Decolonialization of Contemporary Science According to Professor Syed M. Naquib al-Attas as the Aufklarung Movement in Islam

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Abstract
Through education, science is expected to be able to provide good and significant changes to human life. In realizing this, Muslim scholars are trying to develop established scientific theories in various fields based on the Islamic worldview. However, in the era of modernization and post-modernization, the Islamic scientific tradition is slowly losing the fundamental aspects of science, worldview and empiristemology. In practice, empiristemology is separate from theology, this separation is the impact of the secularization of science.

Syed Naquib al-Attas is one of the contemporary Muslim scholars who initiated the Islamization of science as a response to the secularization of science, where he returned science to the Islamic scientific tradition. By using library research methods, furthermore, it is hoped that this research can elaborate on the concept of Islamization of science as an era of enlightenment (Aufklarung) developed by al-Attas became the basis of Islamic knowledge. This research finds that decolonialization of secular science is an important step in elaborating al-Attas towards the Islamization of contemporary science.

Keywords: Decolonialization, Islamization of Syed Naquib al-Attas, Aufklarung

Abstrak
Melalui pendidikan, ilmu pengetahuan diharapkan diharapkan mampu memberikan perubahan yang baik dan signifikan terhadap kehidupan manusia. Dalam mewujudkan hal tersebut maka cendikiawan Muslim berupaya menyusun teori-teori ilmu yang telah mampu dalam berbagai bidang berdasarkan worldview Islam. Akan tetapi, pada era modernisasi dan post-modernisasi, tradisi ilmiah Islam secara perlahan kehilangan aspek-aspek mendasar dari ilmu pengetahuan, worldview dan empiristemologinya. Dalam praktiknya, empiristemologi terpisah dengan teologi, pemisahan tersebut merupakan dampak dari sekularisasi ilmu pengetahuan.


Kata Kunci: Dekolonialisasi, Islamisasi Syed Naquib al-Attas, Aufklarung
Introduction

Islam has taught all its followers the obligation to seek knowledge, as written in the hadith: "Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim and Muslim woman." (HR. Muslim). This shows how much Islam views the importance of science. Science, hereinafter also called science, experienced a golden age in the development of Islamic civilization, namely during the Abbasid period until the 14th century AD. Then it experienced stagnation due to the increasing dominance of Western civilization in science since the 18th century AD. And it was rebuilt at the beginning of the 20th century AD which later became the second journey of development of Islamic civilization.¹

The development of science in this century has accompanied the technological development of Western nations. This indirectly resulted in the loss of the characteristics of eastern nations and the characteristics of Islam in scientific civilization. Science experienced transmigration into Western civilization.²

Dependence on western production science is clearly visible in the 21st century, Eastern nations import science and technology raw so that almost all human life involves western science and technology which is considered capable of supporting human life. This gives rise to dependence on Western science and technology for everything. As a result, humans deify science and technology, so that they no longer understand the nature of science, which also indirectly creates inhuman humans.

The above phenomenon makes Eastern nations, especially the Islamic world, lose their Islamic style and characteristics in science and technology.³ This condition was exploited by western nations to colonize eastern nations from all physical and non-physical aspects through scientific colonization as well as through cultural penetration and political intervention which lasted quite a long time.

Seeing phenomena like this, Islam views the basic ideas of science as identical to the ideas of science from a Western perspective. The description of science will show the differences between the idea of science in Islam and science according to the Western view. Mistakes in studying scientific ideas will lead to errors in grasping the path of Islamization of science because Islamization of science requires logical ideas that are in accordance with

Islam. Islamization of science is not limited to justifying science with the arguments of the Qur'an or hadith, although this also supported by facts. Nor is it limited to nostalgia for the greatness of previous Muslim scientists, although this is important to know. Nor is it just Islamizing existing textbooks, although we really need that too.

More than that, the Islamization of science must start from the Islamization of the Islamic worldview in understanding scientific ideas. The worldview of science will change human views and understanding of science where these views and understanding will be fully filled by the concepts of God, nature, science, humans, revelation, prophets, value systems and so on. From this view and understanding, Islamic scientific products will be born and the ability to sort out which modern science can be adopted because it does not conflict with Islamic views and which can be cleared of conflicting elements and also which parts must be rejected because they conflict, that is the meaning of Islamization. According to al-Attas, the emergence of movements and ideas about the Islamization of science is because most Muslims today are not aware that they have taken knowledge from the West without selection. This results in confusion, secularization of science, skepticism, and dependence on Western knowledge that can no longer be avoided.4

The secularization of science creates problems in the Islamic world in general. The solution to this problem is the Islamization of science. Therefore, the basic concepts of science must be explained and understood correctly and clearly in order to avoid thoughts that can damage them. Al-Attas was one of the first world figures to put forward the idea of the Islamization of contemporary science as an answer and response to the secularization of science. This Islamic education figure who was active in the mid-20th century has realized his thoughts and ideas at the higher education institution he leads, namely International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).

**Research Methods**

The method used in this article is library research, using a philosophical approach, this article seeks to reveal the reasons/background of the Islamization of knowledge project initiated by Al-Attas. A philosophical approach is a perspective in seeking explanations of the concepts of religious teachings by examining and find a system of reasoning that can be

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understood by humans. Philosophy as an approach generally has four branches, namely logic, metaphysics, epistemology and ethics.\(^5\)

Meanwhile, the data collection technique used is a documentation technique, namely collecting material in the form of books and related research articles and then extracting the essence or information related to the object of study. Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out by reviewing various literature and documentation on related research data. The first stage is to identify and analyze what and what kind of problem is being studied. The second stage is a review of various literature and documentation data needed to find information about the object of study being researched. The final stage is to draw conclusions about the problem being studied.\(^6\)

**Results and Discussion**

**A. Biography of Syed Naquib Al-Attas**

Syed Naquib al-Attas, whose full name is Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Muhsin bin Muhammad Al-Attas, and is usually called al-Attas, was born to parents named Syed Ali al-Attas and Syarifah Raquan bint Syed Muhammad al Aydrus on September 5 1931 in Bogor, West Java.\(^7\)

Syed Ali bin Abdullah al-Attas is a descendant of a Sayyid family who are also scholars and experts in Sufism. Meanwhile, his mother, Syarifah Raquan bint Syed Muhammad al Aydrus, apart from being a syarifah, she also came from the descendants of relatives of kings in the Sukapura Kingdom, West Java.\(^8\)

If you look at the explanation above, it is clear where Syed Naquib al-Attas inherited his intelligence and knowledge. Syed Naquib al-Attas received an education in Islamic sciences from his mother's family in Bogor, while from his father's family in Johor, he received an education that was very useful for him in developing the basics of Malay

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language, literature and culture, and it was these two types of education that later had a great influence on the thoughts of Syed Naquib al-Attas.

The first public education that Syed Naquib al-Attas received was the elementary school Ngee Heng English School which is located at JKR 4874, Jalan Abd. Rahman Andak Johor Baru. This school is called an English School because the language of instruction is English. Syed Naquib al-Attas received his education at Ngee Heng English School from the age of 5 (1936 – 1941). After that, in 1941 - 1945 Syed Naquib al-Attas continued his school at al 'Urwah al Wutsqo Sukabumi with Arabic as the language of instruction.

After World War II ended in 1946, al-Attas returned to Johor to pursue further education. First at Bukit Zahrah School, then at English College (1946-1951). After completing secondary school in 1951, al-Attas enlisted in the army as a cadet officer in the Malaysian-British army. Because of his expertise, al-Attas was enrolled in military education. First at Eaton Hall, Chester Wales, then at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst England (1952-1955). After graduating from Sandhurst, al-Attas was assigned as an office employee in the Royal Malayan Army Regiment, the Federation of Malaya. However, he was not here for long, after Malaysia became independent in 1957, al-Attas resigned from military service and developed his basic potential, namely the intellectual field.

His deep interest in the world of science brought him to the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur for two years (1957-1959) at the Faculty of Social Sciences Studies. During his undergraduate studies, al-Attas has written two books. The first book is the Ruba’iyat Series, and the second book is Some Aspects of Sufism as Understood and Practical Among the Malays. This second book was so valuable that the Canadian government, through the Canada Council Fellowship, gave him a scholarship to study at the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal Canada (1960-1962). From McGill University, al-Attas obtained a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree after his thesis, entitled Raniri and the Wujudiyyah of 17th Century Acheh, passed with very satisfactory grades. A year later al-Attas moved to SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), University of London.

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10Sekolah Kebangsaan Ngee Heng Johor Bahru telah dibuka pada tahun 1920. Bahasa pengantarnya ketika itu adalah dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan dinamakan Ngee Heng English School. Selepas tahun 1946, sekolah ini telah dinamakan Ngee Heng Primary School
(1963-1965) to continue his doctoral education. From the University of London, al-Attas obtained a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) degree with cum laude honors in the field of Islamic Philosophy and Malay Islamic Literature after defending his dissertation entitled The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri.12

Upon returning from England in 1965, al-Attas devoted himself to his former alma mater, namely the University of Malaya. Here he began to show his prowess and brilliance, so that he was appointed Head of the Literature Department at the Faculty of Malay Studies. Then from 1968-1970, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Letters at the same University. In 1970 he became one of the senior founders of the National University of Malaysia (UKM). And in 1987 he became the founder and rector of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) in Malaysia.13

B. Background to the Idea of Islamization of Science Syed Naquib Al-Attas

Before the 14th century AD, the Abbasid Daula was a successful daulah in developing science, so that this period was known as the golden age of Islam, namely the golden age of Islam. As is known, the Abbasid Daula reached its golden age when it was led by Harun al-Rasyid and al-Makmun. The dynasty founded by Abu al-Abbas in 750 AD experienced very rapid development in scientific civilization, this was marked by the establishment of libraries, providing salaries to scientists, translating books, and guaranteeing openness and academic freedom.

However, this glory did not go smoothly, the Abbasids experienced a setback when Baghdad was destroyed by Mongol troops led by Hulagu Khan (656 H/1258 AD). During the destruction of the city of Baghdad, the caliph and his family were killed in an area near Baghdad, thus ending the Abbasid Bani. The conquest only took a few days, the Mongol army not only destroyed the city of Baghdad but they also destroyed the civilization of the Islamic ummah in the form of books collected in Baitul Hikmah, the work of the Islamic ummah which were priceless. The books were burned and thrown into the Tigris River,

12Disarikan dari Syamsul Kurniawan dan Erwin Mahrus, Jejak Pemikiran Tokoh Pendidikan Islam, hlm. 175-177; Kemas Badaruddin, Filsafat Pendidikan Islam; Analisis Pemikiran Prof. DR. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, hlm. 9-11; dan Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, Filsafat dan Praktik Pendidikan Islam Syed M. Naquib al-Attas, hlm. 46-50
causing the river water to change color, from clear to dark black due to the ink water staining the books.\footnote{Abdul Muid, “Peradaban Islam Pada Zaman Dinasti Bani Abbasiyah,” \textit{JIPI: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Pendidikan Islam} 3, no. 3 (June 13, 2019), \url{https://jurnal.maziyatulilmi.com/index.php/jippi/article/view/13.}}

This condition is in line with the technological advances experienced by western nations. The scientific crisis in Islamic civilization made eastern nations in general make the west their new qibla, science based on Islam also made Islamic scholarship orient itself towards the west as a benchmark for the development of science and technology, so that gradually eastern nations lost their Islamic identity, especially in science.\footnote{Bistara, “Islam Dan Sains Menurut Sayyed Hossein Nasr.”}

Muslims do not realize that secularism is colonizing ideology, science, politics, culture and colonialism, so that Islamic science no longer provides a bright future perspective for Muslims so that science based on Islamic principles reaches the lowest point in its civilization. Conditions like this were experienced by all Islamic countries when Napoleon colonized Egypt in 1798 AD, where he not only carried out a mission of military expansion but also a mission of orientalism.

Secularism is a thought born from Western perspectives and experiences, which has had a negative impact on contemporary science. This bad impact is based on the concept of secularism itself in the form of disenchantment of nature, or the emptying of the universe from religious and spiritual values; desacralization of politics, removal of politics from religious and spiritual elements; and deconsecration of values or relativization of human values, so that there are no absolutes in truth.\footnote{Harvey Cox, “The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective - Harvey Cox - Google Buku,” accessed August 12, 2023, \url{https://books.google.co.id/books?hl=id&lr=&id=QGmYDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR11&dq=The+Secular+City:+Secularization+and+Urbanization+in+Theological+Perspective&ots=8Nqt2Bj38H&sig=OnoD0ZyXTyRR9vxDrquzIlCPo&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=The%20Secular%20City%3A%20Seculariz}}

The scientific transformation that came from the West, which places more emphasis on rationality and puts aside divine values, has resulted in the release of theological values in science. Science that is built without basing itself on theology will only give birth to scientists who are dry of the value of spirituality and have lost science from the transcendental dimension.\footnote{Syed Muhammad et al., “Konsep Pembelajaran Fakultas Kesehatan Universitas Darussalam Gontor: Implementasi Konsep Islamisasi Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas,” \textit{Prosidings Konferensi Integrasi Interkoneksi Islam Dan Sains} 2 (2020): 483–92.} For al-Attas, secular modern knowledge is a challenge for Muslims and the transfer of this modern knowledge is a source of confusion in Islamic education.
In the development of science and technology, Western nations have given a new color to scientific civilization, this is quite a big contribution. But on the other hand, it also eliminates the character and norms of Islam. According to Ibrahm Bafadal, this is a problem in itself because of the many impacts caused by the secularism of science, including:  

1. Providing space for the growth of atheism, because secularism does not teach faith in Allah SWT in the souls of the recipients of the teachings/lessons.
2. Opens up space for moral corruption, because secularism does not look at the taboo of disgrace and promiscuity, as long as they are adults and of their own choice.
3. Severance of historical relations with predecessors, even with Rosululah, Companions, Muslim scholars, Ulama, Tabiin and Islamic champions. Because history books contain more about national history without also emphasizing the Siroh Nabawiyah and other Islamic histories in a balanced manner.
4. Neglect of spiritual education, so that students' souls dry up regarding religion and orientation. Secularism does not instill that the purpose of creating humans on this earth is solely to worship Allah. And this gives rise to criminality and the usual perception of deviant behavior.
5. Obscuring belief in unseen things such as the existence of heaven and hell, the last day, reward and sin and even the issue of God's mercy. This results in the orientation of human life more towards worldly interests only.
6. Shift in Islamic values and norms.
7. The foundation and orientation of education is only on the transfer of knowledge, and forgets religious values, so that students only have knowledge intelligence and are morally and religiously disabled.

Looking at the explanation above, Naquib al-Attas is correct in assessing that science built by the West only elevates doubts and conjectures to a scientific level in terms of methodology. This means that doubts are used as a strong epistemology in gaining knowledge.

According to Syed Naquib al-Attas, Western knowledge is not built on the foundation of revelation and religious belief. However, it is built on cultural traditions which are strengthened by philosophical speculation related to secular life which makes humans rational creatures. Western civilization also adopted the spirit of rationalism in Islam,

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rational and scientific knowledge and spirit in the West were reshaped in accordance with the culture in the West. This kind of fusion will ultimately give birth to a dualistic character in the worldview and values of Western culture and civilization. There is a kind of elimination of religious values after the purification carried out by Westerners of the rationalism imported from Islam. They, in the spirit of naturalism, rationalism and empiricism, deliberately set aside religious values that were deemed not to bring change to the times.19

C. Islamization of Science as an Aufklärung Movement in Islam

According to Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, there are three scientific findings produced by al-Attas which have the potential to influence the lives of Muslims entering the 15-21 century AD. The first relates to the issue of science among Muslims. The second finding is that modern science is not value-free (neutral) because it is influenced by western culture. The third finding relates to the importance of the Islamization of science.20 In his findings, al-Attas put forward the meaning of Islamization and the Islamization of knowledge as a solution to various problems of Muslims, especially those related to education and civilization.

As a follow-up to his findings, according to Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, al-Attas initiated the Islamization of science at the first world conference on Islamic education in Mecca in 1977 AD. Then al-Attas also explained at the second conference in Islamabad that the Islamization of science was to free human understanding from magical, mythological, animistic, national culture (which is contrary to Islam) and the secularism of knowledge, thus encouraging humans to forget the nature of their existence and soul.21

From the explanation above, it can be understood that al-Attas is trying to divert human thoughts and understanding from things that distance themselves from Allah, whether they come from outside, which then become human impulses/lusts. From here al-Attas also added that there are two meanings of Islamization, namely the arrival of the meaning of something into the soul and the arrival of the soul into the meaning of something.

To carry out the Islamization of knowledge, according to al-Attas, it is necessary to involve two interconnected processes. The first is to carry out the process of separating the

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20Kosim, Kustati, and Murkilim, “Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas’ Ideas on the Islamization of Knowledge and Its Relevance With Islamic Education in Indonesia.”
key elements and concepts that make up Western culture and civilization, and second, to incorporate Islamic elements and key concepts into every relevant branch of contemporary science.

Thus, it can be understood that Islamization is not just a theoretical concept, but also practical. In the process, the Islamization of science has four interrelated interests: Faith interests, humanitarian interests, civilization interests, and scientific interests. So it is faith that is of primary importance in the Islamization of science project, not just scientific interests. Islamization of science refers to the process of developing a methodology for dealing with science and its sources (social science and natural science with the injection of a new basis that is consistent with Islam).

According to al-Attas, the process of Islamization of science must contain three main principles, namely monotheism, sharia and morals. Naquib al-Attas believes that the Islamization of science can be carried out in two ways, namely first by separating the concepts or key elements that make up western culture, and secondly by incorporating key concepts or elements into each branch of science.

With these two concepts of al-Attas, basically Muslims should be able to anticipate the massive movement of secularism by mastering the knowledge inherited from their predecessors, because the idea of the Islamization of knowledge will be difficult to find meaning when it is not linked to classical Islamic scholarship which is so rich and very rich. Generation after generation will increasingly forget the scientific heritage and the Islamic figures who discovered it, they will increasingly become less and less familiar with Islamic scientific scholars, perhaps they will not even know that the Prophet Muhammad was the barometer for the emergence of classical Islamic scholarship.

Apart from that, Muslims must also be proficient in various modern scientific disciplines that are currently developing in terms of concepts, principles, methodology, problems and themes. This is considered important so that Muslims can discover and incorporate new concepts that can cover the principles of monotheism, sharia and morals.

Even so, the process of Islamization of science must be carried out together by Muslims, because if Muslims do not balance it with a massive movement then it will be very difficult or even impossible to realize. Even though the concept of Islamization of science has many pros and cons, this idea is a bright spot and an answer to various shifts in morals.

23 Bistara, “Islam Dan Sains Menurut Sayyed Hossein Nasr.”
monotheism and shifts in sharia which have recently been considered normal and are slowly colonizing Islamic civilization. Therefore, this idea can be called an enlightenment movement (*aufklärung*) in Islam, especially in scientific civilization.

**Conclusion**

The science brought by the West brought a skeptical epistemology based on rationalism and empiricism, thus having a very significant impact on the development of Islamic civilization. So that the Muslim nation loses its Islamic spirit, faith and morals, because western science does not bring the principles of monotheism, sharia and morals into it. This epistemology makes Prof. Naquib al-Attas, as one of the Muslim scholars who was worried about the development of Islamic science at that time, initiated the Islamization of Science project as a bright spot that the ummah had to fight for collectively in fighting the colonialism of scientific secularism. Prof. Naquib al-Attas tries to restore the human soul to its natural state when created by Allah, namely solely to worship Allah.

This is a form of resistance by Prof. Naquib al-Attas over the west, through the movement of separating key concepts or elements that make up western culture, and then incorporating these concepts or key elements into every branch of science, Prof. Naquib al-Attas hopes that there will be a change in the taqlid carried out by Muslims towards western science and all its features. So that from here personality, justice and strength of faith will grow as necessary, so that education or science can give birth to a people who are holy (insan kamil) in terms of faith, piety and morals.

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