

THE POLITICAL GENEALOGY OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE ERA OF THE PROPHET AND THE RIGHTLY- GUIDED CALIPHS

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Abstract: This study analyzes the political genealogy of Islamic education during the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs (Khulafaur Rasyidin), focusing on the relationship between knowledge, power, and the formation of early Islamic civilization. Using a qualitative-descriptive library research design informed by a genealogical perspective, the study traces primary classical historical texts alongside secondary scholarly literature through content analysis. Findings show that in the Meccan period, education functioned as an instrument of liberation centered on cultivating monotheism (tawhid) as an epistemological and social critique of pre-Islamic (jahiliyah) structures, chiefly through the informal institution of Dar al-Arqam. In Medina, education became institutionalized around the Prophet's Mosque, integrating spiritual, social, and political functions. Under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, education was further institutionalized: Abu Bakar's Qur'anic codification stabilized epistemic authority, Umar bin Khattab's dispatch of scholar-teachers expanded and decentralized learning across newly conquered territories, Uthman bin Affan's mushaf standardization enforced textual unity, and Ali bin Abi Thalib's era fostered intellectual discourse amid political conflict. The study concludes that Islamic education was never neutral but consistently mediated by the dialectic between political authority (ulil amri) and scholarly authority (ulama), reflected in the shift of learning spaces from private to public and in curricula moving from moral-spiritual formation toward state-administrative needs, underscoring education's role as a strategic instrument in building and sustaining Islamic civilization.

Keywords: *Political Genealogy, Islamic Education, Prophet Muhammad, Khulafaur Rasyidin, Knowledge And Power, Library Research*

1. INTRODUCTION

Education, from the earliest moments of Islam's emergence, has never been separable from the social and political dynamics that shape a civilization. Far from being a mere process of transferring knowledge, education has functioned as a strategic instrument for forming collective consciousness, value systems, and the socio-political identity of the Muslim community. Understanding the early history of Islamic education therefore also means tracing how the relationship between knowledge, power, and community-formation unfolded in a specific historical context.

During the earliest period of Islam, particularly the era of the Prophet Muhammad, education played a foundational role in constructing the epistemological and ideological base of the Muslim community. The teachings conveyed by the Prophet functioned not only as religious doctrine but also as a paradigm of liberation that challenged the prevailing social structure of pre-Islamic Arab society (jahiliyah) a structure marked by social inequality, tribal aristocratic dominance, slavery, and deeply entrenched polytheistic belief systems. In this context, Islamic education emerged as an instrument of social transformation aimed at building a society grounded in the values of monotheism (tawhid), justice, and human equality before God. During the Meccan period, the Prophet's educational activity focused on cultivating faith, monotheistic consciousness, and the spiritual character of Islam's earliest followers. This process unfolded gradually and strategically, and in several phases was conducted covertly to avoid political repression from the Quraysh. The house of al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam (Dar al-Arqam) became one of the earliest centers of education, playing a critical role in forming the first generation of Muslims with ideological resilience and firm commitment to Islamic teaching.

Following the migration (hijrah) to Medina, the dynamics of Islamic education shifted significantly. Whereas the Meccan period had used education as a tool for forming ideological and spiritual consciousness, the Medinan period saw education develop into a more institutionalized system integrated with the socio-political structure of the Muslim community. The Prophet was no longer only a spiritual leader but also the head of a multiethnic, multireligious polity. In this context, education became a vital instrument for constructing a new social order, forging communal solidarity, and embedding Islamic values in social life. The Prophet's Mosque (Masjid Nabawi) became the gravitational center of the community's educational, social, and political activities, the site where the study of the Qur'an, the transmission of hadith, political deliberation, and community formation proceeded in an integrated fashion. Institutions such as Suffah also emerged as centers of intellectual formation for companions who studied Islamic teaching intensively. The existence of these institutions demonstrates that, from the outset, Islamic education possessed not only a spiritual dimension but also strong social and political dimensions. Following the Prophet's death, leadership of the Muslim community passed to the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Khulafaur Rasyidin). During this period, Islamic education encountered new dynamics as leadership structures shifted and Islamic territory expanded; the challenges faced by the Muslim community no longer concerned only the formation of faith and community but also political stability, state administration, and the integration of an increasingly broad and diverse society.

Under Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq, for instance, the policy of collecting the Qur'an became a critical step in preserving the epistemological stability of the Muslim community. The codification of the mushaf functioned not merely as an act of preserving revelation but also as the foundation for an educational system that treated the Qur'an as its principal source of learning. Under Umar bin Khattab, education underwent a more systematic process of institutionalization through the deployment of companions as teachers and scholarly authorities across newly incorporated territories. These developments show that Islamic education under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs cannot be

separated from the political dynamics of power at the time; educational policies adopted by the caliphs were frequently tied to the need to preserve social stability, reinforce the legitimacy of authority, and build cultural integration among newly converted populations. In other words, education became one of the strategic instruments in the construction of early Islamic civilization.

Given the complexity of the relationship between education, power, and the development of early Muslim society, an analytical approach capable of tracing how the relationship between knowledge and power took shape within the history of Islamic education is required. A genealogical approach offers a relevant perspective for understanding how the practice of Islamic education developed through the various social and political dynamics that underlay it. Prior scholarship has extensively documented the historical narrative of Islamic education during the Prophetic and Rightly-Guided Caliphate periods, yet studies that explicitly interrogate the dialectic between political authority (*ulil amri*) and scholarly authority (*ulama*) as a structuring force behind curriculum, learning spaces, and educational institutions remain comparatively scarce. This is precisely the gap this study seeks to address.

Based on the foregoing, an inquiry into the political genealogy of Islamic education in the era of the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs is important to undertake. This study aims not only to understand the chronological development of Islamic education but also to uncover how power, scholarly authority, and educational practice interacted in shaping the foundations of early Islamic civilization. The theoretical framework adopted draws on a genealogical perspective of knowledge and power to interpret the historical data. The choice of the Prophetic and Rightly-Guided Caliphate periods as the research context is justified by their status as the formative era in which the foundational patterns of Islamic education its institutions, curricula, and power relations were first established and from which later Islamic educational traditions descended. The remainder of this article is organized as follows: the

Method section outlines the philosophical orientation, data generation techniques, and data analysis procedures; the Theoretical Framework section presents the genealogical lens used to interpret the findings; the Results and Discussion sections present and interpret the study's findings thematically; and the Conclusion synthesizes the study's contribution and outlines directions for future research.

2. METHOD

a. Philosophical and Methodological Foundations

1) Philosophical Orientation

This study is a qualitative-descriptive inquiry conducted through library research. The philosophical orientation adopted is interpretive and historical-critical, grounded in a genealogical perspective adapted from Foucauldian power-knowledge analysis to trace the historical entanglement between power and knowledge within early Islamic educational institutions. This orientation was chosen because the object of inquiry, the political genealogy of Islamic education during the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, is fundamentally a historical and discursive phenomenon that cannot be reduced to quantifiable variables. A genealogical, qualitative approach allows the researcher to interpret how educational practices, institutions, and curricula were shaped by, and in turn shaped, configurations of political and scholarly authority across successive historical periods.

2) Data Generation Techniques

Data were generated through documentary and literature-based techniques rather than field data collection. Primary sources consisted of classical texts on the history of

Islamic civilization documenting the Prophetic and Rightly-Guided Caliphate periods, including historiographical accounts of the codification of the Qur'an, the institutionalization of learning under Umar bin Khattab, the standardization of the mushaf under Uthman bin Affan, and the intellectual discourse that developed under Ali bin Abi Thalib. Secondary sources comprised peer-reviewed journal articles, theses, and contemporary scholarly books relevant to the social and political history of Islamic education, drawn primarily from publications of the last decade. Source selection criteria prioritized materials with clear historiographical grounding and direct relevance to the relationship between political authority and educational institutions. The document review was conducted iteratively over the course of the study, with sources cross-checked against one another to ensure historical consistency before being incorporated into the analysis.

3) **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed critically using content analysis, proceeding through four stages: data reduction, in which relevant excerpts concerning education, power, and knowledge were extracted from the corpus of primary and secondary sources; source verification, in which cross-referencing among multiple historiographical accounts was used to check the reliability of contested historical claims; contextual interpretation, in which the extracted data were read against the socio-political context of each historical

period; and genealogical conclusion-drawing, in which patterns across periods were synthesized to reveal the underlying dialectic between political authority (*ulil amri*) and scholarly authority (*ulama*). To safeguard the rigor of the analysis, source triangulation was applied by comparing classical historiographical texts with contemporary scholarly interpretations, and interpretive claims were repeatedly checked against the primary textual evidence. As this study relies exclusively on published documentary sources, it did not involve human subjects and therefore did not require informed consent procedures; nonetheless, the study adheres to standard academic ethics of accurate citation and non-distortion of historical sources.

3. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

The interpretive framework of this study integrates a genealogical perspective on knowledge and power with the historiography of early Islamic education. Genealogy, in this sense, is understood not as a linear reconstruction of chronological events but as an analytical strategy for tracing how configurations of political authority (*ulil amri*) and scholarly authority (*ulama*) have continuously shaped and been shaped by educational practice. Three conceptual pillars structure the analysis. First, the power-knowledge relation posits that the production of religious and legal knowledge in early Islam was never separable from the political legitimacy of the ruling authority: the state required scholarly authority to sustain social stability, while scholars required political support to expand networks of learning. Second, the concept of learning-space transformation

frames the shift from private, clandestine instruction (as at Dar al-Arqam) to public, mosque-centered institutions, and later to semi-formal scholarly circles (halaqah) across the expanding Islamic territories, as evidence of the community's evolving socio-political position. Third, curriculum orientation is treated as a historically contingent construct that moved from an emphasis on moral-spiritual formation (tawhid and akhlaq) toward socio-political competence and, ultimately, state-administrative expertise as the needs of an expanding Islamic polity grew more complex. These three pillars are used jointly to interpret the empirical findings presented in the following section, allowing the study to read specific historical episodes the codification of the Qur'an, the deployment of teacher-scholars, the standardization of the mushaf, and the flourishing of theological discourse as manifestations of a broader genealogical dynamic between power and knowledge.

4. RESULTS AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section presents the study's empirical findings in two parts. First, a chronological overview traces how Islamic education evolved across the Meccan, Medinan, and Rightly-Guided Caliphate periods. Second, three cross-cutting genealogical themes are examined in detail: the dialectic between political and scholarly authority, the transformation of learning spaces, and the shifting orientation of the curriculum.

During the Meccan period, Islamic education functioned primarily as an instrument of liberation, centered on cultivating tawhid (monotheism) as both an epistemological foundation and a social critique of the jahiliyah order. Instruction proceeded gradually and, for much of this period, covertly, with the house of al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam (Dar al-Arqam) serving as the principal center for forming the ideological resilience of the earliest converts. Following the migration to Medina, education became integrated with an emerging political

order. The Prophet's Mosque functioned as the gravitational center of learning, worship, legal deliberation, and governance, while the institution of Suffah provided intensive instruction for companions such as the Ahl al-Suffah, an early embryonic intellectual community. The post-Badr literacy policy, under which Quraysh prisoners were released in exchange for teaching Muslim children to read and write, further illustrates the Prophet's deliberate cultivation of literacy as a civilizational asset.

Under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, this institutionalization deepened along four distinguishable lines. Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq (632-634 CE) confronted the apostasy wars (Perang Riddah) and the loss of Qur'an memorizers at the Battle of Yamamah, which prompted at Umar bin Khattab's urging the systematic codification of the Qur'an into a single mushaf, an act that stabilized the epistemic foundation of the entire educational system. Umar bin Khattab (634-644 CE) presided over rapid territorial expansion into Persia, the Levant, Egypt, and parts of the Byzantine domains and responded by dispatching scholar-companions such as Abdullah bin Mas'ud to Kufah, Mu'adz bin Jabal to the Levant, and Abdullah bin Amr to Egypt to serve as regional teaching authorities institutionalizing education while fostering a controlled acculturation between local custom and Islamic norms. Uthman bin Affan (644-656 CE) confronted growing dialectal diversity that threatened the uniform recitation of the Qur'an and responded with the standardization of the mushaf, prioritizing textual unification over dialectal variation. Ali bin Abi Thalib (656-661 CE), governing amid intense internal political conflict, oversaw the flourishing of theological and juridical discourse (kalam, fiqh) as the community sought deeper doctrinal grounding to navigate contested questions of leadership, justice, and the relationship between religion and state an intellectual legacy that would underpin the later development of classical Islamic scholarship, including the madrasah tradition.

a. The Ulil Amri-Ulama Relation: Political Legitimacy and Curriculum Authority

A genealogical reading of the sources shows that, from the Prophet's death onward, the relationship between political and

scholarly authority underwent a structural transformation. The caliphs, as holders of political authority, came to depend on companions and scholars as sources of scholarly legitimacy, producing a collaborative pattern in which the state supplied political legitimacy and institutional support while scholars supplied doctrinal and pedagogical authority. Under Umar bin Khattab, this dynamic is especially visible: companions competent in religious knowledge were assigned as teachers in newly conquered territories such as Kufah, Basrah, the Levant, and Egypt, a policy that simultaneously propagated Islamic knowledge and integrated conquered populations into the structure of the emerging Islamic polity. This relationship between *ulil amri* and *ulama* also produced a form of epistemic legitimation for the curriculum: while the normative sources of the curriculum remained the Qur'an and hadith, their implementation was shaped by the social and political needs of the Muslim community. The curriculum thus functioned not merely as a pedagogical device but also as an ideological instrument, reinforcing the legitimacy of political authority even as it remained anchored in religious sources. This finding indicates that the production of religious knowledge in early Islam cannot be understood in isolation from its political context, nor can political authority be understood without reference to the scholarly networks it depended upon for legitimacy and administrative capacity.

b. Transformation of Learning Spaces: From Private Refuge to Public and Semi-Formal Institutions

The genealogy of Islamic education is also visible in the transformation of its physical and institutional learning spaces, a shift that mirrors the community's movement from a persecuted minority

to a politically empowered society. During the Meccan period, education was confined to the private, clandestine space of Dar al-Arqam, the house of al-Arqam ibn Abi al-Arqam, which functioned as a site of ideological consolidation for the earliest Muslim community. Following the hijrah to Medina, learning moved decisively into public space, chiefly the Prophet's Mosque, which functioned simultaneously as a site of worship, education, administration, and intellectual discourse; within it, the Prophet convened learning circles (halaqah) attended by companions, and the phenomenon of Ahl al-Suffah companions residing in the mosque's portico who received sustained instruction emerged as an embryonic intellectual community. Under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, learning spaces developed further into semi-formal institutions: in the rapidly growing Islamic cities, mosques became hubs generating numerous scholarly circles, with companions dispatched by the caliphs acting as both teachers and leaders of these emerging intellectual communities, instructing a widening range of disciplines. This trajectory from private refuge, to public mosque-based institution, to semi-formal scholarly network demonstrates that the institutionalization of Islamic education proceeded in step with the community's growing socio-political consolidation, rather than as an autonomous pedagogical development.

c. Curriculum Orientation: From Moral-Spiritual Formation to State Administration

The genealogy of Islamic education can further be traced through shifts in curriculum orientation across three overlapping phases. In the earliest phase, under the Prophet in Mecca, the curriculum centered on moral-spiritual formation: the strengthening

of tawhid, akhlaq (moral character), and personal piety, with the Qur'an studied not merely as text but as a comprehensive guide for living, transmitted through dialogic and experiential methods grounded in the Prophet's own exemplary conduct. Following the establishment of the Islamic polity in Medina, the curriculum expanded to encompass social and political dimensions: companions studied not only religious doctrine but also law, governance, and the management of social relations within an increasingly complex Muslim community, preparing a cadre of leaders capable of administering an expanding polity. Under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, curriculum expansion accelerated further into an explicitly administrative register: as Islamic territory expanded, the state required human resources competent in administration, law, and governance, and education correspondingly incorporated disciplines such as Arabic linguistics, jurisprudence, and public administration alongside continued religious instruction. Taken together, this progression from moral-spiritual formation, through socio-political competence, to administrative expertise demonstrates that the Islamic curriculum was not a static religious canon but a historically responsive construct, continuously reshaped by the practical and political demands of an evolving Islamic civilization.

5. Discussion: Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study extend prior historiography on early Islamic education by foregrounding the dialectic between political authority and scholarly authority as the structuring mechanism behind institutional and curricular change, rather than treating these developments as a simple linear narrative of pedagogical progress.

Where earlier studies (e.g., Afyati and Prabowo 2025; Munawaroh and Kosim 2021; Akhmad Rifansyah et al. 2024) have documented the chronology of educational institutions under the Prophet and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, this study's genealogical reading clarifies why particular institutional forms emerged when they did: Qur'anic codification under Abu Bakar responded to an acute crisis of epistemic preservation following the loss of huffaz at Yamamah; the deployment of teacher-scholars under Umar responded to the administrative demands of rapid territorial expansion; mushaf standardization under Uthman responded to the destabilizing effects of dialectal diversity; and the flourishing of theological discourse under Ali responded to the legitimacy crisis produced by internal political conflict. In each case, an external political exigency, rather than an autonomous pedagogical rationale, catalyzed a shift in educational practice a pattern consistent with a genealogical, Foucauldian reading of knowledge production as inseparable from power.

Theoretically, these findings suggest that the history of Islamic education is best understood not as the unfolding of a fixed doctrinal curriculum but as a continuously negotiated settlement between *ulil amri* and *ulama*, in which each historical period produced its own configuration of authority, space, and curriculum suited to its particular political conditions. This has practical implications for institutions and policymakers engaged in Islamic education today: it suggests that curriculum design and the governance of religious educational institutions are inevitably shaped by contemporary configurations of political and scholarly authority, and that awareness of this dynamic can inform more deliberate and reflexive institutional

design rather than an uncritical appeal to an imagined, static "classical" model of Islamic education. For scholars and educators, the transformation of learning spaces documented here from private refuge, to public mosque, to semi-formal institution also offers a historical precedent for thinking about how contemporary Islamic educational institutions might adapt their physical and institutional forms to changing social and political circumstances without abandoning their epistemic core.

This study is nonetheless subject to several limitations. First, as a library-based, qualitative-descriptive study, its findings rest on the interpretation of secondary and classical textual sources rather than on primary archaeological or documentary evidence, which constrains the certainty with which some historical claims can be asserted. Second, the analysis is confined to the Prophetic and Rightly-Guided Caliphate periods and does not extend to the subsequent Umayyad or Abbasid eras, limiting the temporal scope of the genealogical trajectory traced here. Third, the genealogical framework, while useful for illuminating power-knowledge relations, necessarily privileges certain dimensions of the historical record (institutional and political dynamics) over others (for instance, the lived pedagogical experience of individual learners), and future research employing complementary theoretical lenses would help produce a fuller picture. Despite these limitations, the study offers a coherent genealogical account of how power and knowledge co-constituted the foundations of Islamic education in its formative period.

6. Conclusion

This study has traced the political genealogy of Islamic education across the Meccan, Medinan, and Rightly-Guided Caliphate periods, showing that education functioned throughout as a strategic instrument in the formation of Islamic civilization rather than as a neutral, purely pedagogical process. In Mecca, education centered on cultivating tawhid, shaping moral character, and liberating the community from the structures of jahiliyah; in Medina, it was transformed into a more organized system with the Prophet's Mosque as its social, political, and educational center. Under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, education became progressively institutionalized: through the Qur'anic codification of Abu Bakar, the deployment of scholar-teachers under Umar, the mushaf standardization of Uthman, and the flourishing of intellectual and theological discourse under Ali bin Abi Thalib. Taken together, these findings confirm that Islamic education has, from its inception, served not only as a means of transmitting knowledge but also as an instrument for constructing communal identity, preserving socio-political stability, and building and expanding Islamic civilization a dynamic sustained by the synergistic relationship between political authority (ulil amri) and scholarly authority (ulama). Future research would benefit from extending this genealogical approach into the Umayyad and Abbasid periods to trace how the ulil amri-ulama dialectic evolved as Islamic civilization matured, and from complementing the present library-based method with comparative analysis of manuscript and archaeological evidence to further substantiate the historical claims advanced here.

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