

# A Comparative Analysis of Roman-Persian Political and Economic Periods with Contemporary Islamic Perspectives

## Abstract

This study investigates the comparative dynamics of economic politics during the Roman-Persian period and the contemporary era through the lens of Islamic economic principles. It explores key dimensions such as resource management, wealth distribution, and the societal impact of policy, particularly in relation to social inequality, resource exploitation, and moral degradation. Employing a qualitative methodology based on an extensive literature review of secondary sources, this research reveals that while the Roman-Persian political economy succeeded in maintaining imperial stability, it also perpetuated significant social disparities through excessive taxation and territorial exploitation. In contrast, the modern economic paradigm, driven by technological innovation and global integration, remains susceptible to systemic crises and widening inequities. The findings suggest that core Islamic tenets—namely zakat, the prohibition of usury (riba), and equitable wealth distribution—offer a normative framework for constructing a more just and resilient economic order, both historically and in contemporary contexts.

**Keywords:** Political Economy; Roman Period, Persian Period; Contemporary Period; Islamic Perspective

## Introduction

The history of human civilization has always been colored by intertwined political and economic dynamics, including during the heyday of the two great empires, namely Rome and Persia. These two kingdoms not only competed in the military realm, but also in economic and political strategy, which made them the dominant world power for centuries. In the context of Islam, the analysis of this period is important because many Islamic values and teachings

were born and developed in the midst of this civilization. Therefore, the comparison between the political and economic conditions of the Roman-Persian period and the contemporary period from an Islamic perspective becomes relevant to understand the patterns and challenges faced by the modern world (Ahmad, 2013).

During the Roman and Persian periods, economic power depended heavily on the state's ability to control strategic areas, such as the Silk Road and the Mediterranean Sea. This allowed them to master international

trade and create a stable economic system. On the other hand, the political system of these two empires is based on the power of an absolute monarchy that concentrates control on a single leader figure. Despite fundamental differences in government systems, both the Romans and Persians emphasized political and economic stability as the main foundation of their glory (Lapidus, 2011).

In the contemporary context, global political and economic dynamics have undergone significant changes with the emergence of democratic countries and global capitalism. The modern political system emphasizes more on the participation of the people through democracy, while the economic system shifts to capitalism which focuses on the free market. However, as with the Roman and Persian periods, the challenge of maintaining political and economic stability remains a major issue faced by many countries (Kennedy, 2014).

From an Islamic perspective, both the Roman-Persian period and the contemporary period have relevance in terms of political and economic ethics. Islam emphasizes the principles of justice, social welfare, and the responsibility of rulers to their people. In classical times, the caliphate system of government was often seen as an attempt to balance political power and economic well-being, similar to the challenges faced by the Romans and Persians. In contemporary times, many Muslim-majority countries face the same dilemma in trying to balance the demands of modernity with Islamic values (Ansary, 2012).

This comparative study is not only important for understanding historical dynamics, but also offers insights into how Islamic principles can be applied in today's political and economic contexts. By

comparing the conditions of these two different times, we can draw important lessons about how Islam views the relationship between politics and economics, as well as how these values can be applied in the face of today's global challenges (Shatzmiller, 2014).

## **Literature review**

### **1. Political Economy**

Political economy is a field of study that examines the relationship between political and economic policies. Basically, political economy focuses on how government policies affect the economy, as well as how economic dynamics can influence political decisions. In a broader context, political economy involves questions about the distribution of wealth, power, and resources in society (Fadlan, 2010). Therefore, to achieve ideal and comprehensive economic growth, the distribution of wealth must be considered. In the view of the Islamic economic system, the poor distribution of wealth in the community has an impact on poverty and economic inequality (HTI, 2017). The welfare and economic growth of the people will be realized, because Islamic economic politics is to ensure that the basic needs of each individual citizen can be met. Islam has made the state a guarantor of the fulfillment of the basic needs (food, board, clothing, health, education and security) of the people (Maliki, 2001). In Islamic teachings, it is also allowed for the state to have a special ownership of the wealth. In addition, Islamic political economy distinguishes between the basic needs of individuals and the basic needs of society, including the mechanism for their fulfillment (an-Nabhani, 2010).

### **2. Roman civilization**

Roman civilization is often juxtaposed with the civilizations of Ancient

Greece, Ancient Egypt, Persia and China. This is based on the Roman civilization in the field of buildings which has similarities with the civilizations mentioned. The Romans did adopt and imitate the forms of Greek civilization (Karim, 2015). The Roman Empire is known as the ruler of Europe and the World. No one could match the Roman rule of the time, other than Persia. The Romans were able to take over the Western world civilization from Greece for up to 500 years, and were able to become the dominant power in Europe for up to 200 years. During Diocletian's reign, the Roman empire was divided into two large regions, namely Western Rome with the capital Milan led by Diocletian, and Eastern Rome with the capital Nicomedia under the leadership of Maximian who was a friend of Diocletian (Lucas, 1993). In addition, in governing the state the Romans had a significant role in regulating the economy. Fiscal, monetary, and regulatory policies issued by the state greatly affect economic activity. Where is the Roman currency The Roman currency, the denarius, plays an important role in the world economy (Nawawi, 2009).

### 3. Persian Civilization

The Persian Kingdom is a kingdom that holds the principle of freedom, individualism towards its territory. He allowed his colony to develop its own character, traits and culture. Politically, Persia has central or centralized power (Achmad, 2010). The Persian economy, particularly during the Achaemenid Empire, also focused on agriculture with a network of sophisticated irrigation systems that supported agricultural productivity. In addition, cross-border trade flourished, especially along the Silk Road. The Persian Empire had a good road system that facilitated trade (Choirul, 2017). However, in the end, the condition of the Persian

kingdom worsened after many wars were fought by the Emperors, both with the Roman Empire and with others, such as the Arabs. The war was costly, so the kingdom's economic condition deteriorated; farmers and workers lose their income, the price of basic commodities rises drastically, so that it cannot be reached by even small or medium communities (Ilham, 2013)

### 4. Contemporary period

The application of contemporary politics reflects the changes and complexities in the way governments and societies deal with modern political issues. The application of contemporary politics does not only involve government policies, but also involves public response and participation in responding to the development of the times (Ar Rasyidet, 2023). In this era, the establishment of global communication and interaction networks has encouraged the creation of a more integrated and interdependent political reality. In addition, the influence of globalization creates new demands for governments to manage domestic policies, requiring the courage to be more open to various influences and challenges that originate from outside national borders. The application of politics that is responsive to global information flows, international economic development, and cultural dynamics is essential in responding to rapidly evolving global challenges (Noorikhsanet, 2023). On the other hand, advances in information technology are influencing the way politics is conducted, introducing new elements in contemporary political strategy. Social inequality and justice are serious challenges that require policies that support inclusion and reduce disparities in society. Environmental crises, especially climate change, demand sustainable policies and focus on

environmental protection (Rachman and Santoso, 2023).

## Method

This study will use a qualitative method with a historical-comparative approach to analyze the comparison of the Roman-Persian political and economic period with the contemporary era from an Islamic perspective (Alwani, 2020). At this stage, a literature study is used on secondary sources related to the political and economic period of the Roman and Persian periods, as well as the development of the economic and political development of the Islamic world. These sources include classical Islamic history, historical literature, and the results of contemporary studies on economics and politics in the Islamic world. The sources of this literature will be analyzed comprehensively with the aim of exploring the economic and political principles of the period, as well as their relevance and application in the contemporary context (Ahmad, 2019).

The next stage is a comparative analysis that will compare the political-economic policies of the Roman-Persian period with Islamic principles, both in the classical and modern periods. This approach will look at similarities and differences in economic policies such as taxation systems, wealth distribution, and trade mechanisms, as well as compare how they are relevant in the contemporary economic system of the Islamic world (Khan, 2021). The data obtained will be analyzed using contemporary Islamic economic theories as well as the concept of *maqasid al-shariah* (sharia goals), to ensure that this comparison is not only historically relevant, but also relevant in today's global context (Chapra, 2018).

## Results and Discussion

### Centralization of Power in the Roman Empire in an Islamic Perspective

The Roman Empire was known for its highly centralized political system under the rule of an emperor. In the days of the Roman Republic, power was divided between the Senate and other institutions, but after Augustus became the first emperor in 27 BC, the republican system was slowly replaced by a veiled monarchy. The emperor held full control over the military, law, and government, and gained political legitimacy from his religious status as "Pontifex Maximus", the supreme religious leader of the state. This centralization makes it easier to manage large areas, but it also reduces the political participation of the people, creating a highly hierarchical and elitist government structure (Richard, 2002).

In Persia, the centralized political system was also very strong under the leadership of the Shahanshah (Royal King). Shahanshah's rule was not only political but also religious, especially in the Sassanid dynasty which adhered to Zoroastrianism. Shahanshah is seen as God's representative on earth and is responsible for the welfare of the entire kingdom (Clifford, 1986). As in Rome, Shahanshah's power was unlimited and he controlled a large and complex bureaucracy. The satrapic system, in which the empire was divided into provinces led by satraps (governors), allowed central power to be exercised in remote areas. However, despite the local autonomy, the satraps still have to submit to the Shahanshah (Fergus, 1977).

Both empires, the Romans and Persians, used powerful bureaucracies to maintain control over their vast territories. In Rome, the bureaucracy flourished under the reigns of Emperors Diocletian and Constantine who introduced a "tetrarki" system to divide power between the four rulers, but still retained the highest authority in the hands of the emperor. This

bureaucratic structure ensured effective tax collection and military control throughout the empire. In Persia, the bureaucratic structure was well organized through a satrapi system that allowed the Shahanshah to control the provinces effectively. Satrapi played an important role in collecting taxes and maintaining order in the imperial territory (Touraj, 2009).

Religion played an important role in legitimizing centralized power in both Rome and Persia. After Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity, it became an important tool to strengthen the emperor's authority as the protector of religion and the state. In the Persian context, the Shahanshah is considered a religious and secular leader, who controls the rituals of Zoroastrianism. This political centralization allowed the rulers in both empires to utilize religion as an effective tool of social and political control. Although different in their religions, the two empires used the concept of "divine right" to strengthen their authority (Michael, 2008).

In an Islamic perspective, political power should not be absolute as seen in the Roman and Persian systems. Power in Islam is governed by sharia which puts God's law above all else. The caliph in Islam is not an absolute ruler, but a leader who is responsible to the ummah and to Allah. The Islamic political system is more decentralized with strict supervision of leaders to ensure that their policies are in accordance with the principles of justice and the common good. Unlike the Romans and Persians who placed the ruler in the highest position without clear legal restrictions, Islam limited the power of the ruler so that exploitation would not occur (Imran, 1994).

### **Territorial and Economic Expansion in the Roman, Persian, and Islamic Perspectives**

The Roman Empire was known for its aggressive policy of territorial expansion, starting from the Republican period to the Imperial period. The main goal of expansion is to secure economic resources and expand political influence. Each conquered territory not only became a source of taxes but also supplied important resources such as grain, minerals, and slaves. This expansion allowed Rome to control major trade routes in the Mediterranean and Europe. However, extensive conquest also requires high costs in defending large territories, both in terms of military and administration (Richard, 2002).

Persia, especially under the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties, also had a long history of territorial expansion. Like the Romans, Persia conquered strategic areas rich in natural and human resources. Persia controlled important trade routes between Asia and Europe, such as the Silk Road, which provided great economic benefits. The Persian Empire established an efficient tax system to manage the revenues of their provinces, which were governed through a satrapic system. Nevertheless, as with the Romans, the large cost of maintaining large areas was often a burden on the empire's economy, especially during periods of prolonged war against the Romans (Garth, 1993).

In the Islamic perspective, territorial expansion is carried out not solely for economic exploitation, but rather for the spread of Islamic teachings and justice. During the time of Khulafaur Rashidin and the Umayyad dynasty, expansion was carried out to spread Islam, and the conquered territories were enacted a system of social justice that was more equitable than during the previous reign.

Resources from the conquered territories are used for the public good, through instruments such as zakat and kharaj (land tax). In contrast to the Romans and Persians, who emphasized economic exploitation for imperial interests, the Islamic economic system aims to create social justice and reduce economic inequality (Touraj, 2009).

When compared to modern economic and expansion policies, the system implemented in Rome and Persia bears a resemblance to the strategies of capitalist countries that utilize the territory and resources of developing countries for their economic interests (Clifford, 1986). Islam, on the other hand, offers a different, more ethical approach to treating the controlled territories. In Islam, the wealth from territorial expansion is not used for the benefit of the political elite alone, but is distributed for the prosperity of the general public. This can be seen in Islamic economic instruments such as zakat, which requires an equal distribution of wealth, and the prohibition of *riba* which prevents economic exploitation (Imran, 2000).

### **Roman and Persian Economic Systems in Islamic Perspective**

The Roman Empire had an economic system that relied heavily on agriculture, slavery, and trade. The Roman economy was basically agrarian-based, where most of the economic production came from large areas of agricultural land. These lands were managed by an elite of landowners, while slave labor was used to cultivate the land and produce commodities such as wheat, wine, and olive oil. Land taxes taken from conquered provinces were also a major source of revenue for the empire. In addition, trade was also an important sector for the Roman economy, especially cross-regional trade through the Mediterranean Sea which made Rome a

center for the distribution of goods from Asia, Africa, and Europe (Duncan-Jones, 1982)

The Persian economy, particularly under the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties, also relied heavily on an efficient tax system and international trade. The Persian Empire developed an extensive trade network by connecting the Silk Road from China to the Mediterranean Sea (Frye, 2004). Taxes collected from conquered territories as well as revenues from interprovincial trade became the foundation of the empire's economy. Like the Romans, Persia also had an agrarian economy, but with a great focus on administration and a strong bureaucracy to manage the tax system. Land taxes, individual taxes, and levies from ports and markets became the main sources of revenue for the empire. In addition, Persia also utilized slave labor, although the scale of its use was not as large as in Rome (Scheidel, 2012).

In the Roman economic system, slavery played a central role. Slaves were used massively in farms, mines, and households, providing cheap labor that supported economic production. Dependence on slaves became a hallmark of the Roman economy, and the exploitation of slaves provided great economic benefits to the elite. On the other hand, Persia also practiced slavery, although the slave system was not the main foundation of the economy as it was in Rome. In Persia, slaves are generally used for domestic tasks and large-scale construction projects, such as palace construction and infrastructure, but are less reliable in the agricultural sector (Daryaei, 2009).

The Islamic economic system provides criticism of the exploitation that occurred in the Roman and Persian economic systems, especially related to the inequality of wealth distribution and the use of slaves. Islam

teaches more equitable economic principles, such as zakat, the prohibition of usury, and the encouragement to treat workers fairly. Zakat acts as a tool for wealth redistribution to help the poor, while the prohibition on *riba* avoids exploitation in financial transactions. Islam also seeks to abolish slavery gradually by encouraging the emancipation of slaves as a noble act. In terms of trade, Islam supports fair trade and prohibits practices that harm or deceive consumers, in contrast to exploitative economic practices often seen in Rome and Persia (Nyazee, 2000).

### **The Influence of Religion on Politics in the Roman Empire, Persia, and Islamic Perspectives**

Religion had a significant influence on the politics of the Roman Empire, especially after the legalization of Christianity as an official religion during the reign of Emperor Constantine in the early 4th century AD. Prior to the adoption of Christianity, Rome adopted polytheism that believed in many gods and facilitated the worship of the emperor as a divine being. Roman emperors were often considered figures equal to gods, and this worship of emperors was used to strengthen the legitimacy of their political power. However, with the acceptance of Christianity as the official religion, the relationship between religion and politics has undergone a major change. Christianity became the main instrument to strengthen the authority of the emperor, who claimed to be God's representative on earth. The church and the state became two important pillars in maintaining power, and the synergy between spiritual and political authority becomes increasingly close (MacMullen, 1984).

In the Persian Empire, Zoroastrianism played an important role in

the political structure. The kings of Persia, especially during the reigns of the Achaemenid and Sassanid dynasties, claimed that they were given authority by Ahura Mazda, the supreme god in Zoroastrianism. Shahanshah (Royal King) is considered to be the deputy god of the earth, who carries great responsibility to maintain justice (*asha*) and combat chaos (*druj*). Zoroastrianism gave divine legitimacy to kings, which strengthened their political power. Zoroastrianist priests, known as *magi*, also played an important role in government, and this close relationship between the state and religion made Persian political power not only secular but also religious (Daryaee, 2009).

In contrast to the Roman Empire and Persia, in Islam, religion is not only a tool to legitimize political power, but also the main source of law and government. From an Islamic perspective, political power is not absolute because it is limited by *sharia* (Islamic law). Muslim leaders, including caliphs, do not rule by personal will or unlimited divine legitimacy, but must follow legal principles derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In the early history of Islam, caliphs were considered servants of the *ummah* (*khadim al-ummah*) who were responsible for upholding justice, safeguarding the welfare of the people, and ensuring that all political decisions were in accordance with *sharia*. Thus, in the Islamic political system, religion is not just a political tool, but the main foundation that governs all aspects of government (Brown, 1996).

In Roman and Persian history, there are various dynamics in the relationship between religion and the state. In Rome, although Christianity became the official religion, there were often conflicts between the church and the state, especially when political power sought to dominate the

church. This was seen in several periods when the Roman emperor tried to control the appointment of bishops and intervene in theological doctrines (Bosworth, 1984). In Persia, relations between the state and religion were generally more harmonious, but there were also tensions when the Sassanid kings sought to impose their dominance over religious authority. In Islam, the relationship between religion and politics also faced challenges, especially in the post-Khulafaur Rashidin period when the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphate began to implement more centralistic and sometimes contrary to Islamic egalitarian principles (Nyazee, 2000).

### **Distribution of Wealth in Roman, Persian, and Islamic Perspectives**

The Roman Empire showed enormous inequality in the distribution of wealth. Most of the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the elite, including emperors, senators, and wealthy landowners. The Roman social system was based on rigid classes, with the nobility and the senate holding control of farmland and other large assets, while the majority of Roman society were small farmers, workers, or slaves living in poverty (Scheidel, 2012). The tax system that the Romans applied, especially in the conquered provinces, often exacerbated this inequality, as most of the tax revenue went to the center of the empire to finance the military and major projects such as the construction of roads, fortifications, and monuments. This unequal distribution of wealth creates significant social disparities, often fueling rebellion and political instability (Temin, 2013).

Like the Romans, the Persian Empire also had an economic system that favored the concentration of wealth among the nobility and the political elite. The Persian nobles, particularly in the Sassanid dynasty, held

great privileges, including extensive land ownership and control over important economic resources. Wealth was derived from taxes collected from the imperial provinces, and large revenues were also generated from international trade, especially along the Silk Road (Daryaei, 2009). Nonetheless, Persia also had a limited policy of redistribution through an efficient administrative system, but the main focus remained on maintaining wealth among the political elite and the nobility. The gap between the common people and the elite remained high, with farmers and workers receiving a very small share of the imperial wealth (Bosworth, 1996).

In the Islamic perspective, the fair distribution of wealth is one of the fundamental principles that marks a significant difference with the Roman and Persian systems. Islam teaches that wealth should circulate throughout society and not be concentrated only in a group of wealthy people. Instruments such as zakat, alms, and the prohibition of usury aim to reduce social inequality and ensure that the less fortunate, including the poor, receive a share of the wealth circulating in society. Zakat, for example, is an obligation for wealthy Muslims to distribute a portion of their wealth to the needy, which helps to redistribute wealth structurally. In addition, Islam prohibits economic exploitation through usury, which is often one of the main causes of economic injustice. Thus, the Islamic economic system aims to create a balance between the well-being of individuals and the interests of the wider community, in contrast to the unequal distribution of wealth in Rome and Persia (Nyazee, 2000).

### **Trading Systems in the Roman, Persian, and Islamic Perspectives**



The Roman Empire had a highly integrated and extensive trading system, which covered a wide range of regions from Europe, the Middle East, to North Africa. Roman infrastructure, such as well-built highways, ports, and naval networks, helped facilitate the flow of trade between provinces. The main products traded included agricultural products, wine, olive oil, spices, and commodities from the colonies. In addition, the Romans also played an important role in cross-regional trade, such as trade with India and China through the Silk Road. However, this trading system relied heavily on military power to maintain the security of trade routes and to force the colonies to make economic contributions through taxes and products. The wealth from this trade is often concentrated in large traders and political elites, while the lower class benefits little from this trade (Temin, 2013).

The Persian Empire, especially during the Sassanid dynasty, also had a highly developed trading system, with the Silk Road being one of the main routes connecting East and West. Persia played an important role as an intermediary in trade between Rome, India, China, and other regions of Central Asia. In addition, Persia had access to important ports in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, which allowed them to engage in maritime trade with India and Southeast Asia (Daryaei, 2009). Trade in commodities such as silk, spices, precious metals, and luxury goods was an important element in the Persian economy. Just like the Romans, the Persians also harnessed military power to secure trade routes and expand their control over important areas in the international trade network (McLaughlin, 2014).

In the Islamic perspective, trade is seen as a noble and important activity in the economic and social development of the

community. The Prophet Muhammad himself was known as a merchant before becoming an Apostle, and Islam encourages fair, honest, and transparent trade activities. Islam also emphasizes the principles of equality and fairness in trade, so practices that are considered exploitative such as *riba* are strictly prohibited. During the Islamic Caliphate, especially during the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphate, international trade flourished. Trade routes between the Islamic world, India, Africa, and Europe became very important. The market system in the Islamic world is well regulated, with strict regulations to prevent fraud in the price and quality of goods. The state also plays an important role in ensuring the security of trade routes and enforcing Islamic law in markets (Lapidus, 2014).

The Roman and Persian trading systems were driven by the need to strengthen the political and economic power of the elite, while in Islam, trade was directed to the welfare of society in general. Infrastructure in Rome and Persia was built to maximize profits for the empire, whereas in Islam, trade was governed by the principles of fairness and equality to prevent excessive economic inequality. In addition, Islam prohibits the practice of usury, which is very common in Roman and Persian economies, which helps prevent exploitation in trade transactions (Lewis, 1987).

### **Property Rights in Islam**

In Islam, property rights are recognized as part of human rights, but with responsibilities that come with them. Islam allows individuals to own personal wealth and property, but reminds that such wealth must be managed in accordance with *sharia*, which emphasizes social justice and moral responsibility. Property rights in Islam are not absolute, but subject to the rules set by

Allah. This principle emphasizes that in the end all wealth belongs to God, and man is only a trustee to use it wisely and fairly. Every property owned must be obtained in a halal way, and used for the benefit of oneself and the society as a whole (Nyazee, 2000).

Although Islam gives individuals the freedom to own property, there are restrictions imposed for the sake of the general welfare. For example, the practice of *riba* (interest) is strictly prohibited in Islam, because it is considered a form of exploitation that can harm other parties (Chapra, 1992). In addition, Islam also regulates the distribution of wealth through instruments such as *zakat*, *infaq*, and *alms*, which aim to prevent the accumulation of wealth in the hands of only a few rich people. *Zakat* is an obligation that requires the owner of wealth to set aside part of his property to help the less fortunate. With this rule, Islam seeks to create a balance in the distribution of wealth, as well as prevent extreme economic inequality (Lewis, 1987).

In the contemporary context, the property system in Islam can be seen as a middle ground between capitalism and socialism. Capitalism encourages absolute private property rights, which can lead to great social inequality, while socialism restricts private property rights and prioritizes collective ownership (El-Ashker, 2006). In Islam, private property is recognized, but on the condition that the wealth must be used for the benefit of society at large. Principles such as *zakat* and the prohibition of usury make the Islamic system more socially just compared to capitalism, but still respect the right of individuals to own wealth, in contrast to socialism which tends to abolish private property rights. Thus, property rights in Islam are not only oriented to the individual

but also to the welfare of the community (Akram, 1994).

### **Social Justice in Islam and Its Comparison with Roman-Persia**

Social justice is one of the core principles in the Islamic political and economic system. Islam emphasizes that every individual has rights that must be fulfilled by society and the state, including the right to a decent life, obtaining education, and gaining access to basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter (Chapra, 1979). In the Qur'an and Hadith, many teachings emphasize the importance of balance in the distribution of wealth and fair opportunities for all. Social justice in Islam is realized through various instruments, including *zakat*, *alms*, *waqf*, and the distribution of wealth through inheritance, which aims to prevent extreme economic inequality and ensure that wealth does not only revolve among the rich (QS Al-Hasyr: 7) (Hasanuzzaman, 1981).

The Roman and Persian empires, despite having structured legal and social systems, often failed to realize social justice for all levels of society. In Rome, a rigid social structure with a class division between the elite, nobles, and slaves led to great inequality. The Roman elite controlled most of the wealth, while the lower classes, including peasants and slaves, often lived in difficult conditions without many opportunities to improve their economic status (Kamali, 2005). Similarly, in the Persian Empire, power and wealth were concentrated in the hands of kings and nobles, with commoners and workers not enjoying the same welfare. The social structure in these two empires favored the ruling class and paid less attention to the equitable distribution of wealth (Lewis, 1991).

In the contemporary context, the principle of Islamic social justice seeks to overcome the social inequalities generated by the capitalist system that tends to benefit a few rich people. Instruments such as zakat act as a mechanism for redistributing wealth that is directly aimed at the disadvantaged (Nyazee, 2000). In addition, Islam also emphasizes the importance of social responsibility for each individual and state, especially in ensuring that everyone has equitable access to economic resources. In Islam, the government is responsible for upholding social justice and preventing economic exploitation that harms small communities. This is different from the Roman and Persian systems, which focused more on accumulating wealth by the state to support the political and military elites, without paying much attention to the welfare of the wider community (Chapra, 1992).

### **Comparison with Contemporary Systems**

During the Roman Empire and the Persian Empire, politics and economics were heavily influenced by a centralized hierarchical structure. Power was held by the elite, both in the form of emperors (Romans) and shah (Persians), with economic power concentrated in the state and nobility. Both controlled the distribution of wealth through a strict tax system and a monopoly on land and international trade. In this context, trade and diplomatic relations serve to strengthen state power, focusing on territorial expansion and resource exploitation in conquered areas. Natural resources and military power are the main capital of the country to maintain its hegemony. In Islam, this system is contrary to the principles of more equitable distribution of wealth and

the empowerment of the wider community (Lewis, Bernard, 1993).

In contemporary economics, globalization and economic democracy provide a wider distribution of wealth, although inequality still exists. Many contemporary countries have adopted free markets and open international trade policies, where the private sector has a major role in creating economic growth (Hodgson, Marshall G. S, 1974). Although the state still has a role through regulation, economic liberalization allows the middle class and private businesses to flourish. Islam, in this case, encourages a just economic system in which zakat, infaq, and alms become instruments of wealth redistribution. This principle seeks to avoid the accumulation of wealth in only a few elites or rulers, as happened in the Roman-Persian era (Crone, Patricia, 2015).

This comparison shows that in an Islamic perspective, economic justice takes precedence. The elitist and centralized Roman-Persian system was contrary to Islamic principles that promoted equal distribution of wealth, social justice, and broad community participation in the economy. In the contemporary economy, despite improvements in terms of economic access, the challenge of inequality is still very real, and Islam provides solutions through an economic system oriented towards the public interest and a fair distribution of wealth.

### **Application of Islamic Economic Principles in the Modern Era**

Islamic economics has very different principles from the economic systems that developed during the Roman and Persian Empires. Both empires relied on a highly elitist hierarchical system, with the distribution of wealth centralized in the hands of a few elites or rulers. Wealth is

generated from taxes levied from the general public and the exploitation of land and international trade, which is controlled by the state. In Islamic economics, the principles of justice, equal distribution of wealth, and concern for others are the basis of an economic system that aims to avoid a monopoly of wealth by a few. Islam emphasizes the importance of zakat, infaq, alms, and waqf as instruments of wealth redistribution that help narrow the economic gap among members of the community (Chapra, M. Umer, 1992).

The application of Islamic economic principles in the modern era can be seen in several aspects, such as a sharia-based financial system that prioritizes the principle of prohibition of usury (interest) and fairness in transactions (Kahf, Monzer, 2003). One of the modern applications of Islamic economics is the development of Islamic banking around the world. In this system, profits are obtained through profit sharing (*mudharabah*) and partnerships (*musharakah*), where risks and profits are shared between capital owners and entrepreneurs. This is different from the conventional banking system which focuses on fixed loan interest. Islamic economics encourages fair and transparent transactions and prohibits exploitation, thus creating a more ethical and sharia economic climate (Siddiqi, M. Nejatullah, 1981).

In addition, socio-economic instruments such as zakat and waqf have significant relevance in the context of the modern economy. Zakat as a form of wealth redistribution is mandatory for Muslims who can afford it and is distributed to those in need. This is in line with government efforts in many Muslim countries to reduce poverty and social inequality. Waqf has also developed into a more modern financial instrument, such as in the form of cash waqf managed by financial institutions or

foundations. Cash waqf allows the assets to be invested in the productive sector, and the proceeds are used for social benefits. This shows that the principles of Islamic economics are able to adapt to the dynamics of the modern economy without sacrificing Islamic moral and ethical values (Asutay, Mehmet, 2011).

## Conclusion

The political economy of the Roman and Persian periods was greatly influenced by the centralization of power and the strict control of the state over resources. Both empires relied on a hierarchical system that placed power and wealth in the hands of a few elites, while most of the people were the subject of exploitation, mainly through taxation and land tenure. These structures aim to maintain political and military power, but also magnify economic injustices, ultimately widening the gap between rich and poor. From an Islamic perspective, such a system is incompatible with the principles of social justice and equitable distribution of wealth, which are an important foundation in Islamic economics.

In the contemporary era, despite the existence of a more liberal and participatory global economic system, economic inequality remains a major challenge. The modern capitalist economic system tends to create inequality in which most of the world's wealth is controlled by a small group of people, similar to the pattern of wealth distribution in the Roman-Persian period. However, Islam provides solutions through economic instruments designed to ensure justice, such as zakat, infaq, alms, and waqf. The Islamic economic system also emphasizes the prohibition of *riba* and economic exploitation, which helps reduce the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few people and funnel that wealth to the wider community, especially those in need.

So in conclusion, a comparison between Roman-Persian economic politics and contemporary economic systems shows that despite progress in economic participation, inequality still remains a major issue. Islam offers a more ethical, fair, and sustainable approach to the economy, by prioritizing an equitable distribution of wealth and ensuring social welfare. In the modern context, the application of Islamic economics through Islamic banking, productive waqf, and zakat instruments shows the relevance of Islamic principles in facing today's global economic challenges. These principles, if applied more broadly, can help reduce economic inequality and create a more just and prosperous society.

## REFERENCE

- Ahmad, K. (2013). Islamic economic framework and development: A comparative study with modern economic systems. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 19(3).
- Ahmad, M. (2019). The comparative analysis of Byzantine and Persian empires from Islamic economic perspective. *Journal of Islamic Civilization*, 12(2), 77–90.
- Akram, M. (1994). *An introduction to Islamic economics*. International Institute of Islamic Thought.
- Alston, R. (2002). *Aspects of Roman history AD 14–117*. Routledge.
- Alwani, T. J. (2020). Islamic economic thought in historical perspective. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 35(1), 45–66.
- Asutay, M. (2011). Islamic moral economy as the foundation of Islamic finance. In *Islamic finance and ethical economy* (pp. 1–12). Springer.
- Bosworth, C. E. (1984). The impact of Zoroastrianism on Sasanian politics. *Journal of Persian Studies*, 47(1), 215–220.
- Bosworth, C. E. (1986). Sasanian Persia and its interaction with Rome. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106(4), 797–800.
- Bosworth, C. E. (1996). *The new Islamic dynasties*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Chapra, M. U. (1992). *Islam and the economic challenge*. Islamic Foundation.
- Crone, P. (2015). *Pre-industrial societies: Anatomy of the pre-modern world*. Oneworld Publications.
- Daryaee, T. (2009). *Sasanian Persia: The rise and fall of an empire*. I.B. Tauris.
- El-Ansary, W. (2012). Economic justice and political authority in Islam. *Islamic Studies Journal*, 20(4).
- El-Ashker, A., & Wilson, R. (2006). *Islamic economics: A short history*. Brill.
- Fowden, G. (1993). *Empire to commonwealth: Consequences of monotheism in late antiquity*. Princeton University Press.
- Frye, R. N. (2004). *The heritage of Persia*. Mazda Publishers.
- Hasanuzzaman, S. M. (1981). *Economic functions of an Islamic state: The early experience*. Islamic Foundation.
- Hodgson, M. G. S. (1974). *The venture of Islam: Conscience and history in a world civilization*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kahf, M. (2003). Islamic economics: Notes on definition and methodology. *Review of Islamic Economics*.
- Kamali, M. H. (2005). *Principles of Islamic jurisprudence*. Islamic Texts Society.
- Kennedy, H. (2014). The political economy of the early Islamic state. *Journal of Political Economy*, 32(1).

- Lapidus, I. M. (2014). *A history of Islamic societies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, B. (1987). *Islam: From the Prophet Muhammad to the capture of Constantinople*. Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, B. (1993). *The Arabs in history*. Oxford University Press.
- MacMullen, R. (1984). *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100–400*. Yale University Press.
- Millar, F. (1977). *The emperor in the Roman world*. Cornell University Press.
- Nyazee, I. A. K. (1994). *Theories of Islamic law: The methodology of ijihad*. Islamic Research Institute.
- Nyazee, I. A. K. (2000). *Islamic jurisprudence*. Islamic Research Institute.
- Scheidel, W. (2012). *The Cambridge companion to the Roman economy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Shatzmiller, M. (2014). The economic history of the medieval Islamic world: Perspectives and reflections. *Medieval Economic Journal*, 22(1).
- Siddiqi, M. N. (1981). *Muslim economic thinking: A survey of contemporary literature*. Islamic Foundation.
- Temin, P. (2013). *The Roman market economy*. Princeton University Press.