



EARLY RELIGIOUS SCIENCES AS AN
INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC SCIENCE

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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SEPTEMBER 2015

ABSTRACT

A great deal of scholarship from the past and the present has dealt with the history of early religious sciences of Islam. The classical Islamic literature is abundant with reference consisting of both, religious and intellectual sciences. In recent attempts to reexamine the history of Islamic science, a number of significant works has appeared in European languages analyzing the historicity and authenticity of early Muslim intellectual movement. The result of the main findings from the above studies is that considerable amount of intellectual and academic activities in the first centuries of Islam were indeed taking place. Works in Qur'anic and Ḥadīth studies in particular received a special attention from historians and other specialists from both the East and the West. However, in relation to the general understanding of the notion of Islamic science, the views were somehow mixed. While some have argued that religious sciences of Islam were the product of much later development of Islamic civilization when considerable elements of foreign thought, particularly Greek sciences, has been translated into Arabic, the majority of the scholars and historians involved in the foregoing discussion claimed the influence of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth upon Islamic science, or rather portraying the two as the essential source for Islamic science in its religious and intellectual domains. However, no systematic study has yet been undertaken to demonstrate the degree of such influence and to portray the means by which it has been actually materialized. The present thesis fills that gap. The sciences chosen for this study, namely *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* and *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* are directly related to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet. By analytical examination of the early development of said sciences and methodology employed therein, this thesis has shown that the Qur'anic and Sunnatic influence on the philosophy and methodology of Islamic science has derived precisely through early religious scholarship of Islam, especially through the sciences of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Intellectually speaking, the Qur'anic sciences were responsible for protecting the original ideas and doctrines such as the unity of God, the concept of knowledge, the purpose of creation and others contained in the Qur'ān as the source of all that is Islamic. Ḥadīth sciences on the other hand have helped to secure the main part of the Sunnah which served as the principle commentary of the Qur'ān, the model to be emulated by all Muslims and the way by which the above ideas and doctrines are to be understood and implemented. Finally, the sciences of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth by developing a methodology which comprised of all possible modes on knowing from rational to spiritual, empirical to intellectual, have contributed on the epistemological level of Islamic science whereby religious sources of knowledge have been equally emphasized with other modes by which knowledge can be derived.

ملخص البحث

عُني قدراً كبيراً من الدراسات في الماضي والحاضر في التعامل مع تاريخ العلوم الدينية المبكرة للإسلام. و تزخر المؤلفات الإسلامية التراثية بوفرة من المراجع تتكونان معاً من العلوم الدينية والفكرية. و قد ظهرت عدد من الأعمال الهامة باللغات الأوروبية لتحليل تاريخية وأصالة بداية الحركة الفكرية الإسلامية وذلك في محاولة حديثة لإعادة مراجعة العلوم الإسلامية. أن أهم ما أسفرت عنه نتائج هذه الدراسات هو أن كم هائل من الأعمال الفكرية والأكاديمية كانت قد أخذت مجراها بالفعل في القرون الأولى من الإسلام. لقد حضيت الأعمال الدراسية في القرآن الكريم والسنة النبوية الشريفة بعناية خاصة من قبل المؤرخين والمختصين من الشرق والغرب على السواء. ومع ذلك فقد جاءت وجهات النظر مختلطة بطريقة ما فيما يتعلق بالفهم العام لمفهوم العلوم الإسلامية. حيث قال البعض بأن العلوم الدينية للإسلام هي نتاج التطور الذي جاء لاحقاً في الحضارة الإسلامية حين تمت ترجمة قدر كبير من الأفكار الأجنبية وخاصة من العلوم اليونانية الى العربية، بينما ادعى أغلب العلماء والمؤرخون الذين عنوا في هذا النقاش تأثير القرآن والحديث على العلوم الإسلامية او بالأحرى تصويرهما كمصدرين أساسيين للعلوم الإسلامية في مجالها الديني والفكري. غير أنه لم تجر إية دراسة منهجية حتى الآن تبين مدى هذا التأثير وتصور الوسائل التي من خلالها يتثبت ذلك فعلياً. عليه فأن هذه الأطروحة بعنوان "العلوم الدينية المبكرة كمقدمة للعلوم الإسلامية" تهدف الى سد هذه الفجوة. العلوم المختارة لهذه الدراسة هي "علوم القرآن" و "علوم الحديث" وهي ذات ارتباط مباشر بالقرآن الكريم والسنة النبوية الشريفة. أظهرت هذه الأطروحة من خلال الدراسة التحليلية للتطورات المبكرة لهذه العلوم والمنهجية المستخدمة فيها أن تأثير القرآن والسنة على فلسفة ومنهجية العلوم الإسلامية أستمد تحديداً من خلال المؤلفات الدينية المبكرة للإسلام خاصة من خلال علوم القرآن والحديث.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the beginning of my preparation to write a PhD thesis in Islamic Science and throughout the long and painstaking efforts needed for the research and preparation of the actual text of the thesis, I am indebted to several institutions and personalities to which I would like sincerely to express my gratitude and appreciation. First of all, I would like to thank all my supervisors, namely, Prof. Torla bin Hj. Hasan, my current supervisor, and both Prof. Osman Bakar and Prof. Baharuddin Ahmad, as my former supervisors, for all their valuable and helpful instructions, recommendations and patience during their involvement in supervising me in this academic project. I would also like to express my gratitude to other accomplished scholars and my colleagues who have given me their professional advices, important suggestions relating to the content of my thesis and the academic and spiritual motivation for the final accomplishment of the thesis: Prof. Alparslan Acikgenc (Yildiz Technical University, Turkey), Prof. Megawati Moris (IIUM), the late Prof. Uthman al-Muhammadi (ISTAC), Prof. Resid Hafizović (Faculty of Islamic Studies, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Prof. Patrick Laude (Georgetown University), Prof. Muhamed Mrahorović (Bosnian and Herzegovina) and Prof. Nevad Kahteran (University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina). No less significant support I have received from my dear friends and colleagues Džemal Plojović, Islam Karam and Enita Maksumic who in their own ways respectively have provided me with much needed support and assistance. I am certainly indebted to all the staff in several libraries in both, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, especially the library of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), the main campus, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas library at International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), the library at University Brunei Darussalam and the library of Jami' Sulatan Hasan al-Bolkiah, Brunei Darussalam, for all their help and understanding while I used their facilities for the research, study and writing of my thesis. Finally, I would like to thank both my families in Bosnia and Brunei who have been my best inspiration and support for all these years of my studies conducted home and abroad. To them my thesis is dedicated, especially to my late father Idris, my mother Fatima, my two brothers Mirsad and Sead who are also traditional scholars in Islamic studies, my dear wife Harina and our two precious daughters Hatidza and Aisha.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between religion and knowledge ontologically speaking goes back to the ancient times or even beyond when as Seyyed Hossein Nasr has stated, Reality was at once being, knowledge and bliss, or in other words, when knowledge has possessed a profound relation with the sacred principle of primordial Reality.¹ From Islamic point of view, this relationship between religion and knowledge is evidenced and acknowledged once the first man was sent down from heaven to the earth. That man, named Ādam, which was also a prophet, combined within his heart and mind the knowledge of Divine realities as well as the knowledge of the new world in which he has been brought out to live.² Finally, historically speaking, most of the ancient civilizations that have long ago vanished have left behind them unmistakable evidence that clearly points out the wedding between their religious and scientific knowledge which they have mastered over the course of time.

However historians of both science and religion when dealing with this issue often differ in their understanding first of all the concepts of science and religion and then their relationship. For example, in *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*

¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 1.

² The reference is made to the following Qur'anic verses: "And He taught Ādam the nature of all things" (Qur'ān, 2:31). According to Ibn 'Abbās, the names that were revealed to Ādam comprised of the names of all his (Ādam's) progeny, or the names of all the beasts and other things in nature (*Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafṣīr Ibn al-'Abbās [Tafṣīr Work attributed to Ibn 'Abbās and Abū Tāhir Muhammad Ibn Ya'kūb al-Firuzabādī]*, translated from Arabic by Mokrane Guezzou [Amman: Royal Āl al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2007]), 7. Ibn 'Arabī, a famous Ṣūfī scholar and philosopher in his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makiyyah*, while referring to the names of which Ādam has received the knowledge, has stated that the names in question were "those names whose faces were turned toward bringing both the elemental world and the higher worlds into existence" (William C. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn 'Arabī's Cosmology* [New York: State University of New York Press, 1998]), 154. See also Vincent J. Cornell, "Teaching and Learning in the Qur'ān," *The Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, no. 5 (2005): 3.

the subject in question has been treated in connection with yet another category that is closely related to both, science and religion, namely, magic. There, the three major approaches to this matter have been highlighted and desultorily explained. The first approach views religion, science and magic as different evolutionary stages in a single developmental progression. The second approach distinguishes between the magic and science on the one side, and religion on the other, claiming that the first two categories to some extent shares the assumption of certain natural laws, while religion has no much interest in it, being almost solely oriented towards the moral and social issues. The third approach tends to equalize religion and magic, suggesting that the difference between the two is only imposed from outside, while in reality both concepts are equal. The scientific knowledge on the other hand, is regarded as empirically based technique, and for scientifically oriented culture it functions much like religion and magic, its claim and theories being taken on faith.³

It is quite interesting to note that all three mentioned views in their further analysis claim that the said concepts, namely, religion, science and magic, were used or designed to govern, manipulate and explore the nature and its laws, as it was already the proven fact that the concepts in question were exclusively invented by man for his own purposes, without Divine intervention whatsoever. Nevertheless, an editor of the above Encyclopedia Michael Frassetto has admitted, as did the majority of historians of religion and science, an enormous role of religion and its massive impact upon human societies and civilizations. In his words “The world’s art and literature have been greatly shaped by religion, and modern theater traces his origin to ancient and medieval religious rituals. Not least important, religion provides comfort and consolation and a guide for understanding life’s trials and triumphs, wonders and

³ *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, 2006 edition, “Magic, Science, and Religion.”

tragedies”.⁴ The similar view has been given by the German historian and philosopher Carl Jaspers who have argued that during the Axial Age, in period between 800 BCE – 200 BCE, numerous sages, prophets and religious men and philosophers from various regions of the world such as China, Iran, India Palestine and Greece have changed the direction of civilizations.⁵

In addition to this, in a world far distanced from the regions mentioned above, another brilliant civilizations have been flourishing of its own, namely Maya in South and Plains Indians in North Americas.⁶ All of these ethnically different people from geographically different regions of the world, have shared and valued several things between their diverse cultures, namely, religion, or the sense of Divine and a highly developed customs of living reflected through their infrastructural systems and artistic and religious monuments a great part of which has survived up to our own time.⁷

Looking from the traditional Islamic perspective on these same civilizations from the past, Muslims scholars and philosophers have quite different perspective than the ones mentioned earlier. First of all, the term tradition or traditional in the sense of

⁴ Ibid., viii.

⁵ Jaspers has further argued that “[t]he most extraordinary events are concentrated in this period, Confucius and Lao-tse were living in China, all the schools of Chinese philosophy came into being, including those of Mo-ti, Chuang-tse, Lieh-tsu and a host of others; India produced Upanishads and Buddha and, like China, ran the whole gamut of philosophical possibilities down to skepticism, to materialism, sophism and nihilism; In Iran Zarathustra taught a challenging view of the world as a struggle between good and evil; In Palestine the prophets made their appearance, from Elijah, by way of Isaiah and Jeremiah to Deutero-Isaiah; Greece witnessed the appearance of Homer, of the philosophers – Parmenides, Heraclitus and Plato - of the tragedians, Thucydides and Archimedes. Everything implied by these names developed during these few centuries almost simultaneously in China, India and the West, without anyone of these regions knowing of the others”. For further elaboration of the Axial Age see Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, translated from the German by Michael Bullock (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), 2; Compare with P. Aranson, S.N. Eisenstadt and Bjorn Wittrock, *Axial Civilization and World History*, Eds., (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), a significant study devoted entirely to the Axial Age and events in the world related to it.

⁶ Charles and Linda George, *Maya Civilization* (London: Gale, 2010), 18; *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains Indians*, 2007 edition, “Introduction,” 2.

⁷ One is reminded of ancient world’s sites such as Ka’ba in Mecca, Pyramids in Egypt, Stonehenge in England, Petra in Jordan, Terra Cotta Warriors in China, Borobudur in Indonesia, Chichen Itza in Mexico to name but a few, the majority of which originate much before Islamic great architectural monuments of Alhambra and Taj Mahal or European great cathedrals were built.

religion is at the very start applied to all ancient civilizations, suggesting that each of them has certain form of religion and culture expressed by the virtue of their sacred rituals, arts and architecture as well as through their surrounding environment and ornaments that were filled in.⁸ Secondly, in relation to knowledge and sciences that these ancient civilization have pursued, it has been argued that both the concept of knowledge and its application have acquired a sacred character in the minds and acts of traditional men and women.⁹

The obvious reason for this lies in the fact that knowledge has been perceived as an entity that strictly belongs to a higher order of reality or Idea which, out of its own will has allowed that knowledge to manifest itself through the multiplied levels and forms in the created world of nature.¹⁰ That is why knowledge and religion has never been divided in the perception of traditional people, but rather remained so

⁸ Nasr's many writings have been devoted to the study of ancient and traditional civilizations in the context of religion and philosophy. See for example "What is Tradition?" in his *Knowledge and the Sacred*, 65-92; also by the same author, "The Traditional Sciences" in *The Need for a Sacred Science* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2001), 95-118; and finally by the same author, "The Order of Nature" in *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2004), 29-79. In all these articles, the author has argued about the essential principles such as religion, art, architecture, cosmological sciences, and attitude toward environment and others, which unify all traditional civilizations before the modern science and philosophy with its secular and materialist ideas have emerged in Europe whence it spread across the rest of the world.

⁹ In relation to this Nasr has noted that "[t]he function of a traditional civilization may be said to be nothing other than creating a world dominated by the sacred in which man is saved from the terror of the nihilism and skepticism which accompanies the loss of the sacred dimension of existence and the destruction of the sacred character of knowledge" (Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, 76).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3. Here knowledge has been ultimately identified as divine quality reflected on the plane of creation in both knowing subject that is a human and knowing object that is physical and metaphysical worlds. Human beings are therefore endowed with all necessary faculties in order to know not only what lies within physical level of creation or reality but also what is contained beyond that world, namely metaphysical order of reality. This relationship between knowing subject and knowing object has been masterly describe by Nasr in the following words: "To be human is to know and also to transcend oneself. To know means therefore ultimately to know the Supreme Substance which is at once the source of all that comprises the objective world and the Supreme Self which shines at the center of human consciousness and which is related to intelligence as the sun is related to its rays" (Nasr, *Ibid.*, 4). There is no doubt that this perspective of knowledge, its origin, reality and meaning is derived from the Essential sources of Islam, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, both of which has greatly emphasized the idea of knowledge and matters related to it. The Qur'anic verse such as "But God knows, and you know not" (Qur'an, 2:216) or the famous prayer of the Prophet: "O my Lord, advance me in knowledge or increase my knowledge" (Qur'an, 20:114) points directly to divine origin of knowledge which nevertheless has been attainable by humans due to divine Will and the faculties of knowing bestowed upon humans as a divine gift.

closely wedded and as such being reflected outwardly through various forms of symbolism and arts.¹¹ And finally, concerning the natural environment of the above civilizations, it has never been perceived as something to be completely conquered and manipulated, a theory suggested by modern western philosophers and scientists.¹² The nature in fact has been viewed as the theater specifically designed for contemplation upon divine realities that are manifested therein in multiplied phenomena.¹³

When this view of nature and the rest of the abovementioned principles that were deeply rooted in traditional civilizations began to change, no one would have thought that in the period of only few centuries, humanity would find itself in an alarming conditions primarily caused by modern science and technology. The rise of the later was realized due to a number of events that occurred in Western Europe somewhere between fourteen and nineteen centuries. During this time the process of transforming traditional society of this region into the so-called enlightened and later humanist society, followed immediately with yet another blanket made of rationalism

¹¹ “From the traditional point of view”, writes Nasr, “there is of course no legitimate domain which can be considered as completely profane. The universe is the manifestation of the Divine Principle and there is no realm of reality that can be completely divorced from that Principle. To participate in the realm of the Real and to belong to that which is real also implies being immersed in the ocean of the sacred and being imbued with the perfume of the sacred. The metaphysical and cosmological sciences of the traditional civilization are certainly sacred sciences in that they are based on knowledge of manifestation not as veil or *maya* but as symbol and “signature” of the Divine, as the *vestigial Dei*” (Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, 96).

¹² Since the Renaissance onwards the study of the nature has gradually shifted from ancient and medieval perspectives that in one way or another has always maintained the role of God in a created cosmos or nature itself. The new wave of the philosophical and scientific approaches to nature has created an entirely new worldview of the concept of nature or reality as such whereby the nature has been completely devoid from its divine origin in terms either of its creation or emanation as well as from any form of symbolism and instead has been constructed in pure rational and mathematical terms reducing it to only one component usually identified with matter. For more on this subject see Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*, 100-125.

¹³ Writing about numerous ways of studying the natural world in ancient and traditional civilization, Nasr has mentioned that “Nature may be studied as a book of symbols or as an icon to be contemplated at a certain stage of the spiritual journey and a crypt from which the gnostic must escape in order to reach ultimate liberation and illumination, as is seen in the writings of Illuminationists and Sūfīs like Suhrawardī and Ibn ‘Arabī (Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, [New York: State University of New York Press, 1993], 2).

and materialism which almost completely covered modern Western mind from enduring light of perennial wisdom which was cherished by their ancestors not long ago. Religion has been replaced by Secularism, Tradition by Modernism, traditional art and sciences by modern technology and science. The final result therefore in relation to this study was the complete deprivation generally speaking of religious and spiritual dimension from science, or as Muzaffar Iqbal has said, science, regardless of its origin, was generally perceived to be totally independent of religion.¹⁴ This also had an impact on viewing and understanding the history of Islamic science, its religious and intellectual domains.

As the wedding between Islamic religious principles and science has not been questioned in most cases by Muslims scholars and scientists throughout the long centuries of Islamic intellectual tradition, a number of contemporary historians and researchers especially from the West has projected an idea, claiming that sciences in Islam are simply embodiment of Greek thought in Arabic language, which Muslims have cultivated for centuries and despite that, have never really managed to achieved much that is original.¹⁵

Another similar view to this was recently initiated by certain Orientalists concerning religious sciences of Islam, especially in its early period. Although, the majority of Muslim scholars as well as an increasing number of western religious specialists certainly believe that intellectual activities during the first century of Islamic era have resulted in the development of religious sciences before the translation period of Greek thought began to take place, those Orientalists have claimed that such was not the case. For them the religious sciences were of much later development than what the traditional Islamic view has suggested. In other words,

¹⁴ Muzaffar Iqbal, *The Making of Islamic Science* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009), 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

Muslims were only able to intellectually contribute to their religion, science and civilization after the translation of foreign sciences into Arabic, which apparently they used to enhance and develop what is known today as religious sciences of Islam.¹⁶

Here one is confronted with the two almost opposing perspectives concerning traditional Islamic intellectuality, the first denying Muslim contribution to the development of science and the second ascribing to Muslims the role in developing Islamic religious sciences although in later centuries. One needs to be reminded that these and similar perspectives on one and only subject, namely Islamic intellectual history, has emerged from a single worldview which claims to be founded strictly on scientific method and historical criticism based on rationalism and empirical facts.

For these and similar other questions raised by those who have opposed or denied the idea of authenticity and originality of Islamic science, this thesis will provide suitable answers and amply of evidence to prove that the foregoing claims concerning Islamic science are completely baseless and meaningless. The point to be made by this study therefore is to the religious and intellectual scholarship from the first two centuries of Islam have largely contributed to the development of Islamic science, Islamic science for its part has managed to successfully embrace a wide range of differing ideas and doctrines from philosophy to various branches of science derived from ancient sources, including Greek, Indian and Persian, without ever changing its essential principles derived from the Qur'ān and Sunnah via religious

¹⁶ As an example to this, one could be reminded of the so-called 'the Greek thesis', which refers to the alleged idea that the Arabic grammar for instance, has been developed on the basis of Greek translated treatises into Arabic. For detailed treatment of this issue see C.H.M. Versteegh, *Arabic Grammar and Qur'anic Exegesis in Early Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 22-28. Furthermore, a group of Orientalists led by John Wansbrough have almost completely ignored and denied the events regarding the first three centuries of early Muslim scholarship, claiming it to be rather invented or fabricated by later development of Muslim scholarly activity. See Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 78-83; See also Andrew Rippin, "Literary Analysis of Qur'ān, Tafsīr and Sīra: the methodologies of John Wansbrough" in Andrew Rippin, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpretative Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), Chapter 2.

sciences of Islam. Finally, Islamic science has evolved as David King has stated into “an intellectual tradition of proportions that no medieval and Renaissance European could have ever imagined”.¹⁷

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Islam is essentially a religion of knowledge. The first part of the statement (*shahādah*) of faith in Islam, that is ‘*Lā ilāha illa Allāh*’ (There is no god but God), signifies in itself a declaration of knowledge concerning the reality of God.¹⁸ The knowledge in question is also known in Islamic intellectual tradition as the knowledge of Tawḥīd or Divine unity. Muslim religious consciousness is therefore the consciousness of the unity of God to which scientific spirit is in no way opposed, but rather constitutes the integral part of it.¹⁹ In other words, the scientific spirit of Muslim scholars and scientists as well as its realization in both intellectual and practical levels flow from their realization of the unity.²⁰ This fact is fairly illustrated in the earliest sciences developed by Muslim scholars, the sciences which have primarily dealt with Islamic religion,²¹ thus acquiring an attribute of religious science. It is by the virtue of these

¹⁷ Cited by Iqbal, *Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹⁸ Osman Bakar, *The History and Philosophy of Islamic Science* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1999), 1

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2. The author has further explained that possessing a consciousness of Divine unity means affirmation of the truth of God’s Oneness, His Names and Attributes and His Will and Acts. See also Nasr’s explanation of several Qur’anic terms concerning knowledge and intellection in traditional Islamic scholarship in his *Knowledge and the Sacred*, 11-12.

²⁰ “The arts and sciences in Islam”, as Nasr has argued, “are based on the idea of unity, which is the heart of the Muslim revelation. Just as all genuine Islamic art, whether it be the Alhambra or the Paris Mosque, provides the plastic forms through which one can contemplate the Divine Unity manifesting itself in multiplicity, so do all the sciences that can properly be called Islam reveal the unity of Nature” (Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* [Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2003], 22).

²¹ My view here is that the notion of religion for the first generations of Muslim scholars was rather understood in its universal sense, than in its much confined meaning that one is witnessing today, due to the philosophy of modern or secularist science. In view of the latter, religion is much more restricted to certain beliefs or even superstitions which are opposed to “reality” as they conceive of it. For the early Muslims in general, religion represented the way of life in all its dimensions that are, as is the case with all natural phenomena, in perfect accordance with the divine Will. Therefore, it is possible to

sciences that one is able to recognize the Muslim scientific and scholarly enthusiasm for reality and objectivity, the admiration for empirical evidence, skilful classification of religious texts, its scholars and various technical terms pertaining to religious sciences, specific definitions of subject matter and its conceptual analysis and pure academic argumentations.²² All of these are evidently seen in the early religious sciences such as the sciences of the Qur'ān, Hadīth, Theology, Islamic Jurisprudence, Islamic Sacred History and various other related sciences such as Arabic Language, Grammar, Poetry and others.

The reason for such a precise and scientific approach to religion itself on behalf of the early Muslim scholars and scientists lies in the fact that Islam as the universal religion sent down to all people and for all time, deals not only with practical matters of religion or with what man must and must not do, but also with intellectual domain of religion or with that which one needs to know and understand in order to completely fulfill his or her mission in this earthly life.²³ The second of the above aspects is even more important than the first for the accurate knowledge and correct understanding necessarily imply ideal and right actions. This has been well explained by Nasr in his book *Science and Civilization in Islam*, where in discussing the teaching system within Islamic intellectual tradition he said that since “the teachings of Islam are essentially gnostic in nature, all forms of knowledge, even the

say that the religious sciences founded by the first generations of Muslim scholars should be regarded as more than what the term ‘religious’ imply in its modern usage which, of course, is opposed to the traditional perspective regarding this subject.

²² Bakar, 2-3.

²³ Through this quality of Islamic religion one recognizes the difference between Universal Islam, a primordial tradition whose principle doctrine has always been Divine unity and particular Islam referring to a historical religion revealed to the prophet Muhammad fifteen centuries ago which to certain extent also represent the universal character embodied in its doctrine of *Tawhīd* and divine sacred Law or the *Shari'ah*. See Bakar, “Islamization of knowledge: its conception, methodology and challenges”, in Seminar on Islam in ASEAN’s Institutions of Higher Learning II (Islam and Social sciences, 1990), 13-16.

most external, take on a sacred character, so long as they remain faithful to the principles of the revelation”.²⁴

However, my initial acquaintance with the foregoing portrayal of early religious and scholarly activities by Muslims during my Master research which partly dealt with the early history of Islamic science has prompted an idea that the religious sciences in particular deserve more attention in order to be duly appreciated within the broader concept of Islamic science. Therefore, based upon further research and analysis of this subject, I became even more certain that the detailed scholarly exploration inside philosophical as well as epistemological principles that characterized early religious sciences would be of great significance and fair contribution to the field of Islamic science. The present thesis is therefore an outcome of painstaking inquiry into religious and philosophical bases of the two major fields of religious sciences and its methodological structures that have left considerable impact on the philosophy and epistemology of Islamic science.

1.2 RELIGIOUS SCIENCES CHOSEN FOR STUDY

Among the religious sciences which, compared to others, have represented a particular scholarly paradigm or intellectual introductory for the latter scholarship and development of Islamic science as such, are ‘*Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (the sciences of the Qur’ān) and ‘*Ulūm al-Ḥadīth* (the sciences of the Ḥadīth). Being theoretically and intellectually expositions and interpretations of the two essential foundations of Islam, namely the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth, these sciences have represented as they still do, the corner stone in the general scheme of traditional Islamic scholarship taken as a whole.

²⁴ Nasr, 64.

It is by the virtue of these sciences respectively that the two most fundamental sources in Islam have been completely guarded and preserved in their original contents and meaning. In the following I will provide a short introduction for each of them.

1.2.1 ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān

The Qur’ān as the last Divine revelation is the first major religious and scholarly project that has been entirely completed or written down at the earliest period of Islamic history, or during the Prophet’s lifetime and subsequently compiled into a single book immediately after the Prophet’s demise. In order to safeguard this revelation and to keep it in its original forms and contents, the scholars of Islam began to cultivate a number of disciplines related to the Qur’ān which later became known as ‘*Ulūm al-Qur’ān*. The term ‘ulūm itself suggests that it is not in question one single science but numerous sciences which are organically interrelated since all of them are concerned with the same subject, namely the Qur’ān, but from different perspectives or with different kinds of interest in it. Thus among the sciences of the Qur’ān we have the science of *Qirā’at* or *Tilāwat al-Qur’ān* (the proper reading or recitation of the Qur’ān), the science of *Tafsīr* (the exegesis of the Qur’ān), the science of *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (the causes of Revelation), the science of *Ta’wīl* (the inner or esoteric meaning of Qur’ān) and others. Each of these sciences was designed to study the Qur’anic text from a different angle and with different reasons and each of them as well has developed its own methodology and the manner of bringing about the research set up by the scholars involved in this religious and at the same time scholarly and scientific quest.

1.2.2 ‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth

The sciences of Prophetic tradition are also numerous and different in relation to its special interest of study regarding the Ḥadīth. Thus we have the science of *Riwāyah* (the transmission of *aḥādīth*), the science of *Rijāl al-Ḥadīth* (the transmitters and their requirements or simply biography of transmitters), the science of *Sanad al-Ḥadīth* (the validity or authenticity of the chain of transmission), the science of *Matn al-Ḥadīth* (the correct wording or actual text of Ḥadīth) and others. All of the mentioned sciences of the Ḥadīth were founded with the aim to acquire and explore the knowledge contained within the Sunnah of the Prophet and to develop methods by which to safeguard that knowledge as it represented the first and foremost the interpretation of the Qur’ān.

There are several considerations based upon which I have chosen the abovementioned sciences for the present study. Firstly, each group of sciences has constituted at once the religious and the intellectual commentaries of the subjects involved as well as the initial philosophical and scholarly quests borne out of Islamic revelation in form of the Qur’ān, and its immediate interpretation in form of the Ḥadīth or Sunnah of the Prophet. Based on these sciences respectively, a number of other avenues of knowledge have been opened and later developed into almost independent branches of Islamic science. Among them one could mention the sciences of the *Sharī’ah* or Islamic Law, such as *Usūl al-Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Fiqh al-‘Ibādāt* (methods of Islamic worship) and *Fiqh al-Mu’āmalāt* (Transactions), Islamic theology or *‘Ilm al-Kalām*, various branches of Islamic Philosophy, Islamic sacred history, number of linguistic disciplines pertaining to Arabic language all of which belong to a specific category of Islamic science termed as the Transmitted sciences. On the other hand, the Qur’anic and Ḥadīth sciences have also made their influence in

one way or another on the other form of Islamic science usually named as Intellectual sciences.

Secondly, the sciences of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth on the intellectual level might be considered as the most comprehensive commentaries of the three essential dimensions of Islamic religion, namely the *Īmān* (faith or intellectual doctrine), the *Ihsān* (right behavior or spiritual path) and the *Islām* (*Sharī'ah* or sacred law of Islam). In that case, the Qur'anic sciences are to be viewed as the provider of all necessary foundations and principles related to all the given dimensions of Islam. The Ḥadīth sciences for their part are to be understood as an academic guardian of the practical exposition and interpretation (the Sunnah and Ḥadīth) of the above principles.

Finally, the sciences of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth have represented the first scholarly and intellectual achievements founded at the earliest stage of Islamic intellectual history. Taken as such they have historically as well as philosophically served as the most profound scholarly foundation for the remarkable scientific achievements carried out by Muslim scholars, scientists and philosophers during the next long and flourishing periods of Islamic science and civilization. In addition to the sciences in question, in the third part of this thesis that consists of two chapters, the study is oriented firstly towards the early religious scholarship of Islam and its influence on Islamic science in five main aspects, namely, Islamic worldview, terminology, methodology, subject matter and sources, then the focus shifted towards the nature of Islamic science, including its definition, philosophy, various classifications, methodology and possible aim.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

In the following chapters the attempt is to demonstrate detailed philosophical study of early epistemological and methodological principles used by Muslim scholars in their pursuit for the religious sciences mentioned above. As the primary aim of the study is to reveal a unique scientific philosophy of early religious scholarship prior to the later and much wider range of Islamic scientific tradition to which the religious sciences in question have provided essential foundation in various aspects concerning the quest of knowledge as such. As the aim of Islamic science is not to prove what is outside the frame of Islamic revelation, if there is such a thing, but rather to conform to what is already being revealed therein whether in direct or indirect mode of divine Message intended to man. In other words, Islamic science is founded and developed on the basis of divine Revelation and as such all its outward or empirical as well as inward or philosophical sightings and speculations are mere clarifications and amplifications of certain principles already given in Islamic Revelation. Therefore, the sciences that have provided a great deal of methodological aid to the philosophy of Islamic science in its later development, were precisely those of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth that were already developed before the major works in Islamic science began to appear during the third century onwards. Beside this, the thesis also aims to give an analytical treatment of the following questions:

1. The role of the Qur'ān and Sunnah in the development of Islamic science:

As the first intellectual activities in early Islam have been focused in precisely on the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, and thus first sciences to be developed were those dealing with these two sources in particular, the aim of the thesis is to highlight the roles of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in development in of both, religious and intellectual sciences in Islam.