



THE DECLINE OF ISLAMIC LIBRARIES IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN CIVILIZATION DURING THE CRUSADES

Edgar Restu Pratama¹, Reza Nawafella Alya Parangu²

nawafella@radenintan.ac.id, restuedgar@gmail.com

^{1,2}UIN Raden Intan Lampung

* Corresponding Author, Email: restuedgar@gmail.com

Received: Agustus 2024; Accepted: Oktober 2024; Published: Desember 2024

Abstract

The Crusades that took place between the 11th and 13th centuries had a huge impact not only on politics and the military, but also resulted in serious damage to Islamic libraries in the Middle East. Attacks on major cities such as Jerusalem, Cairo, and Baghdad caused many libraries to be destroyed, with many manuscripts and scholarly works lost to looting and fire. In addition, many scientists and scholars fled, which reduced the interaction and exchange of knowledge that had previously existed. This collapse had long-term effects, seen in the decline of scientific production and the change in focus of scientists to more practical fields, such as medicine and engineering, rather than pure science. While some Muslim scientists began to collaborate with European scientists, many discoveries and innovations from the Islamic scientific tradition could not continue, creating a gap in the development of science. This study uses literature analysis to understand the impact of the Crusades on Islamic libraries and intellectual traditions. The results show that the destruction of Islamic libraries not only caused a great loss of knowledge, but also affected the development of future thought and science. Understanding this history is important to preserve and protect cultural heritage and knowledge so that similar tragedies are not repeated, and to ensure that valuable knowledge remains accessible and is passed on to future generations. Keywords: Keywords consist of three to five relevant words/phrases separated by semicolon

Keyword : The Crusades, Islamic Library, Loss of Knowledge

KERUNTUHAN PERPUSTAKAAN ISLAM PADA PERADABAN TIMUR TENGAH SELAMA PERANG SALIB

Abstrak

Perang Salib yang terjadi antara abad ke-11 dan ke-13 membawa dampak besar tidak hanya pada politik dan militer, tetapi juga mengakibatkan kerusakan yang serius pada perpustakaan Islam di Timur Tengah. Penyerangan terhadap kota-kota besar seperti Yerusalem, Kairo, dan Baghdad menyebabkan banyak perpustakaan hancur, dengan banyak naskah dan karya ilmiah yang hilang akibat penjarahan dan kebakaran. Selain itu, banyak ilmuwan dan cendekiawan yang melarikan diri, yang mengurangi interaksi dan pertukaran pengetahuan yang sebelumnya ada. Keruntuhan ini memiliki efek jangka panjang, terlihat dari penurunan produksi ilmiah dan perubahan fokus ilmuwan ke bidang yang lebih praktis, seperti

kedokteran dan teknik, daripada ilmu pengetahuan murni. Walaupun beberapa ilmuwan Muslim mulai bekerja sama dengan ilmuwan Eropa, banyak penemuan dan inovasi dari tradisi ilmiah Islam tidak dapat dilanjutkan, menciptakan kesenjangan dalam perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis literatur untuk memahami dampak Perang Salib terhadap perpustakaan Islam dan tradisi intelektual. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa kerusakan perpustakaan Islam tidak hanya menyebabkan kehilangan pengetahuan yang besar, tetapi juga mempengaruhi perkembangan pemikiran dan ilmu pengetahuan di masa depan. Memahami sejarah ini penting untuk menjaga dan melindungi warisan budaya serta pengetahuan agar tragedi serupa tidak terulang, serta untuk memastikan bahwa pengetahuan yang berharga tetap dapat diakses dan diwariskan kepada generasi mendatang.

Kata Kunci : Perang Salib, Perpustakaan Islam, Kehilangan Pengetahuan

INTRODUCTION

The Crusades lasted from the 11th to the 13th century, involving armed conflict between European Christian powers and the Islamic caliphate in the Middle East. The war had a huge impact not only on politics and military, but also on Islamic culture and civilization. One of the consequences was the destruction of libraries, which were the center of knowledge at the time. In their heyday, Islamic libraries symbolized intellectual progress. Cities like Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus served as centers of learning that attracted many scholars. However, the Crusades saw many libraries destroyed by warfare, looting and fire. This destruction not only lost valuable books and manuscripts, but also undermined the intellectual tradition that had been built up over centuries. (Sholihah & Sari, 2023)

One of the factors that contributed to the demise of Islamic libraries was the direct attack on major cities that were centers of knowledge. For example, the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099 saw many libraries and educational institutions destroyed. Manuscripts containing scientific, literary and philosophical knowledge were lost in the chaos of war. This created a knowledge vacuum that was difficult to fill. The Crusades resulted in many scientists and scholars fleeing the areas affected by the conflict. They sought refuge in safer places like Persia and North Africa. This migration reduced the interaction and exchange of knowledge that had previously taken place in Islamic centers of learning (Tarigan dkk., t.t.). With less collaboration between scientists, the advancement of science in the Islamic world was hampered.

The collapse of these libraries had a lasting impact, as seen in the decline of scientific production in the Islamic world. After the Crusades, many scientists had to adapt to new conditions. They turned to more practical fields, such as medicine and engineering, rather than pure science. Although much knowledge was lost, some

surviving Muslim scientists began to collaborate with European scientists. It is important to understand that the collapse of Islamic libraries during the Crusades had a major impact on the Islamic world and the development of science globally. Many discoveries and innovations from the Islamic scientific tradition could not be continued or developed after this collapse (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024). As a result, there was a gap in the history of science that is still felt today.

By understanding this historical background, we can better appreciate the importance of preserving knowledge and culture to face future challenges. The collapse of Islamic libraries during the Crusades shows that knowledge is precious and needs to be protected from threats that could destroy it. With a deeper understanding of this history, we can try to prevent similar tragedies from happening in the future.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research method uses a literature study approach in accordance with Sugiyono's guidelines. This approach emphasizes the importance of collecting and analyzing data from various written sources to understand certain phenomena. (Sugiyono, 2022). The main focus of this research is the impact of the Crusades on Islamic libraries and intellectual traditions at that time. This research will collect and analyze various types of literature, such as books, articles, and historical documents that discuss the Crusades, the collapse of libraries, and their effects on the development of knowledge in the Islamic world. Through this method, it is hoped to gain a thorough understanding of how this armed conflict not only physically destroyed libraries, but also damaged the network of knowledge that had been built over centuries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Causing the Demise of the Islamic Library

The main factor that led to the destruction of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades was military attacks. The Crusades were a series of military campaigns by Western European Christian crusaders aimed at reclaiming the Holy Land from Muslims. The crusaders attacked and took control of important cities, such as Jerusalem, Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo. In the process of these conquests, many buildings, including libraries and educational institutions, were subjected to attacks and theft. These attacks resulted in severe damage to the libraries. Crusaders burned, damaged and took valuable collections of books, manuscripts and artifacts. Many important manuscripts and Islamic intellectual works were lost as a result of the theft (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024).

In addition, the military offensive created chaos and instability in the region. Battles and sieges during the war damaged the infrastructure of libraries and educational institutions, leaving many buildings destroyed or severely damaged by attacks and bombings. Many Islamic scholars, scholars and intellectuals suffered death or chose to flee as a result of the crusader attacks. These events disrupted the exchange of knowledge, discussions, and academic activities that normally took place in libraries and educational institutions (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024). The military offensive was the main cause of the collapse of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades. The physical damage, looting, and chaos caused caused great harm to the Islamic intellectual and cultural heritage of the region.

The second factor that led to the collapse of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades was the looting carried out by the crusaders. During the attacks, the

crusaders looted the cities they captured. Libraries and educational institutions were prime targets as they held many valuable books, manuscripts and artifacts. They looted important works from the Islamic libraries in the area. As a result of this looting, the Islamic scientific and cultural heritage suffered a great loss. Many valuable manuscripts, scientific works, poetry and other cultural relics were taken to Europe. (Rothfeld, 2005).

Many were not returned and were lost forever. Looting also hit small libraries as well as private collections belonging to scholars and communities. The loss of these collections disrupted intellectual progress in the Middle East. In addition, looting caused physical damage to libraries. In their quest for treasure, crusaders often damaged library buildings or even set them on fire as a retaliatory measure. Many libraries and educational institutions were completely destroyed, bringing a profound negative impact on the intellectual and cultural heritage of Islam (Rothfeld, 2005).

The third factor in the collapse of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades was the sieges and battles that took place during the conflict. Many cities and intellectual centers in the region came under fierce attacks between crusaders and Muslim forces. In an effort to capture these cities, the crusaders carried out numerous attacks and massive bombardments. These actions had a direct impact on the libraries and educational institutions that existed in these cities. Library buildings and educational institutions were often targeted and damaged by bombings and sieges. These attacks can result in damage to building structures, fires, or even the complete destruction of libraries and their collections. In addition to physical damage, sieges and battles create an atmosphere that is unfavorable to intellectualism and the exchange of knowledge (Muhammed Mu' & Awad, 2023). Conflict and instability in the Middle East disrupted scholarly centers, halting intellectual, research, and learning activities that normally take place in libraries and educational institutions.

The fourth factor that led to the collapse of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades was the limited protection and restoration for Muslims. They were faced with a larger crusader military force and limited resources. The crusaders controlled a lot of territory and carried out surprise attacks, besieged cities, and launched raids (Muhammed Mu' & Awad, 2023). In this way, Muslims had no time to save or protect their library collections. When cities fell to the crusaders, libraries were often looted, burned or destroyed.

After the war, library recovery efforts were also hampered by unstable political and economic conditions. Recovery requires a lot of resources and attention. However, the difficult post-war circumstances made it difficult for Muslims to secure the necessary financial support and resources. These limitations in protection and restoration have resulted in Islamic libraries not having strong defenses and difficulties in repairing the damage done. As a result, many Islamic libraries in the Middle East suffered collapse and severe damage during the Crusades (Muhammed Mu' & Awad, 2023).

The fifth factor that led to the collapse of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades was the limited protection and restoration faced by Muslims. During the Crusades, Muslims faced challenges in protecting their libraries and intellectual heritage. There are several reasons that explain these limitations of protection and restoration:

1. Limited Military Power and Resources

The Muslims faced a stronger Western European Christian crusader army. The crusaders had better weapons, tactics and logistics. Muslims did not have enough military and resources to protect their libraries from this attack (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024).

Internal Divisions and Disputes

2. In addition to the threat from the crusaders, Muslims were also divided into conflicts among political and tribal forces. This infighting undermined efforts to collectively protect libraries and the heritage of knowledge. Political rivalries and battles diverted attention and resources away from library protection (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024).

3. Unstable Political Conditions

The Crusades caused great political instability in the Middle East. Governments and political structures collapsed, resulting in territories becoming divided. This situation hampered the coordination and restoration of libraries. Weak governments were unable to provide adequate protection or allocate resources to revive libraries (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024).

4. Economic Instability

The Crusades also damaged the economy in the Middle East. Infrastructure and trade were disrupted, resources were depleted, and economic activity slowed down. Economic limitations made it difficult for Muslims to obtain the necessary resources to protect and restore their libraries. (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024)

5. Focus on Military Defense During the Crusades

Muslims had to prioritize military defense to deal with the crusaders' attacks. More effort and resources were allocated to defense than to protecting libraries and intellectual heritage. As a result, there was very limited attention and resources for library protection (Wasman & Ahmed, 2024)

The Impact of the Demise of the Islamic Library

Islamic libraries in the Middle East at the time held many scientific and philosophical works that were milestones in the development of knowledge. Classical manuscripts, scholarly works, and treatises that had been written by Muslim scholars

were lost or looted during the looting of libraries. This loss resulted in difficulties in accessing and studying the important thoughts and contributions of the period. Islamic libraries held not only famous works, but also private collections and writings of lesser-known scholars. The loss of these libraries meant the loss of valuable reading and reference materials for future researchers and scholars. This hindered development and progress in scientific inquiry in fields such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and others (Batubara, 2019).

Islamic libraries and educational institutions in the Middle East at that time became important centers for education and knowledge exchange. Scholars, students and intellectuals gathered in libraries to read, study and discuss. The collapse of the libraries resulted in serious disruptions to the process of education and knowledge exchange, thus undermining the intellectual and scholarly traditions that flourished in the Middle East. Libraries stored not only scholarly works, but also works of art, literature, poetry, and other cultural texts (Batubara, 2019). The loss of libraries results in the loss of unique and valuable works of literature and art. This impacts the sustainability and understanding of Islamic cultural heritage, including poetry, music, architecture, and fine arts.

The collapse of Islamic libraries also changed the intellectual landscape in the Middle East. Many scholars, intellectuals and intellectuals fled or died during the Crusades, resulting in the loss of their thoughts and contributions to Islamic knowledge and thought. The lack of access to important intellectual sources and knowledge also hindered the future development of thought and science. The collapse of Islamic libraries during the Crusades had a lasting impact on the loss of knowledge, cultural heritage, and intellectual traditions in the Middle East (Batubara, 2019). This impact is still felt today, as many lost works and knowledge cannot be recovered.

Efforts to Protect and Preserve Islamic Cultural Heritage and Knowledge

During the Crusades, efforts to protect Islamic cultural heritage and knowledge were hampered by constant conflict and attacks. Some important library collections and artifacts were evacuated from areas at risk. Valuable objects such as manuscripts, artworks, and other cultural artifacts were moved to safer locations in Muslim territories, such as Egypt, Sicily, or the east. There are also collections hidden in hidden places, such as caves or underground complexes, to avoid attacks and theft (Haqparast & Salangi, 2024).

Government officials and Muslim leaders have an important role to play in safeguarding Islamic cultural heritage and knowledge. They give directives to troops and communities to protect libraries, mosques and cultural sites from attack. Many Muslim leaders seek to build fortresses and walls around historical places and libraries as a protective measure. Some library collections and Islamic cultural artifacts are stored in educational and religious institutions such as madrassas, mosques and universities (Haqparast & Salangi, 2024). These places are considered safer because they are protected by scholars and ulema. The precious collections are cared for and used for education and research by Muslim scholars.

Some important manuscripts and artworks were recorded and copied by scholars and skilled copyists. These copies served to replace or supplement works that were lost or damaged by crusader attacks. This copying process was crucial in preserving Islamic knowledge and art (AL-ASSA, 2021). Although limited, efforts were made to build new libraries and learning centers in safe areas. Libraries became repositories and disseminators of Islamic knowledge. In addition, they also served as meeting centers for Islamic scholars and thinkers, providing a space to study, discuss and share knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The collapse of Islamic libraries in the Middle East during the Crusades occurred due to various interconnected factors. Military attacks, looting and sieges by the crusaders caused severe damage to library buildings. The loss of manuscript collections and scholarly works, as well as the death or flight of scholars, disrupted the intellectual tradition and exchange of knowledge in the region. The situation was exacerbated by the lack of protection and restoration due to internal divisions, political instability and poor economic conditions. This hampered efforts to preserve Islamic cultural heritage and knowledge.

The impact of this collapse was significant, leading to the loss of many valuable scientific, literary and artistic works. It also changed the intellectual direction of the Middle East. Despite efforts to preserve cultural heritage during the conflict, much of the knowledge and important contributions from the period remained lost. The collapse of Islamic libraries during the Crusades not only resulted in a great loss of knowledge, but also influenced the future development of thought and science, with repercussions that are still felt today.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

- AL-ASSA, A. (2021). Manuscript Of The Islamic Libraries In Jerusalem. *RIMAK International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 03(07), 202–214. <https://doi.org/10.47832/2717-8293.7-3.18>
- Batubara, T. (2019). Mengukur Intelektual Muslim Dari Kualitas Perpustakaan. *Iqra*, 13(1). <https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/iqra/article/view/4363/2152>
- Haqqparast, H., & Salangi, M. M. (2024). Impact of Islamic Civilization on the European Intellectual Awakening: An Analytical Study. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 57–62. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v3i1.223>
- Muhammed Mu', P., & Awad, N. (2023). The Crusaders' Axe And Islamic Crescent : A New Theory On The Crusaders' History In The East (12TH -13TH Centuries A.D.). *RUSSIAN LAW JOURNAL*, XI, 8. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0945-4183>
- Rothfeld, A. (2005). Returning Looted European Library Collections : An Historical Analysis Of The Offenbach Archival Depot, 1945-2948. *A Journal Of Rare Book, Manuscript and Cultural Heritage*, 6(1). <https://rbm.acrl.org/index.php/rbm/article/view/238/238>
- Sholihah, H. A., & Sari, K. E. (2023). Kontribusi Perpustakaan Islam terhadap Era Renaissans di Eropa: Perspektif Historis. *Warisan: Journal of History and Cultural Heritage*, 4(2), 48–55. <https://doi.org/10.34007/warisan.v4i2.1921>
- Sugiyono. (2022). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D*. ALFABETA.
- Tarigan, M., Monica, S., & Aloira, D. (t.t.). *Studi Literatur tentang Faktor-faktor yang Mempengaruhi Kemunduran Pendidikan Islam*. <https://doi.org/10.17467/jdi.v6i3.2394>
- Wasman, S. M., & Ahmed, A. R. (2024). The impact of the Crusades on the cultural and scientific aspects of Europeans and Muslims. *Twejer*, 7(1), 565–599. <https://doi.org/10.31918/twejer.2471.20>