

A comparative analysis of Roman-Persian political and economic periods with contemporary in Islamic perspective

Raid Azhar Romadhan

Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Indonesia
220721100165@student.trunojoyo.ac.id

Achmad Zakaria

Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Indonesia
220721100162@student.trunojoyo.ac.id

Muhammad Rifki

Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Indonesia
220721100162@student.trunojoyo.ac.id

Mashudi

Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Indonesia
Mashudi.fkis@trunojoyo.ac.id

Majdy Kasheem

University of Zawia, Libya
m.kasheem@zu.edu.ly

Received:	Revised:	Accepted:
December 19, 2024	December 29, 2024 December 29, 2024 April 15, 2025	April 17, 2025

Abstract

This study aims to compare the political economy of the Roman-Persian period and the contemporary era through an Islamic perspective, especially in terms of resource management, wealth distribution, and the influence of policies on society, such as social inequality, resource exploitation, and moral crisis. The research method used is a literature study with a qualitative approach using literature studies on secondary sources. The results showed that the Roman-Persian economic and political system, although effective in maintaining imperial stability, tended to create social inequality due to high taxes and territorial exploitation. Meanwhile, the contemporary economic system presents

technological innovation and global economic integration, but it is vulnerable to economic crises and injustices. The conclusion of this study is that Islamic principles such as zakat, the prohibition of usury, and the fair distribution of wealth can be an alternative solution to build a just and sustainable economic system, both in the past and in the present.

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).

In the era of the Roman and Persian empires, economic strength was largely tied to their capacity to dominate key strategic regions like the Silk Road and the Mediterranean. This control enabled them to oversee international trade and establish a robust economic framework. 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 modern era, global political and economic landscapes have experienced profound transformations with the rise of democratic nations and global capitalism. Today's political systems prioritize public participation

through democratic mechanisms, while the economic framework has shifted towards capitalism, emphasizing free-market principles. Yet, similar to the challenges of the Roman and Persian eras, maintaining political and economic stability remains a pressing concern for many nations (Kennedy, 2014).

From an Islamic viewpoint, there are parallels between the Roman-Persian era and the contemporary period in terms of political and economic ethics. Islam underscores the values of justice, social welfare, and the accountability of leaders to their people. Historically, the caliphate system was seen as an effort to harmonize political authority with economic prosperity, reflecting challenges similar to those faced by the Romans and Persians. In modern times, many Muslim-majority nations grapple with reconciling the demands of modernity with Islamic principles (Ansary, 2012).

Analyzing these historical comparisons is not only essential for understanding past dynamics but also provides valuable perspectives on how Islamic values can inform contemporary political and economic frameworks. 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

Political economy

Political economy is a discipline that explores the interplay between political and economic strategies. At its core, it examines how governmental actions impact economic conditions and how economic trends, in turn, shape political decision-making. More broadly, political economy delves into issues surrounding the allocation of wealth, power, and resources within a society (Fadlan, 2010). Thus, achieving balanced

and sustainable economic growth requires careful attention to the equitable distribution of wealth. In the view of the Islamic economic system, the poor distribution of wealth in the community has an impact on poverty and economic inequality (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia, 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).

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).

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).

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 & Santoso, 2023).

Metodologi Penelitian

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 pursued a proactive approach to territorial expansion, spanning from the Republican era to the Imperial era. This expansion aimed primarily at securing economic resources and extending its political dominance. 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.

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. Furthermore, Persia employed slave labor, though its utilization was not as extensive as in Rome (Scheidel, 2012). Within the Roman economic framework, slavery held a pivotal position. Enslaved individuals were widely employed in agriculture, mining, and domestic settings, offering low-cost labor that underpinned economic productivity.

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. Before embracing Christianity, Rome practiced polytheism, which involved belief in multiple deities and the deification of the emperor. Roman rulers were frequently regarded as divine figures, and this practice of emperor worship was leveraged to reinforce the legitimacy of their political authority. 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 become 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 (Daryaei, 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 Roman tax system, particularly in the conquered provinces, frequently intensified economic disparities. A substantial portion of the tax revenue was directed to the empire's core to fund the military and large-scale projects, including the construction of roads, fortifications, and monuments. This imbalance in wealth distribution led to pronounced social inequalities, which often sparked uprisings and contributed to political unrest (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 (Daryaee, 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).

From an Islamic standpoint, equitable wealth distribution is a core principle that sets it apart from the Roman and Persian systems. Islam emphasizes that wealth should flow across all levels of society rather than being concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. Mechanisms like zakat, charitable giving, and the prohibition of usury are designed to minimize social disparities and ensure that vulnerable groups, including the poor, benefit from the wealth circulating within the community.

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. The Islamic economic system seeks to establish harmony between individual prosperity and the collective welfare of society, distinguishing itself from the unequal wealth distribution observed in Rome and Persia (Nyazee, 2000).

Trading systems in the Roman, Persian, and Islamic perspectives

The Roman Empire maintained a vast and interconnected trade network, spanning diverse regions including Europe, the Middle East, and 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 goods like silk, spices, precious metals, and luxury items played a crucial role in the Persian economy. Similar to the Romans, the Persians used military strength to protect trade routes and extend their influence over key regions within the global trade network.

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. Moreover, Islam forbids the practice of usury, a common feature in the Roman and Persian economies, thereby helping to prevent exploitation in commercial dealings.

Property rights in Islam

In Islam, ownership of property is acknowledged as a fundamental human right, accompanied by corresponding responsibilities. 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). Furthermore, Islam also oversees wealth distribution through mechanisms like *zakat*, *infaq*, and charity, which are designed to stop wealth from being concentrated in the hands of a few wealthy individuals. *Zakat* is a mandatory practice where the wealthy must allocate a portion of their wealth to support those in need. Through this principle, Islam aims to ensure a more balanced wealth distribution and avoid severe economic disparities.

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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 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, 2011).

Conclusion

The political economy of the Roman and Persian empires was heavily influenced by centralized governance and strict state control over resources. Power and wealth were predominantly concentrated in the hands of a privileged elite, while the majority of the population faced exploitation through taxation and land ownership systems. Although these structures were intended to uphold political stability and military strength, they also intensified economic disparities, deepening the gap between the affluent and the underprivileged. 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 places a strong emphasis on the prohibition of *riba* and practices of economic exploitation, aiming to prevent the concentration of wealth among a small elite and instead distribute it more broadly throughout society, particularly to those in need.

In summary, a comparison of the economic policies of the Roman and Persian empires with contemporary systems highlights that, despite advancements in economic participation, inequality remains a persistent challenge. Islam provides an alternative framework that is ethical, just, and sustainable, focusing on fair wealth distribution and promoting social welfare. In modern times, the implementation of Islamic economic principles through mechanisms such as Islamic banking, productive *waqf*, and *zakat* demonstrates their continued relevance in addressing today's global economic issues. These principles, if applied more broadly, can help reduce economic inequality and create a more just and prosperous society. The results of research comparing the political and economic systems of the Roman-Persian period with the contemporary era reveal a number of practices that are still relevant today. From an Islamic perspective, there is great potential to formulate solutions based on sharia values that can be applied in the modern era. Future research recommendations need to focus on applicable solutions to overcome contemporary challenges based on lessons from history.

Bibliography

Achmad, A. (2010). *Persian politics and governance: Centralized power and freedom of its territories*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gramedia.

- Ahmad, K. (2013). Islamic economic framework and development: A comparative study with modern economic systems. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 19(3). <http://risc01.sabanciuniv.edu/record=b2290267>
([Table of Contents](#))
- Ahmad, M. (2019). The comparative analysis of Byzantine and Persian empires from Islamic economic perspective. *Journal of Islamic Civilization*, 12(2), 77–90. <https://doi.org/10.1515/mill-2019-0012>
- 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.
- an-Nabhani, T. (2010). *The Islamic state*. London, United Kingdom: Al-Khilafah Publications.
- Ar Rasyidet, M. (2023). *Dinamika politik kontemporer: Partisipasi publik dan respons terhadap tantangan global*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Asutay, M. (2011). Islamic moral economy as the foundation of Islamic finance. In *Islamic finance and ethical economy* (pp. 1–12). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781002513.00014>
- Bosworth, C. E. (1984). The impact of Zoroastrianism on Sasanian politics. *Journal of Persian Studies*, 47(1), 215–220. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004495302_007
- 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.
- Brown, J. (1996). *Islamic Political Thought: A History of Ideas*. Oxford University Press.
- MacMullen, R. (1984). *Christianizing the Roman Empire: A History of Early Christian Thought*. Yale University Press.
- Chapra, M. U. (1992). *Islam and the economic challenge*. Islamic Foundation.
- Chapra, M. U. (2018). *The future of economics: An Islamic perspective*. Islamic Foundation.
- Choirul, M. (2017). *The Persian economy during the Achaemenid Empire: Agriculture and trade along the Silk Road*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Clifford, R. (1986). *Persia and the Roman Empire: Interaction and Rivalry*. Cambridge University Press.
- Clifford, W. (1986). *The Persian Empire: Governance and administration in the Sassanid era*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Crone, P. (2015). *Pre-industrial societies: Anatomy of the pre-modern world*. Oneworld Publications.
- Daryaei, T. (2009). *The Sassanid Empire and its role in world history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Duncan-Jones, R. (1982). *The Economy of the Roman Empire: Quantitative Studies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Frye, R. (2004). *The History of Ancient Persia: From the Achaemenid Empire to the Sassanids*. Harvard University Press.
- 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.
- Fergus, J. (1977). *The satrapy system in the Achaemenid Empire*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- 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.
- Garth, R. (1993). *The Persian Empire and its Role in Ancient World Trade*. Oxford University Press.
- Hasanuzzaman, S. M. (1981). *Economic functions of an Islamic state: The early experience*. Islamic Foundation.
- Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia. (2017). *The concept of Islamic political economy: Ensuring welfare and addressing economic inequality*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia.
- Hodgson, M. G. S. (1974). *The venture of Islam: Conscience and history in a world civilization*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ilham, F. (2013). *The decline of the Persian Empire: Economic and political impacts of war*. Bandung, Indonesia: Mizan Publishing.
- Imran, A. (1994). *Islamic political thought: Principles and practices*. Cairo, Egypt: Dar al-Hikmah.
- Imran, M. (2000). *Islamic Economic System: An Overview of Zakat and Prohibition of Riba*. Islamic Economics Journal, 5(2), 45-60.
- 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.

- Karim, A. (2015). *The influence of Roman civilization on global architecture and culture*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Gramedia.
- Kennedy, H. (2014). The political economy of the early Islamic state. *Journal of Political Economy*, 32(1).
- Khan, M. (2021). *Comparative analysis of ancient political-economic systems: A case study of the Roman-Persian era and its relevance to Islamic economic principles*. *Journal of Islamic Economics*, 13(4), 105–125.
- Lapidus, I. M. (2014). *A history of Islamic societies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lewis, B. (1993). *The Arabs in history*. Oxford University Press.
- Lucas, R. E. (1993). *The division of the Roman Empire: Politics and governance under Diocletian and Maximian*. London, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- MacMullen, R. (1984). *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100–400*. Yale University Press.
- Maliki, A. (2001). *Economic system in Islam*. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar al-Fikr.
- Michael, P. (2008). *Divine right and legitimacy: Comparative perspectives on Roman and Persian political systems*.
- Millar, F. (1977). *The emperor in the Roman world*. Cornell University Press.
- Nawawi, A. (2009). *The Roman economy: Currency and fiscal policies in ancient Rome*.
- Noorikhsanet, L. (2023). *Globalisasi dan implikasinya terhadap kebijakan domestik: Studi politik global*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Nyazee, I. A. K. (1994). *Theories of Islamic law: The methodology of ijtihad*. Islamic Research Institute.

- Nyazee, I. A. K. (2000). *Islamic jurisprudence*. Islamic Research Institute.
- Rachman, A., & Santoso, B. (2023). *Krisis lingkungan dan tantangan keadilan sosial: Strategi politik kontemporer*. Bandung, Indonesia: Alfabeta.
- Richard, J. (2002). *Roman Imperialism and its Economic Consequences*. Routledge.
- Richard, T. (2002). *Centralized governance in the Roman Empire*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Scheidel, W. (Ed.). (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.
- Touraj, A. (2009). *The Achaemenid and Sassanid Empires: Economics, Politics, and Culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Touraj, D. (2009). *Sasanian Persia: The rise and fall of an empire*. London, UK: I.B. Tauris.