

History of Economic Trade in Islam and Its Influence on International Relations Policy in the Arabian Peninsula

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Abstract

The Arabian Peninsula has a long history of trade, where the arrival of Islam introduced economic principles that emphasized justice and social responsibility, expanding trade networks, strengthening political stability, and influencing international relations. The aim of this study is to explore and analyze how the economic principles in Islam shaped and directed the development of trade in the Arabian Peninsula and the significant impact they had on international relations at the time. The research methodology employed in this study uses a literature review approach to gather, analyze, and synthesize relevant information. This study will begin by exploring various secondary sources, including history books, academic journal articles, and historical documents discussing Islamic economic trade principles as well as the political and social developments in the Arabian Peninsula. These sources will be selected based on their credibility and relevance to the research topic. The findings of this research indicate that trade has played a central role in the history of the Arabian Peninsula, from the pre-Islamic period to the Ottoman Empire. Cities like Mecca and Medina became vital trade centers, influencing the economy, politics, society, and culture. Trade became the foundation for international relations, enriching the economy, and impacting diplomacy and cultural development.

Keywords: Arabian Peninsula, trade, international relations

A. INTRODUCTION

The Arabian Peninsula has a long history of trade and economics that dates back to pre-Islamic times. Its strategic location between Asia, Africa, and Europe made it an important hub on ancient trade routes. Traders from the Arabian Peninsula traded commodities such as spices, frankincense, and myrrh with other great civilizations, including Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and India. In addition, cities such as Mecca and Medina served as meeting points for traders from all over the world, strengthening the economic position of the region. This trade activity not only fueled economic prosperity but also influenced the social and cultural development of the Arabian Peninsula, laying a strong foundation for economic growth in the Islamic era and beyond.¹

¹ Sumanti, History of Islamic Civilization.

In pre-Islamic times, the land trade route known as the "Frankincense Road" was a vital link for merchants carrying goods from the southern Arabian Peninsula to the northern regions of the Levant and Mesopotamia. Cities such as Petra and Palmyra became major trading centers that flourished due to the benefits of this route. In addition, the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula was also an important part of the sea route connecting India and the Far East with the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, allowing for the exchange of goods such as silk, jewelry, and precious metals. The success of trade in the Arabian Peninsula was also supported by the local people's expertise in navigation and knowledge of geographical and climatic conditions. Arabs were renowned as skilled sailors who were able to conquer the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. In addition to the trade of goods, the Arabian Peninsula also became a center for the spread of ideas and culture, with traders and travelers bringing with them knowledge, religions, and technologies from various civilizations.²

Islam emerged in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century CE and brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including trade and economics. The teachings of Islam introduced by the Prophet Muhammad emphasized justice, honesty, and responsibility in business transactions, which increased trust among traders and strengthened existing trade networks. In addition, zakat, one of the five pillars of Islam, encouraged the redistribution of wealth and helped reduce economic disparities. The Islamic Caliphate that flourished after the death of the Prophet Muhammad expanded its territory to Asia, Africa, and Europe, creating a wider and more integrated market. Cities such as Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo became centers of commerce and intellectuals, where merchants from various nations met and traded.³

In addition, with the establishment of the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, land and sea trade routes became more secure and organized, thanks to effective administrative systems and efficient postal networks. This allowed for a smoother exchange of goods, ideas, and technology along the famous Silk Road. The Caliphate also introduced a more sophisticated banking system, including the use of checks and the concept of credit, which facilitated long-distance trade transactions. Greater security and a fair legal system also increased the confidence of traders from all over the world to do business in the Islamic territories. Arabic, the language of administration and trade of the Caliphate, played a major role in facilitating communication and

² Wibowo, "POLITICS AND PROSECUTION IN THE FUNCTIONAL VIEW OF THE FPI DPW OF BANDAR LAMPUNG CITY."

³ Arsono, "POLITICAL COMPETITION OF FEMALE LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES IN THE 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN LAMPUNG (Study of the Election of Asmara Dewi, Eva Dwiyana, and Dwie Aroem Hadiatie as Legislative Members)."

the spread of knowledge. Large cities such as Baghdad and Cordoba developed into centers of education and research, where scientists and scholars from different cultures gathered to exchange knowledge. Advances in science and technology, such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, further enhanced the economic competitiveness of the Islamic world. Significant changes were also seen in the agricultural sector with the introduction of more advanced irrigation techniques and crop diversification, which increased agricultural production and food security. Thus, the arrival of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century CE brought about a major transformation in the fields of trade and economy, creating a strong foundation for the development of a brilliant Islamic civilization that had a wide impact throughout the world.⁴

Trade in Islam is driven by the principles of Sharia, which emphasize fairness, honesty, transparency, and social responsibility in all transactions. These principles ensure that economic activities are conducted ethically and morally, avoiding practices such as *riba* (excessive interest), fraud, and exploitation. With the implementation of Sharia, Muslim traders gained a reputation as trustworthy partners, thereby expanding their trading networks. The principle of *zakat* also played a significant role, whereby a portion of wealth was distributed to help the less fortunate, which in turn promoted social and economic stability. The profound influence of Sharia-based trade was seen in the economic and political development of the Arabian Peninsula, where cities such as Mecca and Medina became major trading centers and attracted traders from various regions. The Sharia-driven economic system also helped create a strong and influential merchant class, which played a significant role in politics and governance. This economic success strengthened the power and political stability of the Islamic Caliphate, making the Arabian Peninsula a center of advanced civilization and integrated with the global trading network.⁵

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how Islamic economic principles shaped and guided the development of trade in the Arabian Peninsula and the significant impact it had on international relations at that time. This article aims to reveal how trade driven by ethics and sharia law fostered trust and cooperation between different nations and civilizations. In addition, this article also aims to show how the dynamics of this trade contributed to the economic, social, and political progress of the Arabian Peninsula, while expanding the influence of Islam to other regions through trade routes. By tracing the historical traces of economic trade in Islam, this article hopes to provide in-depth insights into the strategic role of the Arabian Peninsula in the

⁴ Sari, "Women's Political Rights According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi."

⁵ Thohir, Study of the Islamic World Region: Ethno-Linguistic and Geo-Political Perspectives.

global trade network in the past and how this legacy continues to influence international relations today.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method in this study uses a literature study approach to collect, analyze, and synthesize relevant information.⁶This research will begin with a review of secondary sources, including history books, academic journal articles, and historical documents that discuss economic trade in Islam and political and social developments in the Arabian Peninsula. Next, a content analysis will be conducted to identify key themes and trends related to the development of trade and its impact on international relations. Data triangulation techniques will be used to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings by comparing information from various sources. The results of the analysis will be presented in a narrative form that illustrates how Islamic economic principles fostered the growth of trade and strengthened the Arabian Peninsula's diplomatic and economic relations with other regions.⁷This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the central role of trade in shaping international dynamics in the Islamic world in the past.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Traces of the History of Economic Trade in Islam

Before the advent of Islam, the Arabian Peninsula was a significant center of trade due to its strategic location at the crossroads of trade routes between Asia, Africa, and Europe. Cities such as Mecca and Yathrib (later known as Medina) became major trading centers. Mecca, in particular, was renowned as a center of pilgrimage, attracting traders from many regions. Arab trade caravans often traveled as far as Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, carrying goods such as spices, frankincense, silk, and jewelry. In addition, annual markets such as the Souq Ukaz provided a forum for the exchange of goods and culture, strengthening local economies. Arab merchants also acted as intermediaries in international trade, connecting the East with the West. The pre-Islamic economy of the Arabian Peninsula depended largely on this trading activity, which was influenced by geographic and social conditions, including tribes controlling trade routes and establishing regulations and security for traders.⁸

⁶ Fathoni, Research Methods & Thesis Writing Techniques.

⁷ Izzan, ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING METHODOLOGY.

⁸ Alkhateeb, The Lost History of Islam: Retracing the Glory of Muslims in the Past.

These trade conditions were also influenced by a social system of tribes, often rivals but also alliances for the sake of trade. The Quraysh tribe of Mecca, for example, played a dominant role in trade, controlling access to the Kaaba, which was both a pilgrimage site and an economic center. The protection they offered to caravans ensured safe passage across the dangerous desert. In addition to the trade of goods, the exchange of cultures and ideas was also an important part of trade in the Arabian Peninsula. Traders brought stories, beliefs, and innovations from different parts of the world, which then blended with local cultures. This created a dynamic and cosmopolitan environment in some of the major cities, although much of Arabia remained a nomadic society with an economy based on herding and pastoralism.⁹

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, trade underwent a significant transformation influenced by Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad SAW implemented a fair and transparent trade policy, emphasizing honesty, integrity, and justice in every transaction. He prohibited fraudulent practices such as usury (excessive interest), fraud, and monopoly. The Prophet Muhammad SAW also introduced the principle of muamalah in trade, which emphasized business ethics and the welfare of society. Markets played a central role in the Islamic economy during the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Markets became the main place for the exchange of goods and services as well as a center for social interaction. One of the famous markets is the Medina Market, which was established by the Prophet Muhammad SAW to encourage economic activity among Muslims. In this market, the Prophet Muhammad SAW ensured that there was supervision of the prices and quality of goods, and enforced trade regulations in accordance with Islamic teachings. Markets also functioned as a place where zakat on trade was collected, which was then distributed to those in need.¹⁰

The commodities traded during the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW were very diverse, including both local and imported goods. Some of the main commodities included agricultural products such as dates, wheat, and barley, as well as livestock products such as meat, milk, and wool. In addition, imported goods such as spices, silk, and luxury goods from India, Persia, and Byzantium were also traded. This trading activity not only enriched the local economy but also strengthened diplomatic relations with various regions, and spread the teachings of Islam through extensive trade interactions.

⁹ Irwansyah, "The Return of Srivijaya Power: Economic-Political and Religious Relations on the Uluan Regional Trade Route."

¹⁰ Kotimah and A'yun, "IBNU KHALDUN'S CONCEPT OF ISLAMIC ECONOMIC THOUGHT."

Then, the development of trade during the Khulafatur Rasyidin era was marked by the implementation of policies that encouraged economic growth and fair trade. The Khulafaur Rasyidin, such as Abu Bakar, Umar bin Khattab, Uthman bin Affan, and Ali bin Abi Thalib, followed in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad SAW in promoting justice, honesty, and transparency in trade. They implemented strict regulations to prevent fraudulent practices such as usury and fraud, and ensured protection of the rights of traders and consumers. The expansion of Islamic territory under the rule of the Khulafatur Rasyidin had a positive impact on trade. The expanding territory opened up new access to markets and resources, expanding the Islamic trade network from the Middle East to North Africa, Central Asia, and Spain. This brought significant economic benefits to Muslims, enriched cultural and knowledge exchanges, and expanded the international trade network.¹¹

The commodities traded during the Khulafatur Rashidun period included a variety of local and imported goods. Agricultural products such as wheat, barley, dates, and fruits were the main commodities from the Arab region. In addition, imported goods such as silk, spices, and luxury goods from Persia, India, and other regions became an integral part of Islamic trade. During this period, there was an active exchange between various cultures and civilizations, which enriched the economy and social life of the Muslims at that time.

Trade during the Umayyad Caliphate reflects a significant period in the history of Islamic trade.¹² Umayyad trade policies tended towards the expansion of trade and the development of infrastructure to support it. The Umayyad Caliphate expanded its trade network through land and sea routes, adopting policies that facilitated the exchange of goods between different regions. One of the most important developments was in maritime trade, where the Umayyads built major ports such as Syria, Egypt, and Andalusia, facilitating trade with the Mediterranean, Asia, and Africa. This brought great prosperity to the Caliphate, as well as enriching culture and knowledge through active cultural exchange.¹³

The commodities traded during the Umayyad period were very diverse, including agricultural products, luxury goods, and spices. The Arab region produced agricultural products such as wheat, olive oil, and fruits, while imports from distant regions such as Persia, India, and China included silk, spices, and handicrafts. In addition, the slave trade was also an important

¹¹ Basori, "Islamic Law of the Archipelago: The Diaspora of Malacca Law in the 17th Century Aceh Sultanate."

¹² Yudha, Hermanto, and Hermawan, "Human Ontology from the Perspective of Seyyed Huseen Nasr and Its Relevance to the Formation of National Leadership Morality."

¹³ Nurullita, "United States Policy in Counterterrorism of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Aqap) in Yemen (2009-2013)."

part of the Umayyad economy. The unification of the disparate regions under the Umayyad Caliphate created a dynamic and thriving trading environment, generating wealth and prosperity for the Caliphate and the Muslims of the time.

Trade during the Abbasid Caliphate marked a period of progress and innovation in the history of Islamic trade. The Abbasid Caliphate implemented policies that supported the growth of trade, by expanding trade infrastructure, improving the currency system, and providing protection to traders. One of the most important contributions of the Abbasids was the development of the Islamic banking system,¹⁴ which facilitated international trade by facilitating payment and financing for trade caravans. The advancement of international trade reached its peak during the Abbasid period, especially in maritime trade and overland trade routes. The Abbasid Caliphate controlled a vast territory from North Africa to Central Asia, facilitating the exchange of goods between different civilizations. Breakthroughs in navigational technology such as the development of the compass and the sea sail increased the efficiency of maritime trade, allowing for wider and safer trade between East and West.

The commodities traded during the Abbasid period were very diverse and covered various economic sectors.¹⁵ The Arab region became a center of trade for agricultural products such as wheat, cotton, and olive oil. In addition, imports from areas such as Persia, India, China, and Africa included spices, silk, luxury goods, and raw materials such as gold and silver. The slave trade remained an important part of the economy, although it was increasingly suppressed by the anti-slavery movement. Overall, the Abbasid period created a dynamic and thriving trading environment, which brought economic and cultural prosperity to the Caliphate and the regions involved in the trade.

Trade during the Mamluk Empire represents a significant period in the history of Islamic trade in the Levant and Egypt. Mamluk trade policies emphasized the development of trade infrastructure, protection of merchants, and regulation of trade transactions. They built major ports such as Alexandria and Damietta, facilitating extensive maritime trade with Europe, India, and China. The Mamluks also introduced a well-organized caravan system, facilitating cross-border trade overland. The Mamluks played a significant role in the spice trade, especially through their control of trade routes to the Far East. They controlled the spice trade route from South and Southeast Asia to Europe via the Levant and Egypt. Alexandria became one of the

¹⁴ Yudha, *Diachronic Islamic Politics: Historical and Factual*.

¹⁵ Sobby and Yudha, "The Actualization of Democratic Values Based on Local Wisdom."

main centers for the import of spices from India and Southeast Asia, which were then distributed throughout the world through this port. Control of the spice trade gave the Mamluks great economic advantages and a strong position in international trade.

The commodities traded during the Mamluk period included a wide range of goods from different regions. Egypt, as the main producer of wheat in the region, was the main source of wheat exports to Europe. In addition, imports from India and Southeast Asia included spices such as pepper, cinnamon, and cloves, as well as silk, porcelain, and other luxury goods. Egyptian exports also included handicraft products such as cloth, carpets, and copper goods. Overall, the Mamluk period created a dynamic and prosperous trading environment in the Levant and Egypt, which strengthened the economic and political position of the Mamluks in the global trade scenario.

Trade during the Ottoman Empire played a key role in their economic success and political power. Ottoman trade policies were based on Islamic principles that emphasized fair and mutually beneficial trade. The Ottoman Empire expanded its trade infrastructure by building a network of roads and bridges, and protecting major trade routes such as the Silk Road and the Spice Road.¹⁶ They also introduced a system of state monopolies to control the production and trade of certain commodities, such as salt, tobacco, and silk. Overland trade flourished during the Ottoman period, especially through the Silk Road that connected the Middle East with Europe and Asia. Caravans carried goods from the Middle East to Europe, transporting items such as spices, silk, ceramics, and other luxury goods. Overland trade routes also became an important means of cultural exchange, the spread of Islam, and the transfer of knowledge between Eastern and Western civilizations.¹⁷

The commodities traded during the Ottoman period were very diverse and covered a wide range of economic sectors. Agricultural products such as wheat, cotton, and olive oil were the main commodities of the Ottoman territories. In addition, imports from Asian regions such as Persia, India, and China included spices, silk, tea, and ceramics. In addition, the slave trade remained an important part of the Ottoman economy, with slaves traded as domestic workers, artisans, or soldiers. Overall, trade during the Ottoman Empire created a dynamic and thriving economic environment, which strengthened the position of the Caliphate in the global trade scenario and enriched the culture and resource wealth of their territories.

¹⁶ Sobby and Yudha.

¹⁷ Hitti, *History of the Arabs: The Primary and Most Authoritative Reference on the History of Islamic Civilization*.

The Influence of Economic Trade on International Relations Policy in the Arabian Peninsula

The influence of trade on political relations between countries in the Arabian Peninsula is very significant, both in strengthening cooperation and triggering conflict. First, trade creates economic dependence between countries in the region, encouraging the formation of political alliances and economic cooperation. This dependence can help reduce the potential for conflict between countries, because of the common interest in maintaining economic stability and trade. However, on the other hand, competition in trade can also trigger political conflict between countries, especially if there is competition for resources or access to important markets.¹⁸

Cooperation and conflict in trade are also sources of diplomacy and negotiation between countries in the Arabian Peninsula. Trade negotiations often serve as a forum for discussing broader political issues, such as borders, security, or other political issues. Trade diplomacy can be used as a tool to strengthen bilateral or regional relations, as well as to reach broader political agreements. In the organizational component, one of them is to achieve its goals, which in general an organization has the goal of achieving common goals; gaining profit, which means not only gaining financial benefits, but also non-financial benefits; then to achieve the set time target; and of course to gain recognition from other parties about the establishment of the organization.¹⁹ On the other hand, failed trade negotiations or trade conflicts can trigger political tensions between countries, even leading to military conflict or economic sanctions.

In the Arabian Peninsula, trade is not only an economic tool, but also a foundation for diplomacy between countries. Trade negotiations often provide an opportunity to build better political relations between countries in the region. Trade alliances can be the foundation for closer political cooperation, such as the formation of defense pacts or peace agreements. In addition, trade can be a tool for building broader diplomatic relations, either through bilateral or multilateral diplomacy. However, trade can also be a source of conflict if there is inequality in market access or competition for resources. Unequal trade negotiations or protectionist policies can create political tensions between countries. In these cases, trade can strengthen political competition, even triggering open conflict or diplomatic confrontation.

The influence of trade on social relations in the Arabian Peninsula was significant, shaping the dynamics of migration, cultural exchange, and the formation of new social classes.

¹⁸ Ferian, "Gulf Region Integration After Saudi Arabia's Diplomatic Crisis with Qatar in 2017-2020."

¹⁹ Guntur Saputra, Arini, and Malhotra Yasin, "Organizational Role of the ``Ansor Youth Movement" in the Development of Young Generations."

First, trade became a major driver of migration, attracting new populations to the growing trading centers. This created a multicultural environment in trading cities such as Mecca, Yathrib, and Alexandria, with immigrants bringing with them their traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices. This cultural exchange not only enriched social life, but also fostered tolerance and understanding among communities, as they learned to live side by side with different ethnic and religious groups.²⁰

In addition, trade often fostered tolerance and harmony among communities in the Arabian Peninsula. In trading centers, diverse communities interacted in daily trade activities, forming mutually beneficial trade relationships. This created a need for dialogue, compromise, and cross-cultural understanding, which in turn strengthened tolerance and harmony among communities. Mutually beneficial trade relationships also laid the foundation for further cooperation in social and political fields. However, trade could also trigger the emergence of new social classes in the Arabian Peninsula. Prosperous trading centers often became places where new economic elites emerged, gaining wealth and power through trading activities. In addition, trade could also lead to social polarization between those directly involved in trade and those who were not, creating greater economic disparities in society. Therefore, trade not only brought prosperity, but it could also be a source of social tension if not managed wisely.

The influence of trade on cultural relations in the Arabian Peninsula encompasses a variety of aspects that influence the social and intellectual dynamics of the region. First, trade played a significant role in the spread of science and technology in the region. Through trade, ideas and innovations from different parts of the world spread, enriching the knowledge and skills of Arab societies. In particular, trading centers such as Mecca, Alexandria, and Baghdad became centers of learning and intellectual exchange, where scholars and merchants exchanged information, ideas, and the latest discoveries. In addition, trade also encouraged the exchange of arts and cultures between the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula. Through cross-cultural contact that occurred in markets and ports, the arts and cultures of different regions interacted and influenced each other. For example, architecture, music, dance, and cuisine could become points of intersection between different cultural traditions, creating unique and diverse art forms and lifestyles in the region.²¹ However, the most prominent impact of trade on cultural relations was the emergence of cultural acculturation in the Arabian Peninsula. Acculturation occurs when

²⁰ Hamzani and Aravik, *Islamic Politics: History and Thought*.

²¹ Santoso and Aziz, *Islamic Economic Thought and Practice Since the Time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Until the Contemporary Era*.

different cultural elements interact and impact each other, creating a new culture that combines elements from different cultures. For example, trade brought food, language, religion, and traditions from different regions to the Arabian Peninsula, which were then absorbed and adapted to the local culture. Cultural acculturation created a complex and dynamic identity in the region, reflecting the diversity and complexity of cultural relations that continue to develop in the Arabian Peninsula.

D. CONCLUSION

The historical traces of economic trade in Islam show the very important role of trade in influencing the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics of the Arabian Peninsula. Before Islam, trade had been the backbone of the region's economy, with cities such as Mecca and Medina being significant trading centers. The conditions of trade were influenced by geographical, social and political factors, with Arab tribes and trading caravans playing key roles in controlling trade routes and ensuring the safety of traders. The historical traces of economic trade in Islam in the Arabian Peninsula show the importance of trade in shaping the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics. From pre-Islamic trade to the Ottoman Empire, trade has been the backbone of the economy and the foundation of international relations in the region. Trade not only enriched the economy, but also influenced diplomacy, social relations and cultural development, creating a dynamic and diverse environment in the Arabian Peninsula.

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