

# MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

This paper describes the relationship between Muslims and Christians in the middle period of Islamic history (1250-1850). The two main points answered in this paper are, first; Relations between Muslims and Christians in the Era of Decline (1250-1500 AD) and, secondly, Relations between Muslims and Christians during the Three Great Kingdoms Period (1500-1800 AD). The method used is writing history, which includes heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The historical method is helpful for systematically and objectively reconstructing the past to reach a complete conclusion. The study results show that the relations between Islam and Christianity in the medieval period were more often confrontational than holding hands through a dialogical process. This period became critical for Muslims because it faced critical reciprocal tensions. Internally, Muslims are challenged to unite because of the diversity of cultures and the extent of their jurisdiction, and the excessive fanaticism of religious groups. While external challenges, the Abbasid dynasty faced attacks from the Mongols led by Hulagu Khan and Timur Lenk and attacks from the Safavid Empire in Persia. Specifically, the confrontational relations between Islam and Christianity were marked by the collapse of the Ayubbiyah Dynasty. Since then, Muslims and Christians have increased the scale of conflict known as the Holy War or Crusade.

**Keywords:** Islam and Christianity; medieval era

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic civilization has grown and developed since the Prophet Muhammad SAW was sent as the Messenger of Allah SWT. Islamic culture and civilization continued to grow after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, whom the Khulafaur Rashidun and the Umayyad dynasty continued. The glory of Islam reached its peak in the Era of the Abasyah Dynasty. This is because the Abbasid dynasty prioritized the advancement of culture and civilization rather than the desire to expand. The heyday of the Umayyad dynasty by Philip K. Hitti as the most brilliant period (Hitti, 1974: 297).

However, the glorious era of the Abasyah dynasty could not last long. The golden age ended after the Mongol army destroyed Baghdad in 1258 AD led by Hulagu Khan (Amir, 2009: 11). All the splendor of the building, the library was destroyed again by Tamerlane in 1400 AD. In addition, attacks from the Safavid Empire in 1508 AD further weakened the existence of the Abasyah dynasty. According to Badri Yatim, the Abbasid dynasty experienced a decline due to two factors, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors occurred because there was an alliance between the Caliph Bani Abbas and the Persians who were oppressed in the Umayyad era. Second, there is an economic downturn. Third, fanaticism of religious groups. And Fourth, external threats. While the external factors are: First, the long Crusade. Second, the attack of the Mongol troops. (Yatim, 2005: 80-85).

After the fall of Baghdad, the condition of Muslims was at a pulse point. Within the Muslim Ummah itself, they face the fanaticism of religious groups that stab one another. While from the outside they faced three attacks (the Mongols, the Persians and the West). Apart from seeing the confrontation between the Abasyah dynasty and the Mongols and Persians, a confrontation that was no less tense was the long war between the Abasyah dynasty and the Europeans. The war between the two forces represents a conflict that has religious nuances. The Abasyah dynasty as a symbol and strength of Islam faced Western nations, who were predominantly Christian.

The war between Muslims and Christians, known as the holy war or crusade, is an ugly portrait of the relationship between Islam and Christianity in the middle period of Islamic history. Departing from the background of these problems, this paper traces the relationship between Islam and Christianity, especially in the middle period which lasted from 1250 to 1850.

The theoretical construct put forward by Galtung regarding the theory of peace is very relevant in viewing the relationship between Muslims and Christians. Galtung generally divides into two forms of peace: negative and positive (Galtung, 1967). The creation of cooperation between communities, economic equity, social justice which is supported by the government so that a non-violent society is created. positive forms of peace. Meanwhile, negative peace is engineering a non-violent society that is controlled by various decisions. The existence of economic inequality, injustice, social and political disparity has the potential to cause conflict/war.

Religion is a teaching that is believed and practiced by its followers. Religion seeks to coordinate relationships with God, humans, and other creatures to create synergies and become leaders in the salvation of the world and the hereafter. The noble ideals of this religion were eroded when many religious communities clashed in the name of religion. Conflict cannot be separated from human life, but it would be strange if the conflict had a religious background that aims to bring peace and resolve the chaos. In historical reality, adherents of Islam and Christianity are two adherents of religions that have a long history of religious conflict.

## **2) METHODS**

The method used in this paper follows the path and methodology in the field of history. The historical methodology framework and plot include heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Heuristics or data collection is done through interviews, library research, and documentation. Source criticism is carried out to verify historical data's truth, reliability, and validity. An interpretation that thoroughly and accurately critiques sources analyzes and synthesizes filtered data while maintaining relevance to existing sources while avoiding subjectivity to historical facts and fictional language. Historiography is a historical work that not only explains historical events, but also creates meaning for the events themselves based on analysis.

## **3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Relations between Muslims and Christians in the Era of Decline (1250-1500 AD)**

Middle-period Islamic and Christian relations inherited a dark record that had been formed since the beginning of the presence of Islam. The two can go hand in hand and understand each other but more often display suspicions that lead to confrontational ways. The resistance between Islam and Christianity began with the sending of the Prophet Muhammad, but confrontational relations began with the crusade (Wajdi, no year: 531, see also Tim Penyusun IAIN Sahid, 1992: 837-838).

Crusades or Muslims are more familiar with the term holy war is a major battle in strengthening the dominance of Muslims. Christians who have just risen from adversity are trying to seize the holy city of Jerusalem from the hands of Muslims who have controlled mainland Asia,

North Africa, and parts of Europe. The holy wars in the medieval period began after the Mamluk dynasty's reign or after the Ayyubid dynasty's end.

From 1260 to 1277 AD, Sultan Baibar Mamluk conquered areas controlled by the Crusaders and the Mongols. The Crusaders reached Islamic territory in Genoa, Castile, and Sicily during Sultan Qavarun, so the army attacked again. Under these circumstances, Islam became easier to control various areas still controlled by the crusaders, namely Tripoli and Arce. Finally, Islam conquered Tripoli in 1289 and Acre in 1291 (Hasan, 1964: 286-287). Sultan Baibars also conquered the most important cities of the Crusaders in 1291. The victory of the Islamic forces ended the war with the crusaders having left, ending the crusades which had lasted the same seven periods (Armstrong, 2003: 28). The collapse of the crusader fortress in Tripoli and Arce's conversion to Islam automatically ended the crusade which had been going on for a very long time.

The effect of the Crusaders was that they robbed Europeans and Muslims of their wealth, sacrificing many of the best sons of the two peoples during the war. However, it should be noted that the remnants of the Crusades are still related to the religious conflict between Christianity and Islam. In this case Moh. Natsir Mahmud said: "several medieval Western scholars saw that in Islam there is a lot of truth..." (Mahmud, 1997: 190). As a result, educated people learn more about Islam as a hostile nation. This is where the relationship between Christians begins. and Islam, especially those who share knowledge. What is certain is that the progress of Islam after the Crusades on the one hand was very brilliant and very successful scientifically. However, there were weaknesses and setbacks behind it, and there were advantages on the Christian side. Christians were not satisfied with taking Islamic knowledge and brought it to the Western world.

Thohir explained that as a result of the historical Crusades that brought Europe, Christians had direct contact with the Islamic world, establishing relations between the West (Christianity) and the East (Islam). As a result of the Crusades, European Christians were able to study, modify, and apply some of the important knowledge produced by Muslims in the past (Thohir, 2002: 42). The decline of Islam was also marked by the destruction of the center of Islamic civilization in Baghdad by the Mongol invasion in 1258. The last expansion by the Mongols was in the early 15th century, led by the famous Tamerlane, who killed around 70,000 Muslims after attacking the city of Isfahan in Persia. (Thohir, 2002: 4). Thus, the decline of Islam in the Middle Ages was marked by the fall of

Islamic lands into the hands of Christian imperialists, the destruction of Baghdad, the center of Islamic learning, and the death of Muslims at the hands of the Mongols.

Even in the Middle Ages, especially after 1492, the majority Muslim population of Spain persisted until an agreement was reached that guaranteed freedom of religion for Muslims, but in fact after entering 1501 Spanish law forced Muslims to choose to meet and change religions. Or exiled from Spain. Many Spaniards, who remained secretly Muslim, tried to reconcile their internal attitude towards Islam with their external attitude towards Christianity. As a result, several 15th-century Arabic texts attempted to incorporate Christian traditions into Islam. For example, they argue that Jesus as God the Father is just a word (Thohir, 2002: 141). This bad experience is because Muslims are not strong enough to defend their religious teachings openly, while the Christian government enforces the acceptance of their religion.

### **Relations between Muslims and Christians During the Three Great Kingdoms Period (1500-1800 AD)**

The relationship between Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages can also be seen in the period of the three great empires: the Ottoman Empire, the Persian Safavid dynasty, and the Indian Mughal Empire. This country is better known as one that loves war than one that loves knowledge. At present, there is no center of Islamic power in any Arab region or Arab country. Persian flourished in Safavi, Turkic in Turkey, and Urdu in India. As a result, Arabic, which has become the language of unity and was formerly the language of science, has stopped developing and even declined. The stagnation of science in the Middle Ages pushed Muslims backward. As the Ottoman Empire survived and relied on military might, it once again failed to develop science and technology. Military advances unmatched by advances in science and technology meant that these empires were unable to confront the weapons of Christian Europe (Boisard, 1980: 87). At the beginning of the 20th century, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the increasing numbers and violence of Western imperialism in many Islamic countries once again disturbed relations between Islam and Christianity.

The Crusades are over, but the bad influence and bad image remains Followed by Muslims from Christianity. in bad image It represents Muslim and Prophet Muhammad. as opposed to the teachings of the prophet Jesus. Subsequently, Islam identified as the religion of the sword was

vigorously distributed. According to William Montgomery Watts, the distortion of Islam as a religion of the sword continued until the 19th century (Watt, 2002: 86-87).

Although they lost the Crusades, Western Christians greatly benefited from this conflict. They (Western Christians) would never have known modern civilization if they had not taken part in the Crusades. They brought back the book-building sciences of hospitals, modern medicine, public baths, astronomy, geometry, literature, tools, navigation, and more. Various sciences that support their modern civilization (Al-Faruqi and Lois Lamnya, 2001: 289-299). The Crusades directly benefited Christians who sought to translate medical, philosophical, literary, and religious books. This process resulted in the knowledge of the Renaissance Enlightenment in the form of translation (Al-Faruqi and Lois Lamnya, 2001: 289-299).

The only surviving Western cultural contact at that time came from the Crusaders. In the era of Islamic culture and darkness in the age of excellence. This meeting brings great advantages to western countries Various aspects such as. Culture, art, commerce, industry. Besides that, as a result of the Crusades, a new paradigm emerged, namely trade relations between areas controlled by Muslims and the territory of people who were Christians (Watt, 2002: 86-87).

## CONCLUSION

Islamic and Christian relations in the medieval period were more confrontational than living in peace and harmony. At that time, the two major religious groups (Muslims and Christians) faced each other in escalating major conflicts using religious symbols. The holy wars in the medieval period began after the Mamluk dynasty's reign or after the Ayyubid dynasty's end. The holy wars continued until the Era of the three Great Empires (Safavid, Turkic and Mughol). These three countries are better known as war-loving countries than knowledge. The stagnation of science pushed Muslims into a decline phase because they relied on military power but ignored science and technology.

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