the place of the Quran in the objective history of Islam it is too necessary to trace the Quranic verses within social and cultural areas (the Quran as institution not as a textbook).

THE QURAN IN DIFFERENT CIVILIZATION AREAS

There are several areas that the Quran have impacted on over the history of Islamic civilization. The Quran impacted on everyday culture and literature. Also the Quran made several political rules and principles, as well as the Quran changed the fate of philosophy. In addition, the Quran impressed the art, calligraphy and architecture and so forth in Muslim society. In addition to these civilizational areas that have been influenced by the Quran, there are many civilizational aspects as well in the Quran itself that can affect civilization process. Consider the following facets in the Quran: The Quran is not just a book, it is civilizational fact and institution. The Quran is not only to read or to know, but also it is a text to believe and to move. The Quran is not one-layer book, it is multi-layer text that cannot be end in its meanings and in its teachings over an age (Bahraei,1999). Also, the Quran has many aspects that include many features of social and individual life. In fact, civilization as a comprehensive matter requires comprehensive text. The Quran embodies comprehensive teachings providing individual and social needs, natural and supernatural requisites. Another civilizational aspect of the Quran is congregation between theory and practice that is very decisive in civilization process. And finally another feature of the Quran in civilization is the philosophical verses in the Quran about the history and about some historical and existential principles (*sonan elahi*) about history and rise and fall of civilizations.

Some of these civilization capacities have been activated and some other has not been activated yet. The more these capacities will be activated the more we can reach civilization typical system. Also, the more we believe in the Quran as a civilization style text, the more the Quran will be in the center of our social life. And the more we propose plural questions from different angles the more we will be able to activate comprehensive aspects of the Quran on civilizational scale (Richard R. Osmer,2008) In order to understand the Quran in comprehensive way, it is necessary to propose comprehensive questions to the Quran and to extract its different and various points and answers in social, economical, and political fields.

VARIETY OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION SOURCES

The source of civilization should be very pervasive and all-encompassing on the civilization scale. Without this enveloping function it cannot be effective source for civilization (as macro-system) process. In addition, it must be understandable, reasonable, and acceptable for all people including Muslims and non-Muslims who live within this civilization. To put it in clear word, directing idea for every civilization must be pervasive idea on civilization scale so that all people can imagine and believe it. Without this pervasive idea it will be impossible

to make unity and solidarity over the civilization. In addition every civilization source must be constructive on inter-human relationships and productive in the welfare here and now.

In addition to the Quran as a pervasive source for Muslims, Prophet Muhammad himself played central role in making this unity and solidarity in Islamic civilization in Madinah. But the point is that Prophet Muhammad himself recommended every Muslim to attempt for more knowledge even from non-Muslim people in abroad (like China). Accordingly, Muslims followed other knowledge and sciences in other civilizations. Very hard question is the method of this combination between divine sources and non-divine sources which came from other cultures and countries. I believe that Muslims had several techniques and methods in this very difficult process. The important method was critical method. Muslims did not satisfy by translation per se, rather they attempted to extract new questions from translated texts and then refer to the Quran to find new points and responses. This helped people to change Greek philosophy into divine philosophy, and Indian medicine to Islamic medicine, and Sabaists's astronomy to Islamic astronomy.

The significant question today is the plurality of sources and information. The process of information today is very fast and complex. This various and quick information makes it very difficult to criticize and to Islamize new works and products (James Davison, Hunter. 2010).

CLASSIFICATION OF SOURCES

Because of variety of sources in formulation of Islamic civilization, it is very decisive to distinguish central sources from margin ones. This is very crucial for identifying of every civilization. In fact, the character of every civilization depends on its central source. If the central source of civilization is the political power, the essence of civilization will be political; if it is economy, the nature of civilization will be economical, and if the source is divine text and revelation, the nature of civilization will change to divine characteristic. In the classification of the sources in Islam, we should consider the Quran as a central source of civilization. By doing this, it will be possible to make islamity in contemporary civilization process in the world such as ours. But the most important question is how the Quran can be placed in the center when the world is occupied by non Islamic sources? I think the best way is to make defiance (*tahaddi* in Quranic terminology). By doing *tahaddi* in Quranic theory and in Quranic practice we might bring the Quran in the center.

DEFIANCE (TAHADDI)

As I mentioned, plurality and variety of sources requires classification of these sources. Now what is the method and process of this classification? The answer to me on civilizational scale is defiance (*tahaddi*). *Tahaddi* (*Tahaddi* means that different nations throughout the history are unable to create a word like the Quran and this indicates the miraculous characteristic of the Quran)is the way to bring all civilizational sources into race and competition. Each one win in theory (argument) and in practice (efficiency), it will placed automatically in the center. To be in the center is not political decision, it is cultural process by mass rationality and emotionality. The Quran itself used this method to show its priority over other sources saying:

Or do they say, "He has made it up"? Rather, they do not believe. Then let them produce a statement like it, if they should be truthful. (Al-Tur:33-34).

Say, "Then bring a scripture from Allah which is more guiding than either of them that I may follow it, if you should be truthful." But if they do not respond to you - then know that they only follow their [own] desires. And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah ? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. (Al-Qasas: 49-50).

Or do they say, "He invented it"? Say, "Then bring ten surahs like it that have been invented and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah , if you should be truthful." And if they do not respond to you - then know that the Qur'an was revealed with the knowledge of Allah and that there is no deity except Him. Then, would you [not] be Muslims? (Hud: 13-14)

Or do they say [about the Prophet], "He invented it?" Say, "Then bring forth a surah like it and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allah , if you should be truthful." (Yunus: ٣٨)

And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah , if you should be truthful. But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers. (Al-Baqarah: 23-24).

This means that the Quran must be understandable, reasonable, and acceptable for its audiences even if they do not believe the Quran. The Quran today is the same that is understandable, reasonable, and acceptable in comparison to the other sources. This is exactly the way to make priority for the Quran. But this priority do not occur automatically by the Quran itself, it requires academic and cultural activities by Muslim scholars and politicians. In order to do this *tahaddi* against non-Quranic sources, it is essential to make these activities very diverse, numerous, and express. This could be the meaning of the verse: "so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur'an." (Al-Muzammil:20)

The content of this piece refers to the several messages and meanings that exist behind the verses in the Quran. The plurality in the meanings of every verse in the Quran is very important in making civilization. Also, the plurality of the ways in the Quran has serious potency in civilization process. There are many verses in the Quran regarding the plural ways (*sobol*) and the united path (*Sirat*). To take but one instance, consider the following verse: "whereby God guides whosoever follows His good pleasure in the *ways* of peace, and brings them forth from the shadows into the light by His Leave; and He guides them to a straight *path* (Al-Maidah:16). It should be recalled that the same kind of *one* and *many* has been revealed about unrighteousness as well, when it says: "Muster those who did evil, their wives, and that they were serving apart from God, and guide them unto the path of Hell!"

(As-Saffat: 22-23) and “that this is My path, straight; so do you follow it and follow not divers paths lest they scatter you from His path.” (Al-An’am: 153).

This should never be lost from sight that Islamic pluralization varies widely from post-Modern plurality. I think the foundation of Islamic pluralization would be boundlessness of infinite reality which contains gigantic space to engage plural phenomena within it. But post-Modern plurality depends on plural and atomic fragmented reality. Thus, western post-modern culture, contrary to Islamic attitude and culture, has been based on ever-increasing attention to internal subjectivity not external objectivity. Consequently, post-Modern plurality emerges from limitation and restriction that is not capable to enclose many and plurality.

It should be noticed that our western opponents are producing very diverse, numerous and express sources today. To win this situation we must produce the Quranic sources at least in the same quantity and quality. Muslim must produce Quranic products in diverse, numerous and express way. For doing this, we need to be together in our academic and practical activities based on the Quran. Ignoring this communal cooperation in repeating the Quran over and over in all fields will conduce in a weak society. The weak society cannot win *tahaddi* project. And this is will be starting point of Western civilization domination that will defeat Muslim civilization process today.

Briefly, to put the Quran in the center, we Muslim must activate social and civilizational aspects of the Quran on the one hand, and start collected and organized practice (on Ummat scale) on the other. To bring the Quran into center of civilization cannot be done only by one country or one branch of Muslims. Activation of civilizational potencies of the Quran requires entire Muslims attempts in thinking and in practicing. On this collective academic *Jihad* the Quran will show its miracle one more time on the world and we will be revived again as a new unique Ummat. The more we are all together, the more understandable, reasonable, acceptable Quran will appear. And the more we get together in the civilizational practice, the more we will be powerful in front of others and opponents. In addition this collective and cooperative academic *Jihad* on the Quran generates comprehensive plan and program for civilization process over Muslim world.

This should be noticed one more time that *tahaddi* is not limited to the Quran literature, rather it is related the content of the Quran, and the society based on the Quran as well. In other words, the miracle (the venture) of the Quran is not confined to its appearance and words, rather it is miracle in its content and in the its existence. The content that the Quran suggested in the morality must be miracle in relation to other ethics theories. Without this, the Quran will not be the best copy among other moral sources. And the Quranic social and political paradigm must be the best social thought for the Modern audiences. Otherwise the Quran cannot be the perfect version of thought in social and political fields. Moreover, the society based on the Quran, must be miracle in its being as a perfect society. Without this, *tahaddi* in the Quran will be unsuccessful project. How is it possible to claim priority in literature, and to be very weak in content. And how is it feasible to claim perfect content but to be see poor reality. In fact, Quranic miracle means that the Quran is able to bring

something in high level that is beyond of ordinary people will. If human being can produce theories and practices better than the Quuran, how does *tahaddi* make sense?

The important product that comes from *tahaddi* is widespread rationality that makes unity and solidarity among various Muslims over Islamic world. This rationality that arises from *tahaddi*, is in fact the unifying clue that makes unity and identity over wide civilization. In other words, *tahaddi* is a process that insists on common language and logic on the one hand, and concentrates on the best choice that all people (including mass and elites) accepts it. If the Quran wins this *tahaddi*, the rationality of people will be based on the Quran. And if the winner is the modernity, the unifying factor of many parts in Muslim society will be secular. Unsuccessful *tahaddi* project in Islamic world, will drive the Quran into a margin or it will hold the Quran in metaphysical sphere, not in worldly civilization context. And this is exact meaning of secular civilization that is dominated on contemporary Muslim communities. *Tahaddi* of Modernity today in Islamic world did not find yet any serious opponent. This is not because of weakness of the Quran, rather it is because of weak methodology of Muslims in using, interpreting, and in implementing the Quran. We have very serious challenge today to change the situation and to win this competition between Islam and the West. This should be noticed by competition I do never mean the clash of civilizations, rather I mean dialogue between civilizations and also *Ta'arof* ("to know one another") (Al-Hujurat: 13) among civilization. But to make dialogue and discussion between several civilizations it is essential to have independent identity and powerful character to have serious and fundamental dialogue.

In sum, by *tahaddi* project today we will be able to centralize the Quran in civilization process. By centralizing of the Quran, the civilization will be based on the Quran and Islam. To do this, Muslims have several tasks. One of these academic tasks is comparative interpretation of the Quran. Indeed, in order to show Quranic miracle Muslims must consider the Quranic teachings in comparison to other sources. This comparison is very useful way to extract new responses for new questions. Moreover comparative study of the Quran can elucidate delicate points of the Quran in theories and practice and it distinguish the Quran versions from non Quranic humans and versions.

CONCLUSION

We live in a pluralistic age that is going very fast with several sources and information. These quick and complex information will dominate on Islamic world if we will not put the Quran in the center of civilization. In order to do this, we should consider the verse: "ما تيسر" on macro level scale and accomplish it on civilization stage. This means that we all Muslims should read the Quran as much as possible, and we must write it (in papers, dissertations, books and so forth) as much as possible, and practice it in our social and individual life as much as possible.

Reading, writing, and practicing the Quran must be in comparative way so that the Quran dominates on other sources. This is the meaning of *tahaddi* in the Quran that is not limited to

the first age of Hijrat, but it can work today in post-Modern world as well. To do this huge and big project, it is very necessary to make cooperation in reading, writing and practicing the Quran over Muslim nations, religious branches, and political powers. Without this universal cooperation on behalf of Muslim scholars (including Shia and Sunni, and university scholars or Howzeh Olama), doing *tahaddi* against Modern powerful sources will be impossible.

Doing *tahaddi* cannot be succeeded in the claim and slogan, it must be happen within academic and cultural fields. The result of *tahaddi* must be understandable, reasonable, and acceptable teachings on the one hand, and efficient politics, economy, and society on the other. This way will place the Quran in the center as a hard core of Islamic civilization in this world.

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18. There are some statements from Prophet Muhammad and some Shia Imams that refer to this content as follows: this is from Imam Ja'far Sadeqh that: "the verse, its first is in something, its middle in another one, and its end has another meaning; it is one unified message that comes in different appearances". (Abi Al'nasr Mohammad Ibne Masaood Ibne Ayyash Al'ssalamei Al'samargandi, *Tafsir Ayyashei*, Al'maktabat Al'elmeeyato Al'eslamiyyah, V 1, Tehran, p 23). The prophet Mohammad says: every verse in the Qur'an has an external and internal dimension (Bahraei, *Al'borhan Fi Tafsir Al'qur'an*, Moasseseh Al'aalamei, 1999, V 7, Beirout, p 9); in the same way Imam Ali says " there is nothing among the Qoranic verses but has four meanings: apparent (Zaher), hidden (Baten), bordered (Hadd), and resource (Matla'a). So apparent (exoteric) is recitation, and hidden (esoteric) is understanding, and border is permissible and impermissible, and the resource is what God means. Another important statement is Imam Ja'afar Sadeqh's saying: "God's book has four meanings, literal, mentioned (implicit points), subtlety, and realities. Phrasing (literal) is for laymen, mention is for intellectuals, subtlety is for mystics and realities for prophets. (Feiz Kashanei, *Tafsir Safei*, V1, p 31). Ibn Abbas has quoted another tradition that: "the Qur'an has multiple aspects, exoteric and esoteric aspects, does not exhaust its excellences, and can not arrive at its end, it has abrogated and is abrogating, explicit and implicit verses, so its exoteric aspect is recitation and its esoteric dimension is interpretation. (Shahab Al'din Seyyed Mahmood Aloosei, *Rooh Al'maanei*, p8). For an explanation see: Mohammad Husain Tabatabaei, *Al'mizan*, V 10, p 130-131.
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