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# The conceptual evolution of Maqāṣid al-Syarī'ah: A historical study of the transformation of major principles in Islamic thought

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the conceptual evolution of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* by tracing the transformation of its main principles in the historical trajectory of Islamic thought. The main problem raised is the lack of comprehensive integration of historical analysis in tracing changes in the epistemological and methodological structure of maqasid from the classical to contemporary eras. The problem in this study is the approach of Maqashid with Hikmah, 'Illat, then its urgency and history. The purpose of this study is to find out the history and development of maqashid. The method used is qualitative research based on literature studies, with a historical-philosophical approach that examines the works of classical scholars. The conclusion of this study is that the relationship between wisdom, 'illat and maqashid is to solve the benefits of sharia law in the matter of ijtihad, then the urgency of maqashid is to maintain religion, soul, intellect, descendants, property, and honor. The history of its development has been carried out by the ijtihad of the prophet Muhammad PBUH and there have been phases of ups and downs.

**Keywords:** Maqāṣid Al-Syarī'ah; rules; conceptual evolution; history of Islamic thought.

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



## 1. INTRODUCTION

In every scientific study, inquiry is guided by methodological norms that help safeguard rigor and coherence. In Islamic legal studies, these guiding norms are commonly formulated as qawa'id (legal/theoretical rules) that function as benchmarks for reasoning and for maintaining consistency in scholarly work (Hallaq, 1997; Kamali, 2003).

The process of deriving rulings (*istinbāt al-ahkām*) is the core work of uṣūl al-fiqh, which provides structured principles for legal interpretation and deduction (Kamali, 2003; Khallaf, 1977). Within this discipline, scholars generally differentiate between qawa'id uṣūliyyah (methodological/interpretive principles) and qawa'id fihiyyah (substantive legal maxims derived from applied fiqh), while uṣūl principles themselves often include linguistic rules and legislative-ratio rules relevant to how texts yield legal meanings (Al-Zuhayli, 1986). This framing is essential because maqāṣid-oriented reasoning is typically located within the "legislative-purpose" layer of uṣūl discourse, where the law is read in light of its aims and rationales (Auda, 2008).

Linguistically, the term "maqāṣid rules" corresponds to al-qawā'id al-maqāṣidiyyah, a compound expression linking al-qawā'id (rules) with al-maqāṣidiyyah (purpose-oriented). The word qā'idah (singular of *qawā'id*) denotes a foundational base, general rule, or benchmark that organizes scattered particulars into a coherent guideline (Ibn Manzur, 1997). Hence, *qawā'id maqāṣidiyyah* may be understood as general guiding rules that organize juristic reasoning around the higher objectives of Islamic law.

Regarding maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (the higher objectives behind legal rulings), the Lawgiver's intent in legislation is fundamentally tied to realizing human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) and preventing harm, both at the level of society and individuals (Al-Shatibi, 1997; Ibn Ashur, 2006). In this sense, maqāṣid discourse is closely connected to the juristic pursuit of *ḥikmah* (wisdom/rationale) and *'illah* (effective legal cause), and it develops historically as scholars increasingly systematize the objectives of the Sharī'ah into a methodological framework for interpretation and legal reform (Auda, 2008).

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design to investigate the conceptual evolution of maqāṣid al-syarī'ah across the historical trajectory of Islamic thought. The inquiry is conducted through a historical–philosophical approach, using authoritative textual sources as the primary data. The corpus includes classical uṣūl al-fiqh and maqāṣid works, Qur'anic passages relevant to *ḥikmah*, and scholarly writings that discuss the relationship between maqāṣid, *ḥikmah*, and *'illah*, as well as the urgency and development phases of maqāṣid from early Islam to later scholarly codification.

Data are analyzed through close reading and interpretive textual analysis. First, each text is situated in its intellectual-historical context (periodization and authorial background) to avoid anachronistic readings. Second, the study applies conceptual mapping to compare how major scholars define and operationalize *ḥikmah*, *'illah*, and maqāṣid, identifying continuities and shifts in epistemological and methodological structure. Third, themes are synthesized diachronically into a historical narrative (e.g., prophetic/companion-era practice, later juristic elaboration, and contemporary re-actualization), supported by cross-text corroboration to strengthen credibility and reduce single-source bias.

## 3. DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Maqashid's Relationship with Wisdom and 'Illat

#### 3.1.1. The Relationship of Maqasid with Wisdom

Before describing the relationship between maqashid and wisdom specifically related to the study of ushul al-fiqh, the verses of the Qur'an and the views of scholars on the concept of wisdom in general are

first stated. The term al-hikmah is found directly in the Qur'an, at least 19 of which are scattered in several letters. Among others, in Surah al-Baqarah verse 269, which reads:

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

He (Allah) bestows wisdom on whom He wills. Whoever is endowed with wisdom, he has indeed been endowed with much goodness. No one can learn (from him), except ululalbab.

Then in Surah Luqman verse 12 it is stated:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

Indeed, We have indeed given wisdom to Luqman, namely, "Give thanks to Allah! Whoever is grateful, he is actually grateful for himself. Whoever disbelieves (ungrateful), verily Allah is Rich and Praiseworthy."

Luqman is a person who is given wisdom by Allah, namely knowledge of the right and wise way of thinking and acting, so he is known as Luqman al-Hakim (the wise Luqman). What is meant by al-hikmah? Shiddiq ibn Hasan in Fath al-Bayan fi Maqashid al-Qur'an (1995, p. 285) reveals several meanings:

قال ابن قتيبة: الحكمة هي العلم والعمل ولا يكون الرجل حكيما حتى يجمعهما

Meaning: Ibn Qhutaibah said "Wisdom is knowledge and deeds, a person will not become a wise person until he gathers these two things".

الحكمة هي الإصابة في القول والعمل

It means: "Wisdom is to obtain the truth in words and deeds (deeds)."

Meanwhile, ar-Raghib al-Ashfihani said:

الحكمة هي إصابة الحق بالعلم والعقل

It means: "Wisdom is to obtain the truth by (intermediary) knowledge and reason. The truth or true knowledge is also called the straight path (ash-shirath al-mustaqim). The right path can actually be obtained, not only by knowledge and reason, but also through the five senses (hearing, sight, touch, smell, and feeling).

There are others who ta'rif-kan:

الحكمة هي المعرفة بالدين والفقه في التاويل والفهم للشرعية

It means: "Wisdom is knowledge of religion, fiqh in ta'wil, and understanding of shari'ah."

Muhammad Abduh summed up:

الحكمة هو العلم الصحيح ويكون صفة محكمة للنفس وحكمة على الارادة وتوجهها الى الفعل

Meaning: "Wisdom is true knowledge, and it is a solid quality in a person, moreover mastering the iradat and exposing the iradat to deeds."

Al-Ghazali (1322 H) explained that the al-hikmah mentioned in the Qur'an is the Islamic sharia that was revealed to the Prophets and Messengers. They gain wisdom, or the ability to understand the secrets of religious teachings.

الحكمة حالة للنفس بها يدرك الصواب من الخطا في جميع الاعمال الاختيارية

Meaning: Wisdom is the behavior of the soul by which the truth from error can be found in all the acts of ikhtiyariyah. In this regard, there are three special gifts of wisdom:

حكمة الضالة المؤمن أينما وجدها اخذها

Meaning: "Wisdom (true knowledge) is the lost property of the believer. Wherever he finds it, he must give it to him." Thus the concept of wisdom interpreted from the above verses, with various tendencies, and various approaches to different disciplines. Furthermore, in the context of the discussion of this book, it should be pointed out that wisdom is sometimes seen as synonymous with sharia maqashid, even though the fuqaha' (experts of fiqh law) often use wisdom rather than maqashid. For example, Ibn Farhun in his book Tabshirah al-Hukkam fi Ushul al-Aqdhiyah wa Manahij al-Ahkam, states about the purposes of the existence of a court (maqashid al-qadha'), with the statement (Ibn Farhun, 1995).

واما حكمته فرفع التهارج ورد التواصل وقمع المظلم ونصر المظلوم وقمع الخصومات والامور بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر

It means: *"The wisdom is to eliminate chaos, reject injustice, suppress injustice, help the wronged, send or stop disputes, amar-ma'ruf and nahi-munkar."*

To find out the relationship between maqashid sharia and wisdom, we first give the following description: Many scholars of ushul al-fiqh use the word wisdom to explain the meaning of the purpose of the law (tasyri' al-hukm) and the consequences it causes in the form of bringing benefits and rejecting harm.

For example, to produce the benefit of offspring, adultery is prohibited, and sanctions are required for adulterers; To reject or avoid difficulties (al-masyaqqah), it is permissible to qashar and not too fast for people on the journey; To preserve the soul from hostility due to the crime of murder, qishash is sharia with its various requirements; Then to preserve the mind from memory loss and other disturbances of the intellect, the prohibition of consuming liquor (al-khamr) is prohibited. It can be understood that wisdom is actually the ultimate goal of the sharia maqashid. Imam ath-Thufi, a controversial thinker of the Hanbali madhhab, said: "Wisdom is the ultimate goal of the Shari'a," the discussion of wisdom and sharia maqashid, the term wisdom is commensurate with the term sharia maqashid.

### **2.1.2. The Relationship of Maqashid and 'Illat**

Related to the issue of 'illat, it has also become a serious concern and talk among ushul al-fiqh scholars. This has been stated in the author's work entitled *al-qawa'id al-ma'nawiyah* (The Rules of Legal Extension). Therefore, in this discussion, we will focus on the concept of 'illat related to maqashid.

In the study of the science of ushul al-fiqh, the discussion of 'illat law and whether or not it is the same as wisdom also seems to need to be done. Talk about 'illat when discussing al-Qiyas. Qiyas is equating a case in which there is no law in nash with a case whose law is found in nash, because there is an equality of 'illat in both legal cases.

What does 'illat mean? Imam al-Amidi (n.d.) said that 'illat is the driving force of the law (al-ba'its 'ala al-hukum). Ash-Shirazi (n.d.) revealed that 'illat is a substance or nature that demands the existence of law. It is a sign of the existence of law, and it is a trait that is established to determine law by way of al-Qiyas.

Furthermore, it should be stated that from the aspect of its existence: (1) 'illat mentioned directly in the nash ('illat al-manshush 'alaiha); (2) 'illat that is established by the mujtahids (al-'illat al-Mustanbathah)

Meanwhile, in terms of coverage: (1) Al-'illah al-muta'adiyah, that is, the legal law of one problem can also be determined on other legal problems. For example, the intoxicating illat on khamar can be applied to drugs, methamphetamine, etc; (2) 'Illah al-Qashirah, i.e. the legal 'illat of one problem cannot be fixed on another.

### **2.2. The Urgency of the Rules of Maqashid**

Nowadays, one of the things that encourages us to study sharia maqashid and understand its rules and criteria is because the science of maqashid is the knowledge of previous scholars that had been "lost". As a result, Islamic legal thought is close to static (jumud) and is unable to respond to the needs of human life that continue to develop dynamically. In this regard, Muhammad Tahir Ibn 'Ashur explained that one cause of the decline of fiqh is the neglect of maqashid in legal determination. In his original language, [Ibn 'Ashur \(1984, p. 200\)](#) expressed whose meaning: "Ignoring maqashid is the cause of a massive vacuum for the scholars of fiqh, and an act to nullify the beneficial laws."

Therefore, reviving fiqh maqashid is an urgent work to renew fiqh and strengthen its role and position in society. In line with that, 'Allal al-Fasi, revealed: "Indeed, the few reformers, who worked hard to bring Islamic fiqh to the shore of success until it was associated with the maqashid of sharia and its postulates, so that they felt comfortable applying it in the courts and Islamic countries".

To conclude this discussion on the urgency of maqashid, I quote the phrase of Thaha Jabir al-'Alwani in the muqaddimah of Ahmad al-Raysuni's book as follows:

It means: *"And we build the maqashid fiqh in order to realize our identity, and we build contemporary thoughts, and we prepare our roles, and we establish the milestones of civilization's testimony on the guidance of our civilization's fiqh."*

Thus, for a mujtahid or legal expert, having knowledge of the rules of maqashid is a necessity. This is because the urgency or importance of these maqashid rules is to know and understand the universal goals of sharia law, wisdom, and benefits contained in sharia laws. In addition, with these maqashid principles, a mujtahid or expert in Islamic law will be easier and more free to make policies in establishing laws that are



in accordance with the contextual situation of society that is always developing dynamically. Not only that, with these maqashid principles, a mujtahid or contemporary Islamic jurist can show his identity and can play his role in the development of contemporary world civilization. This framework also influences contemporary legal formation and interpretation.

### **2.3. History of the Growth and Development of the Maqashid Rule**

#### **2.3.1. The Prophet's Period.**

Shari'a knowledge, including the knowledge of the rules of maqashid began during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) although it is still universal (kulliyah). Because he is the center for the teachings of Islam, both al-wasa'il and al-maqashid. The verses of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him) are very much suspect as maqashid rules.

In this regard, Farouq Abu Zaid (n.d.) said that, broadly speaking, there are two roles of the Prophet (peace be upon him), namely: As a messenger of news in the form of revelation from Allah to people to be applied in their daily lives; and as an organizer of worldly affairs in Medina.

In Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) served as the community's highest authority in public governance and judicial affairs, resolving disputes either through revealed guidance (naṣṣ) or through reasoned judgment (ijtihād) in matters where no explicit ruling had yet been revealed (Ishak & Abdul Aziz, 2022; Mawejje, 2024). Contemporary scholarship also highlights that his Medinan leadership emphasized social order and non-violent conflict management, which shaped the way disputes were handled in the community (Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

Usul al-fiqh scholars debate the scope of Prophetic ijtiḥād: many accept that the Prophet could exercise contextual judgment—especially in governance, warfare, and judicial cases—while revelation could later confirm, refine, or redirect a decision (Mawejje, 2024). This helps explain why some decisions were undertaken collectively through consultation with companions (shūrā), while others were decided directly in response to concrete disputes; the episode of the Badr prisoners in QS al-Anfāl 67 is frequently examined as a case where deliberation was followed by revelatory guidance. Building on these Prophetic foundations, later jurists systematized the tools and hierarchy of legal reasoning within usul al-fiqh (Hallaq, 1993).

At the same time, Islamic legal theory distilled broad legislative principles—especially easing hardship and preventing excessive burden (taysīr and raf' al-ḥaraj)—into widely used legal maxims (qawā'id fiqhiyyah), which function as interpretive guides across changing contexts (Mustafa, 2016; Saiti & Abdullah, 2016). These maxims reinforce the broader direction of Islamic law toward human welfare (maṣlaḥah) at both individual and societal levels (Saiti & Abdullah, 2016).

#### **2.3.2. Shahabat Period**

The Companions (Ṣaḥābah) period is commonly framed as beginning after the Prophet's death (11 AH/632 CE) and extending through the late first Islamic century. In this era, Qur'ān- and Sunnah-based legal reasoning became more concretely practiced in response to new social realities, through interpretive judgment (ijtiḥād) that later scholars systematized within uṣūl al-fiqh. The Companions' proximity to the Prophet also shaped how they understood and applied the Sunnah when addressing emerging issues in the expanding Muslim community (Başaran, 2018; Hallaq, 1993; Kholiq & Zein, 2021).

After the Prophet's death, the Companions confronted administrative and social problems that had not previously arisen, and they responded by issuing fatwā grounded in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Where explicit and definitive texts (naṣṣ qaṭ'i) were not available, they employed reasoned methods and policy-oriented judgment—often associated with Companion-era ijtiḥād, including well-known legal reasoning practices attributed to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (Ishaq & Ridwan, 2023; Pongoliu, 2019). Collective consultation among leading Companions supported shared rulings that later jurists conceptualized as ijmā' (consensus), even while individual Companions could issue independent legal opinions that became influential within later legal thought (Ali, 2010).

### **2.3.3. Tabi'in-Atba' Tabi'in Period**

The Apostle's very dynamic attitude in dealing with different societal traditions shows that he has an attitude that is very responsive to social realities. Likewise, the principles of Islamic law guidance show that for the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Shabbats, it is not enough to solve legal problems by paying attention to the nash-nash of the law, but some of the considerations that he makes, as an element of consideration to realize the benefits. The attitude of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the above companions were also followed and carried out by the companions and tabi'in, who wanted Islamic law to protect the community. The community can still develop and be creative on the one hand, while the principles or foundations of sharia remain unviolated on the other hand. What has been exemplified by the Prophet and continued by his companions and tabi'in is a clear argument for the importance of the formulation of fiqh that can bring benefits to the ummah. With the existence of various ijtiha activities, in turn famous ushul al-fiqh scholars emerged and recorded in the history of Islamic civilization.

Among them were Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib, 'Urwah ibn az-Zubair, Muhammad ibn Syihab az-Zuhri (a figure of the Tabi'in-Atba' Tabi'in Period The Prophet's) very dynamic attitude in the face of different traditions of society shows that he had an attitude that was very responsive to social realities.

Likewise, the principles of Islamic law guidance show that for the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Shabbats, it is not enough to solve legal problems by paying attention to the nash-nash of the law, but some of the considerations that he makes, as an element of consideration to realize the benefits.

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## **4. CONCLUSION**

The term wisdom is equivalent to the term maqashid sharia or the purpose that God wants from the laws He has revealed. In short, wisdom is the ultimate goal of the sharia maqashid, in the form of benefits that humans get or will get in the laws of God. 'illat is a substance or property that demands the existence of law. It is a sign of the existence of a law, even 'illat is something that requires the existence of a law (mujibah li al-hukm). The urgency or importance of these maqashid rules is to know and understand the universal purposes of Sharia law, wisdom, and benefits contained in Sharia laws. The history of Maqashid during the time of the prophet has been carried out Ijtihad and finally continues to this day.

### **Ethical Approval**

Not applicable.

### **Informed Consent Statement**

Not applicable.

### **Confidentiality Statement**

Not applicable.

## Authors' Contributions

F conceptualized the study, conducted literature and historical analysis, and drafted the manuscript. ZI and HL contributed to source analysis, interpretation of findings, and manuscript revision. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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The author declares no conflict of interest related to this research.

## Data Availability Statement

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