




Islamic Liberation in Human Responsibility as a Caliph on Earth

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Abstract

Islamic liberation theology emphasizes the importance of man's role as a caliph, who is God's representation on earth. This research seeks to understand the paradigm of human responsibility as a caliph in Islamic liberation. The method used in this research is a literature study. Data collection techniques used in this research were obtained from books, academic journals, the Qur'an and other articles relevant to the research problem. The data analysis technique used is the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. The results of the study explain that the responsibility of human 'Khalifah' in liberation is very large; as a representation of God who is given the ability to think, humans are explained to be emancipatory entities over the chaotic condition of the earth. Realizing liberation in Islam is explained as a form of unity with God; divine affairs are not only matters of transcendental worship but also relate to harmony of human relations with other humans and also nature, and ultimately with liberation as a form of implementing God's orders. Islam explains the importance of liberation with the presence of the Qur'an, which is taught to liberate man from his condition.

Keywords: Islam, responsibility, Caliph, liberation, theology.

Introduction

Human existence in Islam has a significant role in the sustainability that occurs on Earth; as a creature created by God, the existence of humans is God's representation as a caliph on Earth. In QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30 is explained: And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I want to make a caliph on earth". They said, "Do you want to make people who destroy and shed blood there while we praise you and sanctify your name?" He said, "Indeed, I know what you do not know".



Humans are understood as a caliph through the Qur'an, that humans are responsible for life on earth "*Khalifatullah Fi Al-ard'*". The creator has given complete facilities to humans who live on Earth. The functional given is that humans are endowed with four powers: physical strength, mental strength, emotional strength, and the ability to survive. Humans with these four abilities are considered so perfect and endowed with luxurious facilities by the creator that the role of leader or caliph is very appropriate (Sihab, 2020).

As a caliph, humans play a role in prospering the Earth; according to the view of the Qur'an, humans were created as caliphs to manage and utilize the Earth and everything in it in optimal and Sharia-compliant ways (Tomadehe et al., 2020). Caliphate is intended to improve the community's quality of life through social change using Islamic teachings as a tool for social change (Furqon, 2021). This role refers to individuals acting wisely based on their rational choices by divine teachings as overseers. Humans are the unique essence, as God created them as the noblest creatures. They have their freedom and are not controlled by anything, so they can determine the direction of their lives and take responsibility for their decisions (Syari'ati, 1996). Through the role and existence of human beings, humans are responsible for the liberation of all problems in society and nature as representatives of God.

Humans must try to liberate and change their fate for the better, the fate of humans as individuals and as a society. The relevance between humans as caliphs and liberation in Islam cannot be separated. Islam, as *Rahmatan Lil' Alamin*, in the midst of various dehumanization issues that occur, focuses on how Islam can be the enlightener of human problems. Islam teaches that before the divine, humanity is not a weak entity but rather a divine companion, a trusted friend, and a guardian of God's creation on Earth. Man experiences his affinity with God, derives wisdom from Him, and has witnessed the submission and prostration of God's angels to him. This dimensional human being charged with responsibility requires a religion that is not only oriented towards the world and the hereafter alone but emphasizes balance. Man can only fulfil his deep social responsibility through the practice of religion, especially Islam (Syari'ati, 1996).

Humans bear great social responsibility for humanity, justice, freedom, and general human equality. Seeing this, the author tries to see how Islam explains the responsibility of humans as caliphs in Islamic liberation for society. The practice of Islamic liberation tends not to be applied more, rather than understanding Islam with only worship practices so that the great responsibility of humans towards humans ordered by God is put aside. Because the reality of Islamic liberation tends not to be practised, it is important to study and explain the role of humans as caliphs in Islamic liberation. This research is intended to fill the void of previous research on man as a caliph and the role of liberation. Human responsibility as a caliph in Islamic liberation provides a substantial picture from Islam's theological point of view.

Literature Review

Several articles have conducted research related to human responsibility as a caliph. Previous research emphasises the importance of human responsibility in Islamic conception because it is a representative, substitute, and representation of God on earth with his position as a caliph who will be held accountable before God (Ilyas, 2016). In addition, previous studies have discussed the role of humans as caliphs on earth towards social change. The study explains that humans are tasked with improving the community's standard of living with social change using the media of da'wah tools to prosper the earth "*Imaratul Ardh'*" (Furqon, 2021).



Meanwhile, another study aims to investigate the Qur'anic concept of the quality of human life as a caliph and the benefit of other creatures. The author argues that in the Qur'anic concept, the quality of human life as a caliph expected by Allah is those who have more quality of life compared to humans in general, from three indicators in humans, namely the mind, heart, and good deeds (Rusmanto et al., 2021). Based on Islamic teachings, humans are described as having unique quality and must be able to manage this quality into something good. The human qualities and the ability to manage these qualities well will enable us to provide benefits for other creatures through the human function of Khalifah.

Other studies have explained that a caliph must prosper the universe by cultivating God's potential in him. Susanti (2020) concluded that humans as caliphs are ordered to develop the attributes of God according to the orders and instructions given; this human potential can be misused for the sake of pursuing lust or vice versa and can also be used for the sake of creating the welfare of life together. A different study explains the study of humans by exploring the origin of human language and terminology. This study explains much talk in the Qur'an about humans and the philosophical meaning of their creation, starting from the creation of the first human (Adam) and human descendants from Adam (Ananda & Aprison, 2024).

Methodology

The research method used is a literature review, which involves identifying and synthesising existing literature on a particular topic. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge, identifies gaps, and assists in formulating research questions and hypotheses (Snyder, 2019). Data collection techniques are obtained using book sources, academic journals, the Qur'an, and other articles. The data analysis technique in this research is descriptive qualitative, which is used to analyse and interpret the data obtained. Data summarising and collection are obtained from selected sources related to qualitative data, such as quotations, descriptions, and narratives.

Furthermore, I collected, categorised, and organised the data according to themes and patterns. Then, interpret and explain the results related to the implications and significance of the research questions. Followed by the author summarising the main results and drawing conclusions based on descriptive analysis (Kim et al., 2017).

Results and Discussion

Human Essence in the Perspective of the Qur'an

Caliph means representative of Allah on earth; this expression refers to the leader or representative of Allah on earth. Caliph comes from the word Khalifah which means behind or replacing someone's place after his death because the one who replaces is always behind or comes after the one he replaced (Al-isfahani, 1961). As an existence that is given reason, humans can make rational choices about what they will do, very different from other creatures that move instinctively. The caliph is very appropriate if humans bear the responsibility of carrying out their responsibilities; humans are equipped with various potentials, such as reason, that allow humans to do so (Editorial Board of the Islamic Encyclopaedia, 2003). Because of the existence of human reason and reasoning, the task of the human caliphate can be realised; this is the potential given by God so that humans can run the caliphate as God's representative on earth.

From this differentiated quality of life, Allah prepares the tools to achieve that (human) intelligence in the form of hearing, sight, and heart. From these three human intelligence tools, various kinds of intelligence emerge, all of which have been stated in the holy book of the Qur'an, including



Intellect (*Al-Aqlu*), intelligence of the heart "*Al-Qalbu*", intelligence of the eyes of the heart "*Al-Basharu / Uly Al-Abshar*", intelligence of conscience (*Al-Fu'adu*), *Al-Nuha* intelligence, *Al-Hijru* intelligence, and finally *Uly Al-Albab* intelligence (Rusmanto et al., 2021). In Islam, humans are considered the best creation of Allah, and they are given a special role as caliphs on earth called caliphs (Hashemi & Qureshi, 2022). The presence of the potential and duty of the Khalifah makes the responsibility given by God to humans so great and heavy. It is also explained in QS. *Al-Ahzab* [33]: 72 regarding the significant task carried out by humans as caliphs:

"Indeed, we have offered a trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but all of them were reluctant to take up the trust, and they feared that they would not carry it out. Then, the man took up the trust. Indeed, he (man) is very unjust and very foolish".

The magnitude of the mandate given by God to humans through Surah *Al-Ahzab* illustrates how other creatures such as animals of God are unable and refuse to carry out the great task from God so that the task and the mandate are given to humans. Humans are the chosen creatures who are given the trust to carry out the mandate amid all other creatures created by God who are not willing to carry it out or unable to do so. The Qur'an provides clear arguments about humans, describing them as creatures with extraordinary innate potential that can be developed and empowered through education (Wahyudin & Nurlaelah, 2023). As a Caliph, humans are accountable for all their actions and decisions. This accountability is based on the belief that humans are the noblest race and are responsible for their deeds in the mortal world (Ishaq & Rehman, 2021). Humans are discussed in QS. *Al-An'am* [6]: 165 In addition to being given the task of caliphate, humans are tested in their lives to be by the path of God by the orders given:

"It is He who has made you caliphs on the earth and has raised some of you a few degrees above others to test you for what He has given you. Verily, your Lord is swift in His judgment. Indeed, He is most forgiving, most merciful".

The concept of Khalifah recognises the gift of choice given to humans; free will involves the right of moral choice or the ability to make decisions. This philosophy emphasises the importance of using free will to act by ethical principles and divine guidance. Humans can understand the nature of Khalifah as creatures created by Allah to devote themselves to him. The task of humans is to run life according to religious teachings and do good deeds on an ongoing basis so as to glorify their creator. Humans are considered caliphs who must dedicate themselves fully to God and are responsible for prospering the earth according to God's will (Malik & Sugiarto, 2023). Humans are thus expected to carry out their duties as Khalifah with full devotion to God and responsibility for the earth and its contents.

Humans are as complex as caliphs and test God's commands. In addition to God giving divine authority to humans and making humans noble creatures compared to others, humans can practice and be bound by divine teachings in carrying out their lives on earth. QS. *Al-A'raf* [7]: 74 explains:

"And remember when He made you caliphs after the people of 'Ad and placed you on the earth, the flat places you built palaces and the hills you carved out houses. So, remember the favours of Allah and do not cause corruption in the earth".

In this verse, Allah emphasises to humans as caliphs not to do destructive things, in this case, destroying the earth in which there is a continuity of human life and nature. Allah gives a dual role to humans so that life on earth is sustainable and harmonious. Besides humans as servants of Allah, humans are given the role of *khalifatullah fi al-Ard*; what is meant by making humans khalifah is making humans rule on earth (Aini, 2020).



Caliph's Responsibility in Liberation

As a caliph, humans are responsible for managing and regulating life on earth with the living things that exist in it to be maintained; this corresponds to the principles of *Hablum Minannas* and *Hablum Minal 'Alam*. By carrying out the relationship between humans and humans and humans with nature as Allah's command, *Hablum Minallah* or the relationship between humans and Allah is implemented. Because both of these things are teachings and orders from God, doing God's orders is the same as establishing a relationship with God outside of matters of worship in Islam. By QS. Ibrahim [14]: 32, which can be interpreted as the relationship between humans and nature or human relations with each other, is not a relationship between the conqueror and the conquered or between God and the Servant, but a relationship of togetherness in submission to God. Because even though humans can manage (master), this is not due to their power but because God subdues it for humans (Aini, 2020).

The complexity of the problems of community life and nature that occur today due to the exploitation of humans and nature by excessive capitalist actors through markets increasingly leading to neoliberal principles cannot be separated from the attention and responsibility of human liberation as Khalifah in Islamic teachings. Basically, the more destruction that occurs towards the environment and humans, the worse the impact is on the survival of nature and humans alike. Maintaining the balance and preservation of the environment, both natural and social environments that exist on earth, is the duty of the caliph in the activity of reforming the earth, confirming that the mouth of all the principles of human caliphate is the reform of the earth (Majid, 2009). Islamic law recognises the importance of preserving the earth and human responsibility towards nature and the environment. The creation of the universe, including the human cosmos environment (land, water and air), has determined a *qadar* (measure or provision) that must always be maintained and defended. So whoever destroys it, indeed, has destroyed the law of Allah (Angga et al., 2020).

From the Islamic perspective in Islamic economics, property ownership cannot be built by destroying religious values as is the case in capitalist economics, neither does it provide opportunities for absolute freedom of individual ownership because it results in property being concentrated in a handful of certain elite groups, which can create distortions in the economy (Sirajuddin & Tamsir, 2019). Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) contradicts the principles of Islamic economics because it applies a blend of Islamic economic principles and global capitalism. In addition, Islam also emphasizes the importance of social justice and equity in property ownership. In addition, Islam also emphasises the importance of social justice and equitable distribution in property ownership (Muhibbudin, 2021). Based on these conditions, the magnitude of human responsibility as a caliph in Islam includes liberation from economic injustice and ecological imbalance, from freedom that has been co-opted by the capitalist system, which is full of injustice and oppression. The Islamic economic system is a potential solution to poverty alleviation. It emphasises elements such as financing/trading, Zakat (compulsory alms), and interest-free loans to reduce poverty and achieve social justice (Nasrat et al., 2023).

The presence of the Qur'an itself is based on causality aimed at freeing humans from the social chaos (darkness) that occurs so that by referring to the Qur'an's teachings, humans can be liberated to realise justice in society. This is written in QS. Ibrahim [14]: 1 which states Alif Lam Ra, the Qur'an which We have revealed to you (Muhammad) so that by the permission of your Lord you may bring people out of darkness into bright light, (towards) the way of God, the Mighty, the Praiseworthy. This verse explains that the Qur'an was sent to free people from darkness to light, illustrating the meaning of liberation in Islamic teachings. Uniquely in the verse is the word



Alif Lam Ra, which has yet to be fully known the meaning of the word, which has become a discussion among Islamic scholars until now. Some scholars, such as for example Theodor Noldeke, in his book *Geschichte des Qorans*, tried to reveal the meaning of the verse, but this is still a debate and the true meaning of this letter is only known by God (Cholily, 2015).

From the Islamic perspective, justice is affirmed as a principle that requires all elements, including citizens and governments, to be fair in all areas of life, both material and spiritual, by placing everything in its portion or place without partiality (Mansir, 2022; Thamrin et al., 2023). In liberation, God does not want change without human effort to change the fate of one's life for the better; liberation is not a transcendent thing that can be changed by itself without human action. By the word of God in QS. Ar-Ra'a [13]: 11 reads: Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. Humans as caliphs are taught not to stagnate and do nothing towards the condition of helplessness to change their social conditions. Then, humans are the party that liberates the problematic reality on earth, explained in the word of Allah QS. An-Nisa [4]: 135 which reads:

"O you who believe, be you the upholders of justice and witnesses for the sake of Allah, even if the testimony is against yourself, your father's mother, or your relatives. Allah knows better if he (the witness) is rich or poor. So, do not follow your lusts to deviate from the truth. If you twist your words or turn away (from bearing witness), surely Allah is Exhaustive of all that you do".

The context of liberation in Islam is a significant discussion; by God's instructions to uphold the truth and make it right, the oneness of God's "Tawhid" and human enlightenment are interconnected concepts in Islamic thought. Tawhid, or belief in the oneness of God, is a fundamental tenet of Islam that emphasises the unity of humanity and the importance of social justice. On the other hand, human liberation refers to the idea of freeing human beings from oppression, persecution and exploitation (Mujahidin, 2023). Deifying God "tawhid" does not have a dichotomy with liberation, by understanding that deifying God is not merely worshipping him but also carrying out significant liberation for a better change in social conditions through the word of God. The view of glorifying God demands that humans only fear one power, namely the power of God, other than Him, which is a power that is not absolute or false. Tawhid guarantees human freedom and honours him alone. This view moves human beings to fight all the forces of domination, shackles, and humankind's disgrace over humans. Tawhid has the essence of an idea that works for justice, solidarity and liberation (Supriyadi, 2003). In God's words, humans carry out liberation from bad conditions in the midst of humans as a worship of God, explained in QS. Al-Ma'idah [5]: 8 which reads:

"O you who believe, be ye upholders (of the truth) for the sake of Allah (and) witnesses (who act) justly. Do not let your hatred of a people encourage you to be unjust. Be, for that is nearer to Taqwa. Fear Allah. Verily, Allah is mindful of what you do".

The discussion of human responsibility in liberation illustrates Islam's comprehensive dimension of liberation. The command of liberation to promote social justice is explicitly explained through God's words, reminding humans, especially Muslims, to address the problems that occur on earth. Ali Syari'ati believes that humans have a responsibility and an intimate relationship with their environment, reflecting Islam's broader ethical framework. He viewed the concept of Khalifah as a way for humans to fulfil their responsibilities as God's representatives on earth (Kirabaev & Chistyakova, 2023). As a Khalifah who is given more potential, it emphasises the importance of humans striving for ideal social conditions for all human beings rather than being in a state of stagnation and doing nothing because God Himself teaches that human change can be realised through human efforts. The essence of realising liberation is to glorify God Himself; the obligation between divine worship and social liberation is a form of following God's commands and



instructions that there is no dichotomy in it, which, when carrying it out, humans are perfectly pious towards God and demonstrate love for his creation.

Dimensions of Liberation by the Caliph

As God's representatives on earth, human beings as caliphs have a major role in the establishment and maintenance of justice in an area with Muslims in it. Liberation, in the context of justice, includes efforts to realise and guarantee rights for the people as a whole by humanitarian principles. Justice is one of the main values in Islam, and humans are considered *Khalifatullah fil ardh*, who carry the mission of creating and distributing welfare for all humans and nature (Risal, 2022). The task of humans as Khalifah is to prosper the earth for human welfare; Islam views that the earth with all its contents is a mandate from Allah SWT to the Khalifah to be used as well as possible for the common welfare (Syaripudin et al., 2023). As a caliph, humans must ensure that community life is fair so that the reality of community life is created with conditions of peaceful coexistence.

The implementation of Islam's egalitarian practices is an important contributor to the creation of social peace in the world, as it guides society without any discrimination, whether in social laws, political and economic reforms, religious civility, ethical principles, or the application of justice to all societies (Qazi et al., 2021; Lubis et al., 2024). Islam emphasises the importance of upholding human rights and eliminating exploitation. It prohibits slavery and discrimination based on social rank and caste system and advocates economic equality, social justice, and universal brotherhood among all human beings. Islamic principles are aligned with the UN charter and the constitution of the civilised world in building an exploitation-free society (Wadho et al., 2019). The Qur'anic perspective on justice includes giving rights to everyone, avoiding injustice and discrimination, and upholding justice even when facing enemies (Shamsulddin, 2023). Creating peace for society is part of the scope of the role of humans as caliphs. Maintaining the stability of the fulfilment of guaranteed human rights will be effective for the conditions of a peaceful society.

The implementation of liberation by humans as caliphs cannot be separated from the aspect of educational empowerment; education is a determinant aspect in the effort of social transformation towards liberation. Education in Islam is a series of human empowerment processes towards Taklif (maturity), both intellectually, mentally and morally, to carry out the human function carried out as a servant of Allah before his Khaliq and as a "Caretaker" Khalifah in the universe (Tafsir, 1992). According to Habermas (Frankfurt School), education aims to create a more just and democratic society by developing critical thinking skills, political participation, and awareness of social structures. The goal is to achieve liberation from the domination of capitalist ideology (Nicolaidis, 2014; Hafiz et al., 2023). Quality education can free people from ignorance and helplessness and provide solutions to ideas for the problems faced; this puts forward the progress that occurs in the civilisation of society. Education is not only fixated on the normative distribution of knowledge but must be emancipatory and socially controlled over the conditions that occur, which can get us out of trouble.

Caliphs are responsible for ensuring economic empowerment in a region; this encompasses how the community's welfare is created. By creating conditions for economic liberation, humans as caliphs contribute to the liberation of poverty and underdevelopment that commonly still occur in society. The distribution of income and wealth has a significant impact on the welfare of society. This is based on the goal of Islam, which is the desire for the welfare of the people in this world and also in the hereafter. This happens when the basic needs of a society are adequately met, and then there is no difference between the rich and the poor (Fauzia & Kadir, 2014). The Islamic economic system requires the role of government and society as a distribution institution in



realising distribution (economic) justice because creating prosperity is an obligation of the duty of humans as caliphs to create distribution instruments offered by the Islamic Economic System, namely Zakat as a mandatory distribution instrument for individuals to form individual social security (Ihwanudin & Rahayu, 2020).

Liberation in the context of Khalifah also means confrontation with oppression, defending of people with low incomes, and justice for all humans and the God-given environment. In the style of capitalism, humans and the environment are merely objects of subordination to the accumulation of wealth aimed at some capitalist actors who are not conscious of others. The shackles of oppression that occur today, one of which is caused by excessive capitalism, make caliphs dynamic in liberation methods that are used in today's modern era. The practice of exploitation that occurs against humans cannot be separated from the exploitation that occurs against the environment; ecologically, human life with nature is an interrelated life. Ideally, caliphs have two forms of caliphate inherent in humans, as explained in the Qur'an. The two forms are: firstly, Caliphate Kauniya, the authority Allah gives to humans to regulate and utilise nature for human survival on earth. Secondly, Caliphate Sharia is the authority given to humans to prosper the universe. However, it is also true that many natural disasters occur because of poorly considered human actions, as explained in QS. Ar-Ruum verse [30]: 41 (Aini, 2020).

Conclusion

The role of the caliph with the responsibility of liberation relates to two binary things that are interrelated, emphasising the importance of Islam and human beings to realise emancipatory liberation for the enlightenment of the community. Understanding God's commands is not only by the practice of transcendental worship but also by understanding the relationship between humans and the environment as God's teachings, carrying out human relations with humans "Habluminannas" and humans with nature "hablum minal 'alam" is a practice of carrying out human relations with God "Hablumminallah" itself.

The significance of liberation can be seen from the causality of the presence of the Qur'an written in QS. Ibrahim [14]: 1, based on the caliph who, through the word of God, is commanded to realise liberation from the social chaos (darkness) that occurs so that by following the Qur'an, humans can forge transformations aimed at social justice. God explains that He does not freely give social transformation because God will not change a people unless the people themselves want to change it. With liberation, humans as caliphs have glorified God "tawhid" in principle; liberation is acknowledging God's greatness by believing that the inevitability of transformation is God's will when humans make their liberation efforts practicable. As a universal religion, it is very relevant when humans, especially Muslims, become carriers of the divine emancipatory mission for society in general.

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