

Knowledge is the key

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ISLAM Hadhari or civilisational Islam is an approach that emphasises development through the mastery of knowledge and education so that the individual or the nation is prepared for future global challenges.

It encourages the doors of *ijtihad* (thorough study) to be opened, so that interpretations are in tandem with the developmental needs of the prevailing tune and conditions.

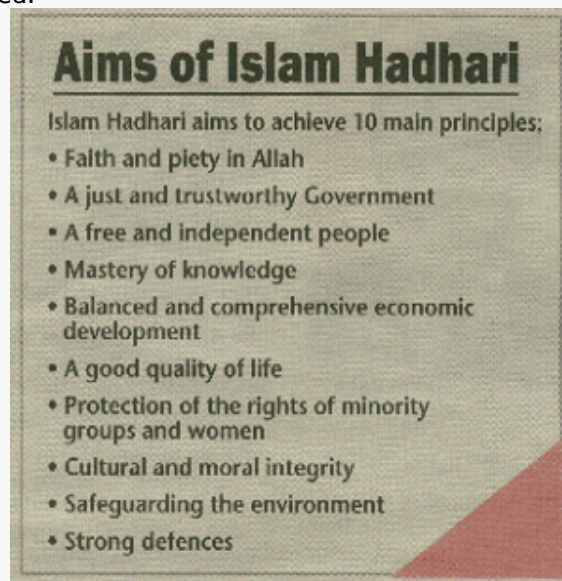
In order to put Islam Hadhari into practice with a civilisational framework, the heritage of Islamic civilisation that unfolded on the stage of history can be a useful reference point and become the source of inspiration for society to learn from and emulate.

A change in attitude and culture requires *ijtihad* and *Jihad* (struggle) on a broader interpretation, covering all aspects of life, including the pursuit of knowledge, mastery of science and technology and economic activity.

Society, local and global, should be made aware of Islam's contribution to civilisational advances, especially in areas of science and technological knowledge that eventually brought about the birth of the Renaissance in Europe.

There must be initiatives to seriously understand what happened during that time and learn from it (<http://www.islam.gov.my/islamhadhari/concept.html>).

In short, it is imperative that we arm ourselves with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and awareness so that the target set can be achieved.



In this regard, one zenith of Islamic civilisation that is worth benchmarking against is Andalusia, where many of the principles of Islam Hadhari could be fully realised, beginning especially with mastery of knowledge.

Between the 8th and 13th centuries, there were at least two major periods of intense scholarship: one originating in Baghdad, Iraq and the other in the lesser known Andalusia, in the Iberian peninsula.

In both cases, the major efforts involved the transmission of knowledge, mainly from Greek sources into Arabic, before they were translated further into other languages.

Thus it forms a good basis in attempting to implement Islam Hadhari modelled on the Andalusian experience of over 700 years.

The history of Andalusia, including modern day Spain, Portugal and southern France, cannot be divorced from that of the Abbasid dynasty in Damascus, Syria and later Baghdad.

When the Umayyad dynasty in Damascus collapsed in the caliphate was assumed by Abu `I-Abbas, who founded the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258).

At that time, a member of the Umayyad family was able to make his way west, first to North Africa and then to

Iberia.

The Abbasid later shifted its capital from Damascus to Baghdad.

These two separate events marked the heights of Muslim learning leading to new civilisations in their own right. However, it is the events in Baghdad that first dominated the world stage.

By and large it overshadowed the growth of a 'new' Umayyad caliphate in what is termed as the Near East.

Except for "nostalgic curiosity", relatively little is known about Andalusia and its presence in Europe, as the subsequent seven hundred-odd years is largely ignored, at times by design.

Despite its decisive influence over the course of European history and its civilisation, little is recorded about it in Western writings. Worse, this period is typically described as "a time that was dark and barbaric" qualified by the adjective "medieval".

Or it was known as the "Middle" or even "Dark Ages" (ca. 500-1500) — one that is squeezed between the Classical and Modern era.

It is often regarded as an "unenlightened, backward, and intolerant culture", a notion that is still propagated today, aided by the dearth of work that espouses different worldviews.

Fortunately, increasing evidence to show that the contributions of Andalusia to Europe and the Western civilisation glitter from time to time like an invaluable gem.

One such gem is a recent book by a Yale professor, Maria Rosa Menocal, in Spanish and Portuguese, called *The Ornament of the World*, which provided much of these evidences.

It began when the Muslims, called the "Moors", entered the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula, which they named al-Andalus, at a time when much of Europe and the classical civilisation of Greece and Rome had gone into eclipse.

Andalusia (Moorish Spain) brought with it a unique experience in terms of its tangible accomplishments in all spheres of life.

Learning was emphasised, marked by a, fascination with science, the Arabic literature and the philosophical discourse on reason and faith.

The world created in the land of Andalusia saw various forms of wealth being created.

Not only was there commercial wealth in terms of consumption, productivity and exchange, there was also intellectual wealth, thanks to the libraries of Cordoba. More significantly, there was a wealth of new and deep thinking about the meaning of life, God, and material things.

All these are the key features that eventually linked Islamic Spain with the larger part of Europe.

It is therefore time for the Malaysian industrial community do some rethinking and put their money where mouth is.

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