

## Article

# From *Aslamat al-Ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* to *al-Takāmul al-Ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*: A Study of the Shift from Islamization to Integration of Knowledge

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**Abstract:** Over the past half-century, the study of Islam in the Muslim world has been preoccupied with three global projects: *maqāṣid al-sharīʿa* (the higher objectives of revealed law), *al-waṣaṭiyya al-islāmiyya* (Islamic moderation), and *aslamat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* (Islamization of knowledge). Of these three, the latter has been the most substantial enterprise due to its ambitious work plan, extensive scope, and far-reaching influence. However, in recent decades, the Islamization of knowledge project has undergone significant developments culminating in its reformulation as ‘knowledge integration’ (*al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*). This paper traces and analyzes the key manifestations of this notable transformation. Firstly, it surveys the various contexts of eschewing the concept of ‘Islamization’ and adopting ‘integration’. Secondly, it examines the conceptualization of the construct of ‘*al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*’ within pre-modern and contemporary Islamic contexts. Thirdly, it investigates the practical implementation of knowledge integration with a special focus on the domain of higher education. The question that brings all three sections together is whether the knowledge integration model embodies a true paradigm shift or is a mere name change while bearing on the old rationale and approach of Islamization. The present paper argues that, under the banner of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*, a shift from an internally focused intellectual effort to one that envisions new opportunities for epistemological renewal is recognizable at the individual level. However, institutionally, the application of this paradigm is still pending full and effective realization.

**Keywords:** knowledge integration; *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*; Islamization of knowledge; *aslamat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa*; Islamic epistemology; Islamic education; higher education



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## 1. Introduction

This study of the shift from Islamization to integration of knowledge traces the ‘operation’ of two pivotal concepts, Islamization (*aslama*) and integration (*takāmul*), within a paramount intellectual project in the modern history of Islam. These concepts not only bear significance as epistemological frameworks and philosophies but also as pragmatic methodologies for engaging with fields and sciences originating within and beyond the Islamic tradition. Directing attention to their ‘operation’ serves to circumvent a wholesale negation of the contention by a cohort of scholars that the initial Islamization of knowledge project inherently already incorporates a perception of integration. However, as will be elucidated, the delineation of knowledge integration emerged as a distinctly defined theoretical and methodological formulation only during the latter phases of the Islamization movement. To comprehend the motifs and circumstances of this shift and assess its ramifications, it is imperative to first contextualize the Islamization project within the historical and cultural milieus of its inception and progression.

The Islamization of knowledge project (*aslamat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa*) rose as a substantive reaction to a dual-sided crisis that has beset Muslims since the last century: a methodological crisis within traditional Islamic sciences, and the epistemological crisis of adopting Western philosophies and modes of learning. *Aslamat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* is the culmination of scholarly efforts intended to provide an ‘Islamic’ resolution to the former—a vigorously competitive

'Islamic' methodology apt for responding to contemporary pedagogical needs—and an 'Islamic' alternative to the latter—by anchoring Western sciences in Islam's worldview. Noteworthy among the inaugural initiatives in this trajectory are the contributions of the Malaysian reformist and philosopher, Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, the architect of the International Islamic University Malaysia, Abdulhamid Abu Sulayman of Saudi Arabia, the pioneer of the Islamization of Knowledge project, Ismail al-Faruqi of Palestine, and the founder of the Fiqh Council of North America, Taha al-Alwani of Iraq. Their works and influence will be reflected upon in the subsequent sections of this study.

The genesis of the Islamization movement can be traced back to the establishment of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS) in 1972. A pivotal moment was declared during the second AMSS conference when al-Faruqi asserted that it was time to formulate an Islamic alternative to the social sciences (Ba-Yunus 1988, pp. 15–17). Subsequent conferences, such as the 1977 International Conference of Islamic Education in Mecca, concentrated especially on education. It was at this venue that al-Faruqi presented his famous paper, "Formulating the Social Sciences Islamically" (al-Faruqi 1981, [1989] 1995). Alongside al-Faruqi in this meeting was another future prominent figure of the Islamization project, Abu Sulayman. Both of them took key recommendations of the 1977 conference and translated them into practical steps, which led to the foundation of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in 1981 in the United States. Since then, IIIT has stood as the standard-bearer of Islamization (Abaza 2002, p. 82). At the core of IIIT's vision was the anchoring of social sciences in the fundamental teachings of the Quran, the tradition of Prophet Muhammad, and the promotion of what the movement's ideologues termed "*al-ru'ya al-kawniyya al-tawhīdiyya*" or the universal monotheistic worldview of Islam (Motahhari 1983, ; Abu Sulayman 1999, 2001, 2011).

However, shortly thereafter, disagreements among the theorists of the movement regarding the definition and scope of *aslamat al-ma'rifa* began to surface. Their divergences can be attributed to at least two primary reasons. The first reason pertains to their varied scholarly backgrounds and their distinct cultural and political contexts. Al-Faruqi was a Palestinian scholar of Comparative Religious Studies. Abu Sulayman was a Saudi scholar of International Relations. Alwani was an Iraqi scholar of Islamic Jurisprudence. However, all three underwent the same formal training in the traditional Islamic sciences at al-Azhar University in Egypt. The second reason bears on the extent and ways of their responses to the criticism directed at the concept and project of Islamization, both internally by scholars who endorse Islamization (e.g., al-Marzūqī 1998, 2007; Ḥamad 2004; Safi [1996] 2014; Malkāwī 2018, pp. 91–136) and externally by those who reject it (e.g., Ghalyūn 1993; Ḥarb 2005).

Attas, for example, construed 'Islamization' as an imperative countermeasure to westernization. In his perspective, *aslamat al-ma'rifa*, as an endeavor to anchor knowledge in the monotheistic worldview of Islam, is viable only through the unequivocal rejection of Western knowledge and the exposure of its secular tendencies (al-Attas 1999, pp. 26–27). Initially, IIIT aligned with a closely related conception of Attas' view, which is attested by the Institute's initial aim: "the substitution of the concept of westernization (*taghrīb*) with Islamization" (International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) 1987, p. 30). However, Attas' position diverges from IIIT's in that his approach implies a theosophical tendency towards conditioning "the epistemological weapons they [the West] use to bring about the deislamization of the Muslim mind" (al-Attas 1978, pp. 128–29). In contrast, IIIT's approach, perhaps due to the influence of the Azhari traditional training in Fiqh received by several of its pioneers, remained relatively free from mystical or gnostic inclinations.

The criticism of the Islamization project posed formidable challenges for its architects, thus prompting a contextual reconceptualization. The evolution of the project's theoretical and methodological model can be discerned in the later writings of key authorities such as Alwani who described *aslamat al-ma'rifa* as an "invariably evolving epistemological perspective subject to continual evolution, testing, and revision" (al-Alwani 2001, p. 10; 1996, p. 9). In his book, *Iṣlāḥ al-fikr al-Islāmī* (reforming Islamic thought), he voiced concern about six internal pitfalls deleterious to the existence of the Islamization project, including

the absence of regular self-reflection, unilateral thinking, and partisanship and factionalism (al-Alwani 2001, p. 201). His concluding remarks manifest a conscious effort to steer the project's course in a slightly different direction as he proclaims a shift from the notion of unilateral alternative (*fikrat al-badil al-uhādī*) to the notion of the gap (*fikrat al-thaghra*), i.e., bridging the gap (al-Alwani 2001, pp. 209–10).

In this rectified perspective, Alwani shifts the aim of the Islamization project towards “mending gaps,” including bridging creed and intellectual thought, Western and Islamic sciences, past and modern methods of education, and the various factions of the broader Muslim community (al-Alwani 2001, p. 212). Therefore, this reformative journey commences with a renewed exploration of the methodological relationship between revelation and the universe (al-Alwani 2001, p. 96). This methodological integration and complementarity establish the Quran as the focal point of Muslims' interaction with the world at all levels. This reconciliatory approach became central to reading the Quran and the human and natural sciences and, by extension, to Muslims' intellectual reform (al-Alwani 1995, p. 96; Ḥamad 2003). These and other revisions of the concept of Islamization of knowledge lay the groundwork for what eventually became recognized as the integration of knowledge, “*al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī*” or “*takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa*”.

Although the idea of ‘integration’ was contemplated by the pioneers of Islamization since the late seventies, *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī* did not emerge as an independent methodological instrument at the inception of the project. Its delay can be attributed in part to their preoccupation during that period with theorizing the decline of Islamic thought and the inadequacy of its traditional methods to face contemporary transformations. Another contributing factor is that the Islamization project initially emerged as a corrective movement bearing the reformative aspirations of the School of al-Manār. The latter focused on matters related to the Islamic Renaissance, the revitalization of traditional sciences, and the assimilation of modern forms of knowledge, particularly in the realm of social sciences (Ibrahim 2007, pp. 82–83). Consequently, traces of *al-takāmul* as an approach are barely recognizable in works solely focused on the theoretical foundations of the project, such as Alwani's. Its formal articulation as such is more detectable in practice-oriented contributions, such as those made by Abu Sulayman.

Abu Sulayman's foundation of the College of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (Kulliyat Ma<sup>c</sup>ārif al-Waḥy wal-<sup>c</sup>Ulūm al-Insāniyya) in 1990 at the International Islamic University Malaysia can be characterized as an endeavor to translate the theory of Islamization into practical execution through the establishment of an institutional project of higher education. In the college's early statement of mission and goals, there is a notable emphasis on the phrase “*waḥdat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa al-islāmiyya*” (the unity of Islamic knowledge), a theme also present in Abu Sulayman's writings around the same period. This emphasis appears to be, on the one hand, a reactionary outcome of the criticism leveled against the Islamization movement, namely, its critique of unilaterally imposing a monolithic epistemological alternative. On the other hand, the newly established college presented an opportunity to test the viability of the concept of Islamization. One of the main outcomes of this test was the egression of the concept of “*al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī*” (knowledge integration).

Even though they share the same fundamental epistemological premise and ultimate goal, knowledge integration and Islamization of knowledge are distinct concepts. Scholars with firsthand experience at the Kulliyat of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, such as Ibrahim Zain and Abu Bakr Ibrahim, conceive of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī* as a sequential outcome of *aslama al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* (Ibrahim 2007, pp. 107–8). For them, the latter is a natural progressive stage of synthesis, reconstitution, revision, and deconstructive criticism of *al-aslama*. At this junction, it is as if *al-takāmul* and *al-aslama* are similar and dissimilar at the same time. They are similar in grounding their endeavors in the same core principle—Islam's monotheistic universal worldview—and projecting identical goals. However, they differ in the ways each of them pursues these goals. The first concept, *al-aslama*, originated during a specific historical moment as a response to questions of

self-assurance and identity building. The second, *al-takāmul*, grappled with the question of creativity and aimed to address Muslims' epistemological and methodological crises through innovative educational curricula capable of reconciling the Quranic monotheistic worldview beyond ideological theoretical discourses.

In this paper, we conduct a comprehensive investigation into the transition and reformulation of the Islamization of knowledge (*aslamat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa*) into knowledge integration (*al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*). Our discussion is organized around four main areas. Firstly, we distinguish and examine two forms of knowledge integration: classical and modern. The classical form pertains to the efforts of pre-modern Muslim scholars in integrating and reconciling the methods of Islamic traditional sciences. The modern form is directly linked to the Islamization of knowledge project and aims to integrate Islamic traditional sciences and modern sciences. Secondly, we explore the institutional application of the knowledge integration model, focusing on select initiatives, such as those of Abdulhamid Abusulayman Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at the International Islamic University Malaysia, the Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia, and the Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia. Thirdly, we reflect on and appraise the model of higher education reform through knowledge integration advanced by Ziauddin Sardar and Jeremy Henzell-Thomas (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2018). In our final remarks, we recapitulate three main limitations in the current study of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*. These include a limited comprehension of the concept of integration and its tendency to be confused with closely related concepts, a shortage of thorough critical studies on *al-takāmul*, and an excessive concentration on its theoretical aspects.

Before proceeding with our analysis, it is crucial to elucidate two key terms: 'modern' and 'Western'. Within the context of this paper, 'modern' refers to the period spanning roughly from the eighteenth century to the present day. This epoch in Muslim history is marked by profound socio-political agitations and intellectual reconfigurations induced by encounters with European and American colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. We juxtapose the 'modern' era with the 'pre-modern' era, which extends from the advent of Islam in the seventh century until the eighteenth century. As for the term 'Western', it serves in this paper as a qualifying shorthand for scholarly perspectives, models, theories, and methodologies that originated from or are influenced by Western European academic traditions and institutions and their North American offshoots. We use it in contrast to 'Islamic' to delineate two intellectual traditions and forms of knowledge with distinct goals, perspectives, methodologies, and historical contexts. Therefore, the terms 'modern' and 'Western' are not employed interchangeably in this paper.

## 2. Knowledge Integration: One Coin, Two Faces

Knowledge integration (*al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*) is relatively a new concept rooted in the perception of knowledge as a universal, complex, and dynamic epistemological structure that facilitates the interconnection of different sciences. However, a shared definition has been elusive due to the diverse political backgrounds of those engaging with this concept and the various epistemological frameworks they employ to implement it (Elbittoui 2017, p. 172). When describing *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi* as relatively new, we meant it in the sense of its contemporary usage by modern scholars. Nonetheless, the spirit and core principle of *takāmul* (i.e., the necessary interconnectedness of multiple fields of knowledge) are as ancient as the study of the Quran. While the Quran does not explicitly use the word '*takāmul*', it uses various derivatives, such as '*tukmilū*', '*kāmila*', '*kāmilayn*', and '*akmaltu*' (Q 2:185, 198, 233, and 5:3, respectively). In *Al-gharīb fī mufradāt al-Quran* (unfamiliar terms in the Quran), al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1109) links the word *takāmul* to these Quranic terms and interprets it as an act of 'consummation' and 'completion', thus emphasizing the sense of bringing an action to completion and perfection (al-Iṣfahānī 1990, pp. 441–42).

In general, we can identify two main forms of knowledge integration. The first form has no political connection to the project of Islamization of knowledge. It predominantly centers on Islamic traditional sciences because they yield to the authority of the Islamic

monotheistic worldview and share the same premises. Research focusing on this form of integration delves into various aspects of the efforts of pre-modern scholars in implementing the principle of *takāmul*. Contemporary scholars have explored knowledge integration in the works of, for example, Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī (d. 790/1388), Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), among others (respectively, Yajiwī 2019; Chaiboub 2019; Laabdi 2021). Borrowing from Taha Abdelrahman’s division of the traditional sciences into internal and external sciences (Abdelrahman 1994, pp. 75–76), we can refer to the first form as an intra-level of knowledge integration, where *takāmul* is approached within and across the traditional Islamic sciences. The second can be described as its inter-level, where scholars investigate the integration of Islamic traditional sciences and modern sciences and approaches that may be rooted in a worldview completely different from that of Islam.

### 2.1. The Classical Conception of Knowledge Integration

Pre-modern Muslim scholars drew inspiration and guidance from the Quran’s emphasis on the first form of knowledge integration (intra-level) in their respective fields of study. They recognized early on that no Fiqh is complete without the study of Hadith, no legal theory without language, and so on. The eponym of the Shāfiʿī School of law, Ibn Idris al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), declared on one occasion: “no reasonable jurist can adjudicate in currency matters with no knowledge of the market” (al-Shāfiʿī 1938, p. 511). Classical Muslim authorities consider Islamic sciences as inherently and naturally complementary to one another. While a comprehensive account of their attempts in this vein is beyond the scope of this paper, a few illustrative cases suffice. For example, the illustrious theologian and Zāhirī jurist of Andalusia, Ibn Ḥazm (d. 356/1064), stated categorically that “all sciences are attached to one another, need one another, and have no goal other than leading to deliverance in the afterlife” (Ibn Ḥazm 1983, vol. 4, p. 90). His choice of the words ‘attached’ (*mutaʿalliq*) and ‘needs’ (*muḥtāj*) stresses the role of integration in perfecting a science. Integrating methods and approaches from other fields and sciences not only contributes to expanding science but is also the means to perfect it. Ibn Ḥazm rebuked scholars who confine themselves to one science and refrain from exploring others, stating that such scholar “almost becomes a joke, as what remains concealed from him is far more than what he has attained, because the sciences are closely interlinked” (Ibn Ḥazm 1983, vol. 4, p. 70).

The distinguished philosopher and jurist, Ibn Rushd (d. 596/1198), saw in the expansion and intricate diversification of the sciences by his age a need to embrace a more integrative model that adheres to a true demonstrative approach. As he asserted, “the more the sciences branch out and their scholars find themselves compelled to draw upon things their predecessors did not have to, the more it is necessary to develop rules to guard their thought [from error]” (Ibn Rushd 1994, p. 35). His use of the word ‘rules’ (*qawānīn*) can be interpreted as a call for developing an epistemological framework that assists in organizing and maintaining the relationship between sciences, thus guiding scholars towards truth and away from deceit.

The renowned 12th-century reformer of the Islamic sciences, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, deemed integration vital for gradual progression in the learning of and respect for the hierarchy of sciences. He admonished seekers of knowledge against “moving to study an art before completing the one before it, because the sciences are essentially hierarchically ordered and some lead to others” (al-Ghazālī 2018, vol. 1, p. 88). In his perspective, the sciences are ‘cooperative’ (*mutaʿāwina*) and ‘interconnected’ (*murtabiṭa*) with one another (al-Ghazālī 2018, vol. 1, p. 48). An awareness of the first form of integration is evident even in earlier generations of Muslim scholars. For instance, Uthmān b. Jinnī (d. 392/1002) referred to it as an ‘interlacing’ (*ishtibāk*) and ‘association’ (*ishtirāk*) between sciences, depicting them as interweaving into a single piece where each thread relies for its stability upon the other threads (Ibn Jinnī 1952, vol. 1, p. 243).

The polymathic training of these pre-modern scholars facilitated the practical implementation of this form of integration. The interweaving and amalgamation of medical and legal knowledge, for instance, is evident in the legal work of Ibn Rushd. His comments on various medical-focused issues, such as the male's 'breastmilk' and female menstruation, mirror a depth of understanding only a master physician could deduce. Imām al-Māzarī (d. 536/1141), a contemporary jurist and physician, challenged a purported prophetic tradition that eating seven *ʿajwa* dates (a type grown in Medina) upon waking up generates immunity against sickness and witchcraft until one goes to sleep. Al-Māzarī deemed this claim irrational within medical practice and denied its possibility based on his experience with his patients (al-Māzarī 1991, vol. 3, p. 121). In the same spirit, about a century later, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī (d. 674/1285) emphasized the need to integrate Fiqh and Uṣūl (legal theory) with other sciences. He called attention to the fact that jurists and rulers often overlook the truth in legal matters due to their lack of training in arithmetic, medicine, or geometry" (al-Qarāfī 1994, vol. 5, p. 502). Accordingly, he considered it mandatory for those aspiring to advance to the rank of *muḥtaḥid* (independent legal expert) to acquire as much knowledge of other sciences as they need and can.

The early Muslim scholars perceived and practiced their arts and crafts wholistically. However, over time, a discernible divide between certain fields of knowledge became more pronounced. As early as the 10th century, Abu Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388/998), for example, highlighted the split between Hadith and Fiqh. Despite Hadith being the foundation of fiqh, he observed a growing divergence between the two. However, they are "brothers committed to assist and collaborate with one another" (al-Khaṭṭābī 1932, vol. 1, p. 3). Historically, the deepening of this divide can be attributed to the emergence of systematic and reductionist conceptions of the sciences, wherein a preference was given to either the traditional sciences or the rational sciences. Consequently, the sciences came to be understood through a logic of contrast and differentiation (Bacha 2016, p. 178).

## 2.2. The Modern Conception of Knowledge Integration

In contemporary scholarship of Islam, particularly by scholars in the Arab and Eastern Islamic world, *al-takāmūl al-maʿrifī* has been predominately viewed as an "intellectual project that aims at developing a monotheistic perspective [*manzūr twḥīdī*] for all sciences and all forms of knowledge" (Ibrahim 2007, p. 33). This 'monotheistic' perspective serves as their basic premise for reconciling science and faith. The Islamization of knowledge project also embraced this maxim in their efforts to bridge the gap between traditional and modern systems of education. Despite internal criticisms, including concerns that the recognition of the Quran as a chief source of social knowledge might subjugate the social sciences to Fiqh (al-Marzūqī 1998, p. 148), the Islamization project's endeavor to address the epistemological crisis of knowledge remains serious and original. In contrast to the criticism of Islamization, early responses to the concept of *al-takāmūl al-maʿrifī* lacked a robust critical method and clarity regarding the meaning and intention of this new shift. For some scholars, 'integration' was viewed as a way to efface the gap between the social and religious sciences (ʿAshwī 1997). Others perceived it as an "organized intellectual endeavor seeking the engraftment [*taṭʿīm*] of religious sciences with the positive qualities of social and human sciences" (Sānū 2001, p. 8). ʿWāshriya rendered it as a form of intersection (*tadākhul*) between history, nature, and religious text (ʿWāshriya 2012, p. 805). According to him, being founded through the interaction of sciences in a given era, this model leads to a unified vision that harmonizes the natural, social, and religious sciences (ʿWāshriya 2012, p. 807).

As a result, there has been a conflation of the concepts of *takāmūl*, *taṭʿīm* (lit., engrafting), *tadākhul* (intersection), and *waḥda* (unification). With its epistemological, philosophical, and ethical dimensions, *al-takāmūl al-maʿrifī* has been reduced to merely effacing the gap between social sciences and religious knowledge, irrespective of their different histories, premises, and systems. Faṭḥī Malkāwī, an authority on the integration of knowledge project, acknowledged this confusion and emphasized a clear distinction between integration (*takāmūl*) and unification (*waḥda*) of knowledge. He regarded the latter as the logical

foundation of *takāmul*, with the former functioning as its practical embodiment (Malkāwī 2012, pp. 23–24). In this context, Malkāwī identified two stages of knowledge integration: production and consumption. The production stage calls for intellectual creativity, since scholars must be trained to integrate and reconcile between revelatory, social, and human knowledge. The consumption stage involves engaging the intellectual structures that support the integration of knowledge in understanding the various questions and phenomena under examination (Malkāwī 2012, pp. 23–24).

In the footsteps of Malkāwī, other scholars approach the concept of knowledge integration as more than an intellectual endeavor to bridge and harmonize sciences. Rather, they view it as a gateway to reconstruct the epistemological framework of Islamic sciences and realign them with their distinctive spirit, structure, and characteristics (Elbittoui 2019). As for the notion of the intersection (*tadākhul*) of sciences, though often used interchangeably with *takāmul* today, it was disproved by pre-modern Muslim scholars, as they deemed it an epistemological conflation that undermines the internal structure of science. Al-Shāṭibī warned against “conflating certain sciences with others,” particularly cautioning jurists who entertain legal questions through grammatical and mathematical methods (al-Shāṭibī 1997, vol. 1, p. 123). For the same reasons, al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) criticized the Mālikī jurist, Ibn al-Ḥājjib (d. 646/1249), for blending philosophical logic with Uṣūl al-Fiqh. He pronounced, “[Ibn al-Ḥājjib] brought in that which does not concern him, i.e., logic, and missed that which concerns him . . . as has been established in this art, it is unpleasant to conflate the sciences with one another” (al-Shīrāzī 2012, vol. 1, p. 64). Long before him, Ibn Rushd criticized al-Ghazālī’s model of legal theory for the same reason: using Aristotelian logic in the field of Uṣūl. He admonished, “let us examine each subject within its appropriate place, for if one desired to learn more than one subject [in one place], will end up learning none” (Ibn Rushd 1994, pp. 37–38).

The cautionary advice of al-Shāṭibī and al-Shīrāzī, which emphasizes the preservation of hierarchies and boundaries between sciences, aligns with the classical lexical meaning of the term *tadākhul*. Ibn Manẓūr (d. 711/1311), for instance, outlines various negative connotations of the word *tadākhul* and related terms, including *dakhīl* (an unwanted guest), *al-dakhal* (a flaw and defect that strikes a person in his soul, body, or mind), *tadākhul* (confusion of things), and *al-dikhāl* of colors, when blended into one (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, vol. 11, pp. 242–43). In contrast, he defined *takāmul* positively, linking it to completion and perfection (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, vol. 11, pp. 598–99). Early Muslim scholars foresaw that excessive curiosity could lead to a deviation from the purpose of integrating sciences, which is to serve one another rather than blend into one. This deviation is seen in certain modern studies that equate the intersection (*tadākhul*) of sciences with the end of specialization (Humām 2017). One reason for this confusion of the concepts of *takāmul* and *tadākhul* is the Arabic translation of the word ‘interdisciplinarity’ as *tadākhul*. For example, despite the classical lexicographers’ negative stance on *tadākhul*, Muhammad Humām argues that the term *tadākhul*, unlike *takāmul*, is more inclusive and involves the intersection of sciences (Humām 2017, pp. 74–76), which he acknowledges (Humām 2017, pp. 72–73).

### 3. Knowledge Integration: From Theory to Practice

The concept of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi* signifies a methodological and epistemological upgrade within the Islamization of the knowledge project. Its primary domain of application has been education, a logical track considering that the Islamization movement has consistently situated education as the core of its reformative agenda. The pioneers’ emphasis on the pivotal role of education in inspiring a cultural revivalist movement is evident in their early writings, such as al-Faruqī’s papers at the first Islamic education conferences (al-Faruqī 1983). These early works advocated a shift from a focus on abstract theorization of the Islamization of knowledge to practical, institutional implementation. They prioritized three steps in particular: reinstating the social function of Islamic knowledge, actualizing the monotheistic worldview through the integration of faith and science, and capitalizing on the accomplishments of the Western intellectual tradition.

The imperative for implementing these steps resonated in two main initiatives: the initiative of Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia (IMISIU), and the initiative of Abdulhamid Abusulayman Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). However, the two experiences are fundamentally different because they pursued different approaches. IMISIU adopted a model closer to indigenization (*ta'sīl*), rather than strictly adhering to Islamization or integration. This approach, based on the promise of reviving and advancing local forms of knowledge, has received criticism for being entangled in endeavors to Islamize Western social and human sciences and engaging in futile comparisons (Ibrahim 2007, pp. 158–69). This can be seen, for example, in the persistent inclination to draw parallels between Western and Islamic scientific contributions, such as comparing democracy with the Islamic system of *shūrā*, or equating between the communist system of wealth distribution and the Islamic system of *zakat*; a tendency that manifestates the subaltern who constantly seeks to legitimize its existence and status in its relationship with the dominant power (al-Alwani 2003, pp. 164–65).

Unlike IMISIU, the Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge openly embraced the project of knowledge integration and actively sought to bridge the gap between religious and social sciences. Established in 1990 by Abdul Hamid Abu Sulayman, a key figure in the Islamization movement, the college has grown and evolved tremendously. It currently encompassed eleven departments organized in two streams. The first stream, Islamic Revealed Knowledge, comprises five departments: Arabic, Fiqh and Usul, Fundamental and Inter-disciplinary Studies, Quran and Sunnah, and Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion. The second stream, Human Sciences, consists of six departments: Communication, English, History and Civilization, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology and Anthropology.

The concept of Islamization and integration of knowledge holds a prominent place in the agenda of the Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge as reflected in its vision, mission, goals, curricular content, and extra-curricular activities across all departments and programs. Its mission statement underscores this emphasis in three of its four main goals: “(1) the integration of Islamic revealed knowledge and human sciences; (2) the Islamization of human sciences; and (3) the relevantization of Islamic revealed knowledge to contemporary issues” (Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences—Main n.d.). While the first objective seems to be a more recent addition, coined after the integration turn, the second and third objectives appear to be consistent with the original goals of the Islamization of knowledge, possibly retained from the original mission statement.

A comprehensive exploration of the implementation of the philosophy of Islamization and integration by the college, spanning its foundation and covering all departments and programs, is beyond the scope of this paper. The founder and eponym of the college, Abdulhamid Abu Sulaymān, and notable alumni, such as Abu Bakr Ibrahim, have written about the college’s experience about two decades ago (Abu Sulayman 2001; Ibrahim 2007). Nonetheless, while a detailed study of the current state and stage of embracing this philosophy exceeds the range of this paper, one illustrative example from the Department of Psychology should provide insight.

Established in 1990, the Department of Psychology is currently home to about 25 academic staff. It offers a four-year full-time program that leads to the Bachelor of Human Sciences with Honours in Psychology, along with postgraduate degrees at the Master and Ph.D. levels (Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences—Main n.d.). In line with the overarching vision and mission of IIUM, the department underscores the Islamization of knowledge as a distinctive feature “to be found in all the programs” (Kuliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences—Psychology n.d.). The department’s identity is defined by eight statements, three of which reemphasize its commitment to the broader vision of IIUM and the Islamization of knowledge project. They include (1) the reformation of contemporary Islamic thought and the integration of revealed knowledge and human sciences; (2) the cultivation of high-quality intellectuals, professionals, and scholars adept at bridging faith, knowledge, and good character; and (3) the promotion of the concept



of Islamization of human knowledge in teaching, research, and consultancy (Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences—Psychology n.d.).

The psychology department at IIUM strongly asserts its commitment to indigenization (*ta'sīl*) and Islamization in all of its program offerings. An examination of their teaching materials shows an unambiguous, dedicated effort to ground modern psychology in the monotheistic worldview of the Quran. This commitment is substantiated by the model of their teaching series, such as the “Science of the Soul Series,” which emphasizes exploring the human psyche and related psychological matters through a Quranic lens (KIRKHS Official 2023). It also manifests in the department’s choice of names of classical Muslim scholars for its labs and service centers, including Ibn Tufayl Psychological Clinic, Ibn al-Haytham Experimental Lab, and Al-Farabi Computer Lab (ibid). Beyond IIUM’s psychology department, the past decade has witnessed a surge of interest in integrating psychology and the Quranic worldview. This is attested by the publication of several key works (e.g., Rassool 2021, 2023; Rassool and Luqman 2023; Pasha-Zaidi 2021), as well as the launching of new specialized journals, such as the *International Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology* and *Tazkiya Journal of Psychology*, both of which express their commitment to Islamization and integration. Other journals, even if not explicitly expressing the same commitment, focus nonetheless on Islamic faith-based spirituality, such as the *Indonesian Journal of Religion, Spirituality, and Humanity*.

Another Malaysian institution that champions the integration of knowledge model is the Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia (Association of the Academy of Islamic Sciences Malaysia) or ASASI, founded in 1977. Initially established to serve the Malaysian community of scholars of science and technology, ASASI has expanded to include members from outside Malaysia and from non-scientific fields, particularly the social and human sciences. However, its emphasis on the hard sciences remains evident in the various projects it supports and the articles published by its journal, *Kesturi*. ASASI’s objectives accentuate its dedication to the project of integration of knowledge. They include, (1) reviving the tradition of Quran-based science; (2) supporting the concept and philosophy of Islamic science; (3) promoting scientific study and establishing the Quran as a source of inspiration, guidance, and reference in scientific activities; and (4) restoring the Arabic language as a language of science (ASASI—Akademi Sains Islam Malaysia n.d.).

Not far from Malaysia, the Indonesian Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has undertaken an ambitious plan of integrating Islam and science, as reflected in the university’s vision and the goal statements of its colleges and departments. For instance, the goal of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences is to “increase the quality of research on the integration of medicine and Islam” (Fakultas Kedokteran—Main n.d.). The integration of Islam and medicine is implemented on two levels. At the first level, the university offers a “double degree” that allows students to major in two specializations simultaneously, a hard science and a traditional Islamic science (Dimiyathi and Tabarani 2022, p. 11). At the second level, the Faculty of Medicine established the Leading Research Roadmap for the Integration of Medicine and Islam. This roadmap has significantly contributed to the university’s integration agenda, with approximately 70% of the 201 research studies carried out between 2017 and 2021 alone, directly addressing the question of the integration of Islam and medicine (Fakultas Kedokteran—Research n.d.).

Finally, we acknowledge the exigency for a more comprehensive exploration of the practical implementation of the *takāmul* model. Such a study would focus on its operational mechanics, empirical validation, pedagogical strategies, various stakeholders’ perspectives, implementation challenges, outcome assessment, longitudinal sustainability and scalability, as well as other practical dimensions. Highlighting these aspects and providing a thorough examination of the orchestration and practice of the *takāmul* model can contribute substantively to the deepening of our understanding of *al-takāmul al-maʿrifī* as theory and practice. This endeavor is the focal point of a future scholarly inquiry.

#### 4. Knowledge Integration as a Reform of Higher Education

The reform of higher education has been a central focus of IIIT for the past four decades. One of its most important publications on this topic in recent years is *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education* by Ziauddin Sardar and Jeremy Henzell-Thomas. The book was first published in 2017, and later abridged by Scott Jordan in 2018 (our references are to the 2018 abridgement). This work emerged from a series of discussions and meetings organized by IIIT across various locations, including Turkey, the United States, Europe, and Africa. Perhaps, the most noteworthy meetings in this series are the 2013 Reform of Higher Education in Muslim Societies Conference at the Wilson Center's headquarters in Washington, and in 2016 at Istanbul University. These meetings reaffirmed three significant challenges. The first is the persistence of the crisis of education within the Muslim world. The second is the dual nature of this crisis, encompassing both epistemological and ethical. The third is the pivotal role that the social sciences can play in effecting reforms in higher education. From these challenges emerged the conviction that a more comprehensive approach is necessary to address both the epistemological and ethical forms of the crisis of education. The solution, as Sardar and Henzell have put it, requires the following:

To meet those challenges through the integration of knowledge—which necessitates rethinking disciplinary identities and a new mode of thought that would integrate Revealed knowledge with human efforts in knowledge production. In other words, we need a new paradigm rooted in the Qur'anic worldview and an epistemology based on the doctrine of tawhid (the Oneness of God) and on responsibility to God, one's own soul, humankind, all created beings, and the natural world. This paradigm accords importance to Revealed and human knowledge, and recognizes the diversity and plurality of our societies, as well as the accelerating pace of new technologies and innovations that are transforming the world. (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2018, p. vi)

This concern regarding knowledge and education aligns with the initial criticisms articulated by al-Faruqi. The authors' proposed alternative, i.e., knowledge integration, is presented as a natural progression of the ideal of Islamization. In the first chapter of the book written by Sardar, knowledge integration is positioned as a critique of the Western model of education—on the account that it mirrors Western values and overemphasizes the material aspects of education while downplaying the spiritual wellbeing of individuals. Like Faruqi, Sardar situates the concept of monotheism (*tawhīd*) at the core of his philosophy of integration. He reaffirms the equation that the *tawhīd* of Allah leads to the unity of creation, subsequently fostering harmony between knowledge, life, humanity, and the interplay between revelation and reason. This axiomatic worldview is then put forward as the most effective model for Muslims in their pursuit of knowledge and the reform of their education (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2018, p. 13).

To actualize this 'new' paradigm, where knowledge, Allah's creation, life, humanity, reason, and revelation are integrated, thus marking the transition from Islamization to the integration of knowledge, Sardar suggests four urgent steps (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2018, p. 17). The first step is to focus primarily on values by revisiting the question of reason and rationalism in the debates of classical Muslim theologians. The second step is to probe the existing model of education in Muslim societies and challenge the authority of modern knowledge systems. The goal is to formulate alternative paradigms that are inclusive and rooted in the Islamic tradition. The third step is to embrace the diversity within Muslim heritage and present it as an integral part of human civilization at large. Scholars from various fields will collaborate to create a more consistently uniform image of their legacy as a human accomplishment. The fourth and last step is to carry out futuristic studies of the potential impact of current shifts within Muslim societies on the behaviors, hopes, and ambitions of individuals and groups.

Sardar's proposal to advance *al-takāmul al-ma'rifi* does not markedly differ from al-Faruqi's initial plan for the Islamization model. Sardar, too, keeps the principle of *tawhīd* as the foundation and vehicle of the 'new' shift into integration, while most of his other pro-

posed steps echo previous suggestions and approaches. One of his observable departures from al-Faruqi's framework, though, is his emphasis on integrating various forms of knowledge rather than dismantling a model and replacing it with another. Additionally, Sardar seems to consciously employ a more 'rational' language, perhaps to avoid the emotional tone of agony, which characterizes al-Faruqi's discourse (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2018, p. 13). However, it is in Henzell-Thomas' book chapter, "The Integration we Seek," that we begin to notice a distinct, though cautious, endeavor to develop a conceptualization of knowledge integration more distinguishable from al-Faruqi's.

Henzell-Thomas gives a 'mystical' face to the concept of *al-takāmul al-maʿrifī* by focusing primarily on virtue and moral excellence—virtue is the first step in Sardar's plan of knowledge integration. He criticizes the Islamization movement for its anti-Western rejectionism and the lack of a universalist approach that fosters transformations through love; an approach that is able to "reach out to the 'other' not only through dialogue and discussion, but also through transforming love" (Sardar and Henzell-Thomas 2018, p. 22). According to Henzell-Thomas, the Islamization model, despite claiming integration, continued to look inwardly and concentrate on the self, thus overlooking important Sufi lessons of universality and unity that can lead to attaining true integration. However, as a counterargument, in a context imbued with political tension, where Muslims often occupy the role of the subaltern, one expects difficulty in promoting Rumi's ideal of "transforming love," as well as continued skepticism among Muslims toward Western ideas. In essence, Henzell-Thomas' perspective of knowledge integration can be summed up in three points. Firstly, he rightly recognizes the risks associated with nostalgia for the old way, as with Islamization, admonishing that it could lead to unsurmountable gaps between practical and theoretical education. Secondly, he cautions against a wholesale effort to 'Islamize' everything, affirming that certain activities may align with revealed guidance while others may not. Lastly, he advocates for the advancement of a holistic system of learning and teaching that integrates both the heart and the mind.

Returning to Sardar's model of integration, a few critical observations arise regarding his intended audience, his plan's feasibility, and the place of non-Muslim groups within it. In his review essay of their book, Charles Butterworth objects to Sardar's exclusive focus on Muslims in his reform plan arguing that the education crisis extends beyond Muslim societies (Butterworth 2019, p. 54). While this is a valid concern, one could further postulate that Sardar rather fails to narrow down his intended audience more incisively. Particularly, does his plan target Muslims in Muslim-majority countries, Muslims in Western countries, or both, and what implications does this lack of clarity have for the plan's implementation? The second issue is the uncertainty of the plan's feasibility in contexts unwelcoming or hostile to the idea of Islamization and integration. Given the different political and financial constraints from countries to another, how practical is the establishment of institutions dedicated to the philosophy of integration? How does the plan address the challenges in countries where such ideas may be faced with resistance? The third concern is the place of non-Muslims at universities implementing the integration plan. How does Sardar's model account for non-Muslim students studying in such institutions? Considering the plan's aim of reconciling human efforts with Islam's revealed knowledge while emphasizing social diversity and plurality, what provisions are in place for the inclusion of non-Muslim groups?

Finally, another concern regarding Sardar's conceptualization of integration pertains to the language employed in the plan, which has been criticized for appearing more as an attempt at 'indoctrination' than providing guiding instructions (Butterworth 2019, p. 56). Two key reasons support this stance. The first is Sardar's failure to distinguish between the materialist and secularist facets of Western thought, which has led to mistaking certain questions on reason and rationality for being Western secular inventions, whereas they have been undertaken by classical Muslim scholars. The second is the use of a language and tone that seems at times attacking rather than appraising Western knowledge models. Consequently, the challenge is presented as a struggle between antagonistic entities where

the ultimate solution is replacing Western models with Islamic models, hence resembling the old Islamization approach. In contrast, the integration advocated by Sardar and Hensell-Thomas aims essentially to identify common ground between different modes of knowledge and hinge on it to develop a universal, inclusive, and holistic education able to reconcile old and new methods, as well as revealed and humanly produced knowledge.

## 5. Conclusions

Over the past few decades, IIIT has undergone an extensive effort to reassess and reform its Islamization project. This revisionary process, marked by specialized forums, conferences, and training programs, has led to the conceptualization of knowledge integration. The culmination of these efforts is evident in significant publications on knowledge integration, ranging from *Manhajiyat al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi* (the method of knowledge integration) by Fathī Malkāwī and *Al-Takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi* (Knowledge Integration), edited by Rā'id <sup>c</sup>Ukāsha (Malkāwī 2011; <sup>c</sup>Ukāsha 2012), to Sardar and Hensell-Thomas' *Rethinking Reform in Higher Education* and Zahra Al Zeera's *Wholeness and Holiness in Education* (Sardar and Hensell-Thomas 2018; Zeera 2023). Throughout this period, IIIT has actively supported numerous research projects and programs globally, extending its influence to institutions historically aligned with its ideology. The most prominent example is Abdulhamid Abusulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, the largest college at the Malaysian International Islamic University, with over 6000 students and 250 full-time academic staff. Several authoritative advocates of knowledge integration today received their training at this college, which continues to support doctoral research on the question of integration. Some of their dissertations were published by IIIT, such as *Al-Takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi wa taṭbiqātuh fil-manāhij al-jāmi'iyya* (knowledge integration and its applications in University curricula) by Abu Bakr Ibrahim (2007).

However, the pivotal question persists: does the knowledge integration model signify a genuine paradigm shift or is it a mere semantic alteration while upholding the old approach and rationale of Islamization? A comprehensive examination of this question demands exploring it at two dynamic levels: historical and structural. At the historical level, the achievements of the integration model must be meticulously retraced and reevaluated against the trajectory of accomplishments within the Islamization project. Structurally, an investigation of the intellectual framework governing writings on *takāmul* is imperative to ascertain whether an actual transition has occurred or if Islamization is merely being rebranded. In delving into this issue, two crucial considerations must guide our inquiry. Firstly, the objective should not be to test the success of the Islamization project by stipulating it based on the efficacy of *takāmul*. Instead, the focus should be on contextualizing *aslama* within its diverse socio-political transformations, both internally, between Muslim movements, and externally, in relation to the global context. Secondly, it is crucial to recognize the plurality within Islamization rather than treating it, or integration for that matter, as a singular, homogenous entity. Abdul Rashid Moten's *Varieties of Islamisation: Varying Contexts, Changing Strategies* (Moten 2023) is one of the very few studies that effectively pursues this approach. Acknowledging the differences in the conceptualizations and implementations of Islamization across intellectual, political, and geographical contexts is not only essential for a nuanced understanding of the complex question of Islamization but also of integration.

Knowledge integration represents a sustained systematic effort to infuse the Quranic worldview into modern fields of knowledge, including natural and human and social sciences. Knowledge forms emerging from the reconciliation of revelation and human experience are described as holistic and integral (*ma<sup>c</sup>rifa mutakāmila*). Additionally, it involves a set of methodologies and procedures aimed at importing the methods of one science into another to overcome epistemological obstacles and enhance productivity. Whether we understand knowledge integration as one or the other, or both, we can conclude that, at the individual level, there have been a few successful attempts at properly carrying out the conceptualization and implementation of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifi*. However, institutionally,

there has been less success perhaps due to the diverse backgrounds of their members. This has resulted in three main drawbacks.

The first drawback is the lack of a profound conceptual understanding of knowledge integration, which often leads to confusion with close concepts. A look into numerous papers presented at recently held IIIT meetings—especially since the 2010 conference on knowledge integration in Algeria (proceedings published in <sup>c</sup>Ukāsha 2012)—clearly illustrates this confusion. Their authors appear to struggle to define the boundaries of integration and tend to oversimplify its conceptual depth. Often, integration in these studies is presented as a mere action of imbuing the traditional religious sciences with elements of modern social science, suggesting a trivial substitution of the phrase of *aslamat al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifa* with *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī*. In addition, the concept of *takāmul* has been mistakenly equated with concepts such as interdisciplinarity (*bayniya*), interconnectedness (*tadākhul*), and encyclopedism (*mawst<sup>c</sup>iyya*), among others. Consequently, rather than supporting IIIT's goal of reforming its Islamization project, these studies indirectly contribute to deepening its intellectual crisis.

The second drawback involves the scarcity of robust critical studies of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī*. Adequate scholarship is essential for developing new epistemological perspectives that can effectively challenge and broaden the scope of knowledge integration, thus fulfilling the promised paradigm shift. A survey of several recent publications on *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī* in specialized Arabic journals suggests that writing on *al-takāmul* has become somewhat of a trend. Unfortunately, several of these studies fail to introduce anything new or contribute innovative insights (e.g., Widiyanto 2022). The third drawback concerns an exaggerated focus on the theorization of knowledge integration and on classical Islamic scholarship. Contrarily, there is a scarcity of studies that focus on the practical implementation of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī* when compared to works primarily focused on its theoretical discussions.

In conclusion, contemporary studies of knowledge integration, particularly those invested in IIIT's program of Islamization, demonstrate a shift from an intellectual endeavor that was internally focused to an effort that envisions new horizons and opportunities for epistemological renewal under the banner of *al-takāmul al-ma<sup>c</sup>rifī*. This transition is seen predominantly in the growing recognition of the merit and urgency of the paradigm of knowledge integration. However, the application and implementation of this model are yet to be successfully materialized.

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