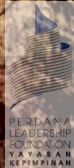


ISLAMIC
CIVILISATION
AND
THE MODERN WORLD
THEMATIC ESSAYS



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OSMAN BAKAR



A humble gift to Tun Dr
Mahathir Mohamed, a
great leader of our times

PMR

Brunei
2 Sept 2018

ISLAMIC CIVILISATION AND THE MODERN WORLD
THEMATIC ESSAYS





17.11.12

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AND

THE MODERN WORLD

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OSMAN BAKAR



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Introduction

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

This book provides a thematic treatment of Islamic civilisation. Each of the fourteen chapters comprising this book treats at least one of the major themes that are characteristic of this civilisation. Readers will notice, however, that some of the themes selected for treatment in the book are each found discussed in more than one of its chapters. Despite this peculiarity of the book, which no doubt arises from the fact that it is a collection of essays written at different times over a considerable period of time, it is still possible to identify each chapter with a single dominant theme of Islamic civilisation.

Nonetheless, there is a recurring theme of which we are fully aware that permeates the whole book. This is the theme of unity that is embodied in the Principle of Divine Unity (*al-tawhid*), which constitutes the core teaching of the religion of Islam. We do not consider this theme as one among the many themes of Islamic civilisation treated in this book. Rather, it is viewed as the underlying and presiding theme that subsumes all other themes and that is sought to be variously displayed by them in the whole domain of human life and thought or of human civilisation. As emphasized in this book, unity is the hallmark of Islamic civilisation. Given this striking characteristic of the civilisation it

is only to be expected if the idea of *tawhid* recurs again and again throughout the book.

In the first chapter, the most important theme of Islamic civilisation discussed is its global presence, particularly in the domain of knowledge culture. The various types of a civilisation's global presence are explained. The second chapter is primarily concerned with the theme of the identity of the Muslim *ummah* and by extension the identity of Islamic civilisation itself. In the third chapter, the central theme treated is the destined role of Islam the religion and its civilisation as the bridge between the East and the West.

In the fourth chapter, the central theme under treatment is classification of knowledge and of the sciences, which was of much importance to classical Islamic civilisation but which is only beginning to be appreciated in our times as an intellectual pursuit of civilisational significance.¹ Classification of knowledge and of the sciences was, without doubt, a major dimension of Islam's knowledge culture of the classical period. The theme was discussed with reference to two of the most eminent Muslim thinkers in history, namely Qutb al-Din al-Shirazi (1236 – 1311) and Ibn Khaldun (1332 – 1406), both of whom were noted for their respective classifications of the sciences. The fifth chapter is mainly concerned with the theme of the spiritual and ethical foundations of science and technology in Islamic civilisation.² This is yet another theme that is closely related to knowledge culture. In fact, properly speaking, it is a subtheme of knowledge culture, to which we may refer as Islam's scientific and technological culture.

Chapter six takes up the theme of Islam's medical and public health systems to which the modern West owed a great deal. Islam's traditional medical system was apparently pluralistic in nature with its scientific medicine and medical practices coexisting with several other forms of medicine. The wisdom of

medical pluralism is the belief that no single medical system, modern or traditional, could claim exclusive efficacy in the treatment of diseases or curing the sick. It is only if all the epistemologically valid and legally legitimate medical systems are allowed to flourish side by side that human society could be assured of a better health deal for the public. In chapter seven, the main theme discussed is the role of cosmology in the cultivation of the arts. This theme is hardly separable from the broader themes of knowledge culture as understood and practiced in Islam. The eighth theme addresses the theme of environmental health care and welfare as an extremely important aspect of Islamic civilisation.

Chapters nine and ten both deal with the theme of Islamic science and technology, which is thus related to the central theme of chapter five. These three chapters show quite clearly that the pursuit of science and technology was one of the major themes of classical Islamic civilisation. However, these three chapters emphasize different aspects of Islamic science and technology. Chapter five focuses on the issue of the spiritual and ethical nature of the foundation of Islamic science and technology. Chapter nine deals with the theme of Islam's golden age in the field of science but with specific reference to Andalusian science or science in Muslim ruled Spain. This theme is discussed within the framework of the theory of the rise and decline of Islamic civilisation in general and of Islamic science in particular.³ Chapter ten concentrates on some of the most noteworthy contributions of Islamic civilisation to humanity particularly in the field of science and technology. We are very much aware of the many works that have been done in this area of studies of Islamic civilisation. Thus we are more interested in this book in pointing out to Muslim contributions to scientific and technological culture that have lasting values for humanity such as

in its institution building and value-enrichment for its sustainability rather than to their discoveries of such and such a theory that could be devalued any day by newly discovered theories. For this reason also, chapter ten receives the shortest treatment in the book.

In the eleventh chapter the main theme discussed is Islam and globalisation in world history. We propose here a theory which we call “Islam and the three waves of globalisation.”⁴ This theory posits the role of Islam as the first prime mover of globalisation in human history as this word is understood today by many theorists of the globalisation phenomena. It is in the light of this theory that the coming of Islam to Southeast Asia, particularly the Malay world, and its history of expansion and consolidation into the most dominant religion and civilisation in the region are sought to be understood. The theme of this chapter is thus related to that of the first chapter in a number of ways. In a sense, this chapter further explains the meaning of Islam’s spirit of globalism and the globalisation process it generated that was touched only briefly in chapter one. It was Islam’s induced globalisation that made possible the global presence of its civilisation in all the continents of the world.

The twelfth chapter pursues the theme of Islamic civilisation in Southeast Asia a little further by delving into the issue of its identity. It addresses specifically the issue of the identity of Malay-Islamic civilisation, which is undoubtedly one of the major branches of the global Islamic civilisation. This chapter discusses the application of the theory of *ummatic* and civilisational identity formulated in chapter two to Malay ethnicity that resulted in the formation of Malay-Islamic identity. In the thirteenth chapter the central theme is the identity crisis of contemporary Muslim *ummah* and its civilisation. The chapter identifies the eclipse of *tawhidic* epistemology as the root cause of this identity crisis. In the last chapter, the central theme discussed is the place and role

of *Maqasid al-shari'ah* in the civilisational renewal of the Muslim *ummah* of the twenty-first century. However, it is the restoration of *tawhidic* epistemology discussed in chapter thirteen that is presented as the key element in the envisaged civilisational renewal.

Civilisational renewal (*al-tajdid al-hadari*) is a newly introduced theme in contemporary Islamic thought. Conceptually, it is the fruit of an application of the traditional idea of *tajdid* (“renewal”) to Islamic civilisation viewed as a whole. This kind of application signifies a major departure from previous understandings of *tajdid* that appeared to be always directed at the renewal and reform of some particular sectors of Muslim *ummatic* life and thought such as their spirituality, educational system, and legal and political thought rather than the whole of it.⁵ When it comes to *Maqasid al-shari'ah* we know that it is not a new idea or theme in Islamic thought. However, in contemporary Islamic thought, its rethinking acquires a new significance particularly in the face of rampant legalism that is oblivious of the higher purposes of Islamic Law and habitual piecemeal approaches to finding solutions to the problems of the *ummah*. The idea of *Maqasid al-shari'ah* serving as the chief instrument for the realisation of the *ummah's* civilisational renewal is indeed new to our times.

The thematic approach to Islamic civilisation as adopted in this book is not meant to invalidate other approaches but rather to complement them. However, we acknowledge its many merits some of which deserve to be mentioned here. We will mention three of them. Its first merit is in helping us to appreciate the living nature of Islamic civilisation. Islamic civilisation is not merely a historical entity or phenomenon. The various themes discussed in this book clearly demonstrate the continuing relevance of Islamic civilisation to the present and future humanity. Its second merit is in helping us to understand the core

content and the main characteristics of this civilisation without having to be burdened with plentiful historical data. And its third merit is in helping to point the way to a better curriculum design for the teaching of Islamic civilisation to the contemporary world. Not all the major themes of Islamic civilisation are discussed in this book. Our most glaring omissions are themes pertaining to economic thought and literature. Notwithstanding these omissions, we feel that our thematic approach could be of considerable help to those who are eager to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic civilisation in its relations to other civilisations, especially Western civilisation.

Moreover, through our thematic approach, we believe this book offers a good number of new ideas, theories, and insights concerning not only Islamic civilisation in particular but also human cultures and civilisations in general. We hope such ideas as the three types of a civilisation's global presence, the Qur'anic theory of the identity of the Muslim *ummah* and the identity of Islamic civilisation, the core content of a knowledge culture, the wisdom of medical pluralism, the theory of Islam and the three waves of globalisation, the marriage between ethnicity and religiosity to produce certain types of civilisations,⁶ and civilisational renewal in relation to *Maqasid al-shari'ah* that we have only just begun to explore would invite many positive responses and helpful critiques from readers thereby helping to contribute to a more enlightened discourse on Islamic civilisation.

Twelve out of fourteen chapters of this book are revised versions of our essays printed earlier in various times and climes. The other two chapters, however, appear in print for the first time here. In all, these essays have been selected with the view of depicting the diversity and richness of traditional Islamic civilisation and yet ensuring their presentation as a coherent, organic whole. It is our hope that this thematic approach to

Islamic civilisation would help portray it in better light. *Wa bi'Llah al-tawfik wa'l-hidayah wa bihi nasta'in.*

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Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam

18 Dhu'l-hijjah 1435/13 October 2014

Notes

1. For a detailed study of this theme, see Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1998); and reprint (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, International Islamic University, Malaysia, 2006).
2. For our recent work on the interface of science, technology, spirituality, and ethics in Islamic civilisation, see Osman Bakar, "Islamic Perspectives: Science, Technology, and Ethics," *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics*, J. Brook Holbrook and Carl Mitcham, eds. (Macmillan Reference USA, 2014, revised edition), 4 vols. pp. 605-611; for a recently published general reference on the interface in question, see *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Science, and Technology in Islam*, Ibrahim Kalin, ed. (Oxford University Press, 2014), 2 vols.
3. Our proposed theory of the rise and decline of Islamic science is still in the formative stage. Our first identification of the major factors for both phases of its development was discussed in a paper titled "Islam, Science, and Technology: Past Glory, Present Predicaments, and Shaping of the Future," presented at the International Conference on Islamic Civilisation held in Kuala Lumpur (1991), which was published in the same year as chapter eleven of our book *Tawhid and Science: Essays in History and Philosophy of Islamic Science* (Kuala Lumpur – Penang: Nurin Enterprise & Universiti

Sains Malaysia, 1991). The core ideas of the theory were further elaborated in a paper titled “Why Does Islam Lag Behind in Science?” which was presented at a seminar on “America and the Muslim World” organised by The Clinton Foundation and held in New York University in January 2002. Our concern with this theory found expression in another paper which was presented as a keynote address at the International Seminar on Islamic Science and Technology: Reviving the Supremacy of Islamic Science organised by Technology University of Malaysia (UTM) and held at Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) on 18-19 March 2008. Although the history of Islamic civilisation provides the proper context for the study of the rise and decline of Islamic science we have not yet undertaken a deeper investigation into the related broader phenomena of the rise and decline of Islamic civilisation. Unfortunately, there are very few serious studies on the subject. Among these exceptional few we may mention in particular M. Umer Chapra, *Muslim Civilization: The Causes of Decline and the Need for Reform* (Markfield, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 2008).

4. We first proposed the theory in a paper presented at the Malaysia Chair of Islam in Southeast Asia Public Lecture in 2002 at the Prince al-Waleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Affairs, Georgetown University, Washington DC. The paper was subsequently revised and expanded into a journal article published in *Islam and Civilisational Review*, vol. 1, no. 4, (July 2010), pp. 666 – 684, which is now included in this volume as its chapter 12.
5. As long as the organic unity and wholesomeness of traditional Islamic civilisation remains largely intact as it was the case over the centuries until modern times it is perfectly understandable if past Muslim concern with *tajdid* was generally confined to particular sectors of Muslim *ummic* (“community”) life and thought. However, in the light of the civilisational crisis of contemporary humanity, which engulfs the Muslim *ummah* as well, it is only logical that the concern with *tajdid* be broadened to embrace Islamic civilisation as a whole. This argument explains the

justification of the concept of civilisational renewal (*tajdid hadari*). Critics of the contemporary mainstream understanding of *tajdid* are not just concerned with its scope of meaning but also with the human instruments of its practical realisation, namely the *mujaddids* themselves. In other words, the issue is whether the notion of renewers-reformers (*mujaddids*) can also be broadened to include groups and movements that are collective in nature instead of just being confined to individuals. For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Osman Bakar, “Religious reform and the controversy surrounding Islamisation in Malaysia,” Syed Farid al-Atas, ed., *Muslim Reform in Southeast Asia: Perspectives from Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore* (Singapore: MUIS, 2009), pp. 31 – 45.

6. For a detailed discussion of the concept of civilizational marriage between ethnicity and religiosity, see Osman Bakar, “Islam and the Malay civilizational identity: tension and harmony between ethnicity and religiosity,” John Donohue and John Esposito, eds., *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 480-487.

CHAPTER 1

Islamic Civilisation as a Global Presence with Special Reference to its Knowledge Culture

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the meaning and characteristics of Islamic civilisation and its global presence, particularly in the field of knowledge culture. Since both terms – civilisation and Islamic – have been contested in contemporary scholarship to the point of their critics denying epistemic legitimacy to the concept of Islamic civilisation itself, this chapter devotes a lengthy discussion to defending the continuing validity and legitimacy of the concept of civilisation for the study of human cultures in history. The most serious challenge to the idea of civilisation perhaps comes from the concept of world-system as developed by a number of Western thinkers, especially Immanuel Wallerstein,¹ who reject civilisation as the basic unit of large-scale historical analysis viewing it even as unreal.² It also comes from popularisers of the so-called idea of post-civilisation world, who believe that contemporary globalisation³ has practically reduced human societies all over the world to an almost flat and uniform global cultural entity rendering the idea of multiple civilisations as traditionally understood meaningless.⁴ As for the term “Islamic” as applied to civilisation the attendant point of contention pertains to the criteria of Islamicity of ideas, technology, and institutions of non-Islamic origin that have entered into the cultural space of Muslim societies. With regard to the term

“Islamic civilisation” itself Muslim scholars argue with each other over the terminological issue of which Arabic word would best convey the Islamic idea of civilisation in the light of the teachings of the Qur’an and the Prophetic Traditions.

The chapter also explains the meaning of a civilisation’s global presence, which it argues exists at three different levels, namely territorial presence, cultural presence, and intellectual-spiritual presence. It argues that in the case of Islamic civilisation, its global presence exists at all the three levels. Since knowledge culture is presented as the very heart of Islamic civilisation given the fact that Islam claims to be the religion of knowledge *par excellence*, the chapter provides an introductory discussion of some important aspects of the knowledge culture originating from Islamic civilisation that have become accepted through the West as integral parts of our common modern civilisation. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further studies and research on the theme of Islamic civilisation’s global presence but from new perspectives in the light of new realities in intercultural and inter-civilisational relations.

The Meaning and Characteristics of Islamic Civilisation

There are three key terms in the title of this chapter that need explanation. These terms are “Islamic civilisation,” “global presence,” and “knowledge culture.” Accordingly, this chapter commences with an explanation of each of these terms, albeit briefly. As for the term “Islamic civilisation,” it is by no means a universally favoured one. In our own times, this term is increasingly becoming a deeply contested one among scholars of world cultures and world history, including those specialising in Islamic thought in general and in Islamic cultural history in particular. The reason for this contestation is that, as noted above, the two component words in the term, namely “civilisation” and

“Islamic,” have both become highly contested. Many Western academics, particularly in North America due to cultural, intellectual, and political factors peculiar to that part of the world, have disowned the word “civilisation” in favour of the word “world-system.”⁵ Wallerstein defines world-system as a “spatial/temporal zone which cuts across many political and cultural units, one that represents an integral zone of activity and institutions which obey certain systemic rules.”⁶ He further describes it as “...a social system, one that has boundaries, structures, member groups, rules of legitimation, and coherence. Its life is made up of the conflicting forces which hold it together by tension and tear it apart as each group seeks eternally to remould it to its advantage. It has the characteristics of an organism, in that it has a life-span over which its characteristics change in some respects and remain stable in others...”⁷

Despite this contestation, we prefer to maintain the use of the term “Islamic civilisation” rather than the term “Islamic world-system,” since meaning-wise the word civilisation would be a better English rendering of the technical Arabic terms usually used to denote man’s largest and most developed cultural entity achievable than the latter word.⁸ Since the arguments that have been advanced against the use of the word civilisation appear to have a wide appeal, we feel it is necessary to address them to show that these do not totally apply to the Islamic understanding of civilisation and the Muslim historical experience in civilisation-building. In the several pages that follow, we provide a comparative discussion of the Muslim and Western notions of civilisation and their historical experiences in civilisation-building. We also provide arguments why the idea of world-system could not be considered as a good substitute for the notion of civilisation. Nonetheless, we fully understand the main underlying reason behind the change in terminological usage from civilisation to world-system that has been brought about

through the intellectual efforts of the Western academic community. As seen by its critics in the West itself, not to mention among the non-Westerners, many of whom are postmodernists, the word “civilisation” as understood in the modern West carries with it a number of value-laden connotations such as superiority, civility, and humanness, which has been used in its past to justify the West’s racism, imperialism, colonialism, coercive acculturation, and even genocide in its treatment of non-Western peoples, cultures, and societies.

In other words, in the West the term civilisation carries a historical baggage that had accumulated over the last few centuries as a result of its long turbulent ties with the rest of the world, notably the Islamic world. The main components of this historical baggage are intellectual, religious, and political in nature. Non-Westerners would generally agree with the postmodernists’ critique of the widely prevailing misconception of civilisation in modern Western intellectual history that found unfortunate applications in its colonial policies only to produce a destructive impact on the rest of the world. However, many of them would not agree with the suggestion that in the light of pejorative meanings that had been given in the West to the term civilisation with disastrous consequences for non-Western cultures and societies the term itself should be discarded from the English vocabulary. What needs to be done is not discarding but correcting it.

Erroneous views of civilisation, especially that are collective in nature and that can easily lend themselves to translations into disastrous public policies as were to prevail in the modern West, need to be first identified and then corrected. It does not serve any purpose if collective errors are duly acknowledged but then sought to be forgotten by erasing the word civilisation from the collective memory. Intellectual honesty requires the collective

erroneous views of civilisation to be squarely confronted by identifying their causes and then preventing them from surfacing again. Substituting the word civilisation with the term world-system or whatever other word one may think of is no guarantee that past civilisational errors would not be committed again. In fact, if we examine closely the Western initiated concept of world-system now in currency mainly in the disciplines of world history and political economy we find that the previous mistake of universalising the West's particular and limited civilisational experience is again being repeated.

The world-system theory and analysis is developed almost exclusively on the basis of European history, its modern civilisational traits, and its systemic economic transformations. Again, the historical experiences of other cultures and civilisations are largely ignored or marginalised in these studies, especially the Islamic civilisation, which by virtue of its unique nature and characteristics as well as its long history of interactions with the Western civilisation provides perhaps the best case for a meaningful comparison and contrast between the two civilisations. Islamic civilisation was both a world-empire and a world-economy. It was certainly a world-system according to the criteria set forth by its theorists, but it was more than just a world-system. Critics of the concept of world-system rightly characterise it as essentially an economic organism with a poor cultural content. To reduce Islamic civilisation – for that matter any spiritually-based civilisation – to a world-system so conceptualised is only to empty it of its rich spiritual, intellectual, and cultural content.

If the West is to prevent its past civilisational errors from resurfacing in its contemporary and future societies, regardless of whether in the same old forms or in new ones, then it is called upon to enter into a truly meaningful multidimensional intercivilisational dialogue, which so far it has largely shunned.⁹ The West ought to realise that its historical baggage insofar as its

treatment of other cultures and civilisations is concerned is too heavy an intellectual burden to be unloaded and resolved by its collective mind alone, at least certainly not in its present shape and form and philosophical orientation.¹⁰ The issue at hand is profound and complex, interwoven as it were with so many other fundamental issues of “civilisational” proportions, especially the intellectual, political, and religious. If this issue is to be resolved, then the West and the non-West need an input from each other.

It may be further argued that the reality of our contemporary world makes it an imperative for both parties to cooperate with each other in addressing the issue. Thanks to the impactful globalisation of people, cultural goods, and ideas the increasingly pluralistic nature of Western societies as well as the growing interdependence of the constituent regions of our global community have helped to transform this civilisational issue into a common issue for all humanity. This issue, therefore, ought to prominently feature in contemporary dialogues of cultures and civilisations.¹¹ It requires thoughtful responses from their advocates and participants if our common human civilisation is to survive, let alone flourish on a solid and sound foundation. Moreover, any study of comparative civilisation worthy of the name, particularly one that would include dealing with civilisational relations between Islam and the West, would have to confront this issue in a thoughtful manner inasmuch as it is of a major significance to our common future. However, the scope of this chapter does not allow us to go into a deeper discussion of the intricacies of the Western historical baggage that are tied up to the usage of the word “civilisation.”

In arguing for the continuing validity and legitimacy of the word “civilisation,” we maintain that the Muslim usage of it is epistemologically sound, being in full accord with the philosophical idea of cultural species that is pluralistic and diverse

in nature and with the indisputable historical fact of diverse civilisational experiences of the different branches of humanity. In our view, aside from the historical baggage argument, which is not intrinsic to the nature of civilisation, many strong arguments, including philosophical and scientific, might be advanced against discarding the word “civilisation” in favour of the term “world-system.” True enough, as asserted by its theorists, the conception of world-system retains a good number of the traditional features of civilisation. Like civilisations, a world-system is viewed as a cultural organism having phases of growth and a lifespan. In his definition of world-system earlier quoted, Wallerstein describes it as having “the characteristics of an organism, in that it has a lifespan over which its characteristics change in some respects and remain stable in others.”¹² However, in sharp contrast to traditional civilisations that are generally rich in cultural and spiritual contents, of which Islamic civilisation is an excellent living example, a world-system appears as a culturally impoverished cultural organism. As such, a world-system cannot aspire to be in the rank of cultural species called civilisations. Moreover, lacking a worldview which usually functions as the soul of a civilisation, including of the materialistic type, a world-system is found to be analogous to a body without a soul.

In the following brief exposition of the Islamic idea of civilisation we may see both its similarities and its differences with the concept of world-system. The idea of civilisation as constituting a particular cultural species has its basis in the Qur’an. The key term in the Qur’an pertaining to this idea is *ummah*, which in its noun form appears in its text sixty-four times in different contexts and with different connotations. This word conveys the core meaning of an organised community that is governed by certain laws, usually divine.¹³ In one verse, the Qur’an describes the animal species as forming communities (*umam*, plural of *ummah*) similar to human communities.¹⁴ This

verse permits us to speak of *ummah* as a genus of living organisms comprising two species, namely animal species in the natural world and cultural species in the human world.¹⁵ By cultural species is meant a human community together with the cultural environment it has created. There are many different cultural species inasmuch as there are human communities with different sizes, belief systems and worldviews, diversity patterns, both ethnic and religious, and depths and breadths of cultural achievements. Therefore, in the perspective of the Qur'an, cultural species is akin to animal species, having as it were many similarities with the latter.

As a member of a particular cultural species, a culture is a living organism in the human world in much the same way each member of an animal species is a living organism in the natural world. Both animal and cultural species exist in different sizes, shapes, and forms and they have also different life-spans.¹⁶ Moreover, they are subject to different laws with the animal species being governed by natural biological laws and cultural species by societal laws.¹⁷ We thus have many kinds of cultural species in the human world, ranging in size and complexity from the smallest and simplest to the largest and most complex and the most sophisticated.

Both in terms of physical size and organisational complexity, the smallest and simplest cultural species is the human family, which itself admits of several sub-species.¹⁸ The largest and most complex of cultural species is what we call civilisation just as the largest animal species to have ever lived on earth but now extinct is identified, at least in the popular imagination of modern man if not in real natural history, with what are called the dinosaurs. In between, we have the intermediate cultural species such as villages, towns, cities, states, kingdoms, sultanates, caliphates, and empires. A civilisation is larger in territorial size and scope of its

This very valuable and timely book brings out clearly some of the most important features of classical Islamic civilisation, especially in the sciences, as well as more specifically the role of Islam in Southeast Asia. Written from the transmittal point of view combined with excellent scholarship, the book does not suffer from that sense of inferiority complex that taint so many works by Muslims on their own religion and culture. Dr. Bakar has made an important contribution to the field of Islamic civilisational studies for which all scholars of Islamic studies should be grateful.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr
University Professor of Islamic Studies, George Washington University

Islamic Civilisation and the Modern World will be welcome by scholars and students in the Muslim world and in the West. Osman Bakar, an internationally recognised scholar of Islamic thought and civilisation, has written a book that provides a wealth of knowledge and a fresh perspective on Islamic civilisation and its relevance today and its relationship to Western civilisation.

John L. Esposito
University Professor, Georgetown University, and author of *The Future of Islam*

This book, which is written by a highly qualified expert in the field and an eminent scholar, is indeed a most timely intellectual enrichment and rethinking of an ever relevant discourse in light of the grave civilisational malaise of secular modernity and "progress" and the necessity of a major global paradigm shift in civilisational reform and reconstruction.

Mohd Kamal Hassan
Distinguished Professor, International Islamic University of Malaysia

These thematic essays are of critical importance in a time where Muslims are being questioned about their ability to confront the modern world. The knowledgeable scholar, Professor Osman Bakar, provides us with studies in a diversity of scientific and artistic fields, illustrating and analysing the respective foundational principles of Islam. He aptly reminds students and thinkers: It is by acknowledging the universal roots of Islamic civilisation that Muslims will be able to appropriately address challenges of their time. A timely, scholarly and fascinating contribution.

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