Endowment for Artificial Intelligence Applications in Achieving the Objective of Preserving Religion: An Inductive Analytical Study

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Abstract

This research aims to determine the Islamic legal ruling on preservation for artificial intelligence (AI) applications and to identify the areas in which such endowments can serve the objective of preserving religion. The primary research problem lies in utilizing AI to safeguard religion both in its affirmation and protection from harm. The researcher employed the inductive-analytical method, reviewing Islamic legal texts and principles to establish the ruling on endowing AI applications. The analysis then linked this ruling to the use of AI in achieving the objective of preserving religion. The study reached several key conclusions, including that endowments (waqf) are unanimously permitted in Islamic law. Waqf is one of the most beneficial and enduring charitable acts after death. Endowing AI applications is legally permissible and valid. Endowments directed toward AI applications that serve the preservation of religion—both in affirming its existence and preventing its loss—are among the most meritorious, as they pertain to one of the major objectives of Islamic law. There are numerous AI-driven avenues for preserving religion that donors can support through endowments.

Introduction:

The artificial intelligence revolution is the driving force behind the modern industrial revolution, and numerous studies have explored its nature and potential benefits. In line with this, the present research aims to examine the role of AI in serving Islamic law. Specifically, it seeks to utilize AI and endowments to support applications that contribute to the preservation of religion—both in affirming its presence and protecting it from loss—given that this is one of the most fundamental objectives of Islamic law.

Research Importance

The significance of this research lies in several key points, including:

- The rapid advancements in artificial intelligence.

- Utilizing AI-related sciences and knowledge to maximize its benefits.

- The importance of endowments (waqf) and their broad applicability.

- Opening new avenues for achieving the objective of preserving religion.

Research objectives

This research aims to:

- Define the key terms used in the study.

- Establish the Islamic legal ruling on endowing artificial intelligence (AI) applications.

- Identify the areas of AI endowments that contribute to the preservation of religion.

Research Problem

The primary research problem lies in assessing the feasibility of utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) to serve the objectives of Islamic law, particularly the preservation of religion—both in affirming its presence and protecting it from loss.

Research Methodology

The researcher will adopt the inductive-analytical method by examining Islamic texts and the objectives of Shariah as established by scholars to determine the legal ruling on endowing AI applications. The study will then analyze and link this ruling to the use of AI in supporting the preservation of religion from both an affirmative and preventive perspective.

Research Structure

This paper consists of an introduction, three main sections, and a conclusion.

Introduction: Covers the significance of the research, its objectives, problem statement, methodology, and structure.

Section One: Definition of key research terms.

Section Two: The Legitimacy of Waqf on Artificial Intelligence Applications.

Section Three: Areas of AI endowments that contribute to the preservation of religion.

Conclusion: summarizes key findings and recommendations.

Section One: Definition of Key Research Terms

Definition of Waqf

Linguistic Definition: Waqf (endowment) in language means detention and prevention. (Nasser Al-Khwarizmi (2/366); Muḥammad Al-Zubaidi (15/523).). Terminological Definition: It is defined as "detaining the principal and allocating its benefits for a designated purpose (Jalal al-Suyuti, (1/55); Ali Al-Jurjani, 1/253).

Scholars have differed regarding the concept of "detaining"—whether the endowed asset remains under the ownership of the donor (waqif) or is transferred to the ownership of Allah. Abu Hanifa holds that the asset remains under the ownership of the waqif, while his two companions believe that it is transferred to the ownership of Allah. This difference of opinion is discussed in its respective section. The majority of scholars agree that a valid waqf removes the ownership of the endowed asset from the waqif. This is the correct opinion according to the Hanbalis, the well-known stance among the Shafi'is, and the view of Abu Hanifa as cited by Ibn Qudamah (Muwaffaq Al-Maqdisi (6/4).

Waqf and ḥabs are synonymous terms among jurists; some use the term ḥabs, while others use waqf, with the latter being the stronger term. Linguistically, they are also considered synonymous, as it is said: "I made it waqf" and "I made it ḥabs."(Muhammad Al-Rasa', (1/410).

Waqf falls under the category of voluntary donations and grants, as it represents a voluntary act by the donor (waqif) in dedicating the endowed asset under specific conditions.

The meaning of detaining the principal (taḥbīs al-aṣl) is to terminate the owner's right over the property and prevent them from disposing of it through sale, donation, or any other means.

The meaning of allocating its benefits (tasbīl al-thamara) is to dedicate the benefits of the endowed asset for the sake of Allah, ensuring that its proceeds are directed toward the beneficiaries specified by the donor.

Definition of Artificial Intelligence

Linguistic Definition of Intelligence:

Intelligence in language refers to quick-wittedness and sharpness of mind. A person described as intelligent (dhakī) is someone who possesses both keen and complete mental acuity (Al-Ain, 5/399; Al-Ṣiḥāḥ Tāj al-Lughah, 6/2346).

Some have defined intelligence as "the rapid deduction of results." Others have described it as "decisiveness in action and the quick ability to discern the truth (Jalal, 2004, 1/200). Another definition states that intelligence is "the strong capability of the soul, prepared to acquire opinions according to language. (Al-Kulliyyāt, 1/456; Dustūr al-'Ulamā', 2/89).

Linguistic Definition of Artificial:

The term "artificial" is derived from "iṣṭinā'," which comes from the verb ṣana'a (to make). It refers to something that is manufactured rather than natural—for example, artificial roses or an artificial heart (Mu'jam al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya al-Mu'āṣira, 2/1323).

Terminological Definition of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a field of science and technology that has evolved over the past thirty years. Its development has relied on various disciplines, most notably electronic engineering, computer science, cybernetics, and psychology, particularly in areas related to perception and cognitive information processing. In addition, it incorporates specialized knowledge relevant to different fields of application (Asālīb al-Dhākā' al-Iṣṭinā'ī fī al-Muḥāsabah, 3).

Despite differences among academics, philosophers, and scholars in defining and determining the concept of intelligence itself, there has been general consensus on the concept of Artificial Intelligence (AI) since the early research in the 1950s. AI is the scientific and technical field that encompasses methods, theories, and techniques aimed at creating machines capable of simulating intelligence (Artificial Intelligence between Reality and Hope, 6).

Current applications of AI include email spam classification, Google Translate, Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana, speech recognition applications, targeted ad classification, and predictive text applications, such as smart writing suggestions that help users compose messages.

Definition of Preserving Religion (Ḥifẓ al-Dīn)

Divine laws were established to protect the five essential objectives (maqāṣid ḍarūriyyah), which, according to scholars, are universally recognized across all religious traditions and legal systems. No religion or legal framework has neglected their preservation. These five objectives are: preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth. The protection of these five is classified as a necessity (ḍarūriyyāt) and represents the highest level of legal and moral priorities (Al-Iḥkām fī Uṣūl al-Aḥkām, 3/274).

By preserving religion (ḥifẓ al-dīn), we mean upholding the faith, establishing its principles, pillars, and rulings in the cosmic order, and avoiding anything that may harm or diminish its standing.

Section Two: The Legitimacy of Waqf on Artificial Intelligence Applications

Legitimacy of Waqf:

When scholars discuss the legitimacy of waqf, they derive it from specific texts related to waqf, as well as from general texts that encourage doing good deeds and giving charity. For example, Allah says: "And whatever good you do, it will not be denied to you. And Allah is Knowing of the righteous." (Al-Imran: 115).

"And do good that you may succeed." (Al-Hajj: 77). "O you who have believed, spend from the good things which you have earned…" (Al-Baqarah: 267).

Waqf is a form of charity (ṣadaqah), and charity is a form of goodness and righteousness in Islamic law. The general texts mentioned above, along with others, affirm the legitimacy of waqf in general. Additionally, there are specific texts that indicate the legitimacy of waqf in particular, such as:

The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), in which he said: "When a person dies, their deeds cease except for three: a continuous charity (ṣadaqah jariyah), beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for them."(Narrated by Muslim in his Sahih, (3/1255), No. (1631)).

In another narration: "Among the good deeds that continue benefiting a believer after their death are: knowledge that they spread, a righteous child they leave behind, a Qur'an they inherited, a mosque they built, a house for travelers they constructed, a river they ran, or charity they gave from their wealth during their health and life. These acts continue to benefit them after their death."(Sunan Ibn Majah (1/163), No. (242)).

Waqf is specifically referred to as ṣadaqah jāriyah (continuous charity). Waqf and ṣadaqah have a relationship of general and specific, as waqf is a form of ṣadaqah in which the owner dedicates the asset, and its benefits are directed in a specific manner.

The Hadith of 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him): The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Who will purchase the well of Rūmah and join their bucket with the buckets of the Muslims? It is better for him than that in Paradise." Uthmān replied, "I bought it from my own wealth." The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said: "You are preventing me from drinking from it until I drink from the sea."(Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, (6/68), No. (3703)).

In this hadith, the Prophet's words, "join their bucket with the buckets of the Muslims," indicate that the well is no longer under the ownership of the one who purchased it but has been dedicated for public use, which is the essence of waqf.

Another example is the first waqf in Islam, which was the waqf of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him). He had acquired land in Khaybar and came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) seeking guidance on how to manage it. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "If you wish, you can hold the principal (the land) and donate its benefits." So 'Umar donated it, stipulating that it could not be sold, gifted, or inherited. It was to be used for the poor, relatives, freeing slaves, the cause of Allah, travelers, and guests. The manager of the waqf could eat from it in a reasonable manner and feed others without accumulating wealth (Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, (3/198), No. (2737), and by Muslim in his Sahih (3/1255), No. (1632)).

The holding of the principal (the original asset) and the donation of its fruits is what constitutes waqf. The legitimacy of waqf is clearly evidenced in the texts:

One example is Abu Talhah (may Allah be pleased with him), who dedicated his most beloved property, which was his Bīrḥā' well, as charity for the sake of Allah, seeking its reward in the Hereafter. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Excellent! That is a profitable asset, that is a profitable asset. I have heard what you said, and I think you should allocate it to your nearest relatives (Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, (2/119), No. (1461))." So, Abu Talhah gave it to his family and cousins.

Additionally, it is reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) would dedicate whatever remained from his household expenses for the sake of Allah. It was narrated by 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him): "The property of the Banī al-Nadīr was from what Allah had granted the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as a special gift, which the Muslims did not acquire by cavalry or camels. It belonged specifically to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), who would spend on his family according to their needs for the year. Whatever remained, he would allocate for weapons and supplies to be used in the cause of Allah. (It

was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, (4/38), No. (2904), and by Muslim in his Sahih, (3/1376), No. (1757).

It is reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered the construction of a mosque and sent a group from the Banī al-Najjār to negotiate for their land. He said: "O Banī al-Najjār, sell me your land." They replied, "By Allah, we do not seek any price for it except from Allah (Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, (1/93), No. (428), and by Muslim in his Sahih, (1/373), No. (524).)." They made it a waqf for the construction of the mosque.

Furthermore, there is a consensus (ijmā') reported by several scholars, which was also hinted at by Imam al-Shāfi'ī. He said in his al-Mughni al-Muḥtāj: "I have heard that eighty of the Ansār Companions donated their lands as waqf, and al-Shāfi'ī calls these donations 'the charitable endowments (Al-Mughni al-Muḥtāj fi Ma'rifat Ma'āni Alfāẓ al-Minḥāj,3/523). This is a large number of companions engaging in waqf, and there is no evidence of dissent among them, especially as the practice spread widely. Therefore, it is considered a consensus.

Imam al-Tirmidhī also mentioned this consensus in his Sunan: "This is a sound and authentic hadith, and the practice is agreed upon by the scholars of the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and others. We do not know of any disagreement among the earlier scholars regarding the permissibility of waqf for land or other assets."(Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, (3/53)).

Al-Qurtubī and others reported the consensus on waqf. In his Tafsīr, he said: "This is the proof for all those who allow the practice of waqf (endowment), and it is a sound hadith, as stated by Abu 'Umar. Furthermore, the matter is a consensus among the Companions, as Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, 'Ā'ishah, Fāṭimah, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, Ibn al-Zubayr, and Jābir—all of whom made endowments. Their endowments in Makkah and Madīnah are well-known and widely recognized."(Tafsir Al-Qurtubi, 6/339).

Additionally, Ibn Muwaddūd al-Ḥanafī mentioned the consensus in his work Al-Ikhtiyār li-Ta'līl al-Mukhtār, saying: "The community has reached a consensus on the permissibility of waqf because it is narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) donated seven plots of land in Madīnah, and likewise, the Companions made waqf." (Al-Ikhtiyār li-Ta'līl al-Mukhtār (3/40, 41))

When researching in fiqh books, it becomes clear that there is a reported disagreement attributed to Abu Ḥanīfah and Shurayḥ. However, it seems—and Allah knows best—that the matter is actually agreed upon. What is reported from them can be understood according to Ibn 'Ābidīn's comment in his Ḥāshiyah: "It is mentioned in the original work that Abu Ḥanīfah did not permit waqf. Some have taken this statement literally and claimed that he does not allow waqf. The correct position is that it is permissible for everyone, but the disagreement is about whether it is binding or not. Abu Ḥanīfah allows the temporary donation, where the benefits are used for the purpose of the waqf while the original asset remains under the ownership of the waqif (donor). If the donor wishes to reclaim it during their lifetime, it is allowed, though disliked. It can be inherited, and it becomes binding only if the judge rules on it or if it is treated like a bequest."(Ibn Abidin's commentary or Al-Durr Al-Mukhtar (4/338)).

There are general or specific evidences other than what was mentioned, and legitimacy is proven by one text, so what we have presented is sufficient, God willing (Fields Of Legal Endowment In Islamic History And Civilization A Descriptive Historical Study)

Second: The Legitimacy of Endowment for Artificial Intelligence Applications:

The legitimacy of endowing for artificial intelligence (AI) applications can be supported by several points, including:

1. Endowment Fields are Subject to Ijtihad, Not Fixed:

There is nothing in Islamic law to indicate that the fields of waqf (endowment) are fixed or that they cannot be extended to new areas. The legal scholars describe this as "tawqīf" (i.e., an action that is specified and

not open to change). However, the scope of waqf is not restricted, and if the objective of the waqf is achieved, it is permissible to establish endowments in various fields.

For example, the texts related to waqf generally refer to specific objects such as wells, land for mosque construction, land cultivated for the poor, or arms and shields for jihad in the way of Allah. However, the Companions of the Prophet and the early Muslims were known to endow in a variety of fields, as evidenced by various endowments made throughout Islamic history.

This indicates that the Companions of the Prophet, the Followers (Tabi'un), and scholars after them understood that the fields of waqf (endowment) are subject to ijtihad (independent legal reasoning), not fixed or predefined. Therefore, whenever endowing for artificial intelligence applications serves the interests of Muslims and achieves one of the objectives of Sharia, it is permissible to endow for such purposes (View of Evidence by non Tawkeef on the permissibility in Sharia transactions Al Waqf on artificial intelligence applications as a model).

2. The Legal Texts:

The legal texts regarding waqf (endowment), in particular, indicate generality. An example of this generality is the saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him: "When a person dies, their deeds are cut off except for three: a continuous charity (sadaqah jariyah), knowledge from which people benefit, or a righteous child who prays for them." This continuous charity includes all types of charitable actions, and artificial intelligence applications intended for charity and service to Islam and Muslims would fall under this category. They serve the objectives of Sharia and cannot be excluded from charity without specific evidence.

Similarly, the generality of the text is evident in the saying "The knowledge he spread." Waqf of knowledge includes books and applications, as the phrase "a copy of the Quran he left as inheritance" refers to both physical books and potentially digital applications. These terms thus cover artificial intelligence applications as well.

The concept of "charity" also applies, as one can donate artificial intelligence applications that serve the objectives of Sharia. This is further supported by the narration of the Prophet advising Umar ibn al-Khattab, "If you wish, you can lock its principal and give away its benefit," which applies to AI applications intended to serve the purposes of charity in the same way as the earlier examples.

3. The Evolution of Domains and the Flexibility of Texts:

One of the points that can be used as evidence is that the domains of worship have evolved significantly, while the texts came with general principles. As scholars state, "The texts are finite, but the occurrences are infinite," and this is a feature of the final religion. Its texts are suitable for all occurrences, no matter how varied, until the Day of Judgment. As the fields have developed, we have taken from these texts that which fits these new domains, applying them appropriately without distortion.

This is supported by a narration from Imam Malik, where "Sahnun asked Imam Abdul Rahman ibn Al-Qasim: 'What if someone dedicates something in the path of Allah? Which path of Allah is meant?' Malik replied, 'There are many paths of Allah, but if someone dedicates something in the path of Allah, it is for the purpose of jihad.' Sahnun then mentioned the opinions of Ibn Wahb, Younus, and Rabi'ah, stating that anything dedicated as a charity or that has been set aside without specifying its intended charity can be used as charity in various ways, including in jihad if it involves animals or, if it involves funds, it can be used for other charitable purposes as the ruler sees fit."(Al-Mudawwana, 4/341)

The key point here is that while "the path of Allah" generally refers to jihad and military struggle, it is understood that it can encompass other categories, as the paths of Allah are many.

From this, it is clear that the waqf on artificial intelligence applications is permissible, as long as it adheres to certain Sharia guidelines, which will be outlined in the third section, God willing.

Section Three: Fields of Endowment for Artificial Intelligence Applications that Preserve the Faith

Artificial intelligence (AI) applications can preserve the faith in terms of existence and prevent anything that might harm it. We consider this from the perspective of prevention in various ways, including:

A- Educational Applications: These include applications that display the Quran in writing, applications for the seven and ten Quranic readings in writing, applications for Quranic exegesis (Tafsir) in writing, and applications specifically for Quran recitations by different readers with various narrations for listening. There are also applications for Quran memorization that automatically request the reader to correct mistakes. These applications could include an interactive feature where the teacher listens to the student and corrects them, as Quranic knowledge is traditionally received through direct learning (Talaqqi). Similarly, interactive applications can be used to teach Tafsir and Islamic sciences, potentially structured in a way that mirrors academic institutes, colleges, and universities. Students would earn certificates showing that they have studied and excelled in these sciences.

B- Dawah (Islamic Invitation) Applications: These would include applications aimed at inviting Muslims who may be neglectful or unaware of their faith, helping to strengthen their belief. Additionally, applications could be developed to invite non-Muslims to Islam, including those in far-off lands, with content in multiple languages encouraging them to embrace the Islamic faith.

C- Applications for Refuting Misconceptions: These applications would preserve the faith by addressing doubts and misconceptions, as referred to by Al-Shatibi. We need applications that detect doubts and offer responses to them. There could also be applications that engage in dialogue with individuals who have doubts, responding to their queries. If the individuals are Muslims, these apps would aim to reinforce their faith. If the individuals are non-Muslims or critics, the aim would be to guide them towards the truth or to silence their attacks and protect the faith.

D- Applications Serving Religious Purposes: The necessity of tangible endowments cannot be ignored, nor should people be solely dedicated to endowing intelligent applications and neglect other forms of charity. There are still other areas in which the faith can be preserved, such as endowments for mosques, schools, and institutions. However, one can also endow applications that serve these institutions, such as applications that organize donations for the benefit of these institutions, manage workers within them, or coordinate donations of Qurans, identify areas of need, facilitate requests, or organize the roles of imams, muezzins, preachers, and mosque attendants, etc.

E- Applications for Protecting the Faith of Islam: A religion cannot stand without a state. The state acts as a vessel for the faith, and safeguarding the state is a necessary step in preserving the faith. We need applications that enhance the sense of belonging in the youth and instill in them values of loyalty and disavowal (Al-Wala' wa Al-Bara'), as well as applications that respond to political and social misconceptions. Furthermore, applications that serve the security sector, including those that create barriers for securing information, training specialists, and applications that detect and counter cyber interventions, are necessary. The collapse of a nation's security information can affect the stability of states and lead to the fall of others.

F- Computational Applications: We also need applications that carry out computational tasks related to religious matters, such as calculating obligatory dues (Fara'id) and zakat using algorithms. These applications would require users to input specific details about the case, and the application would output the result. It is essential that these applications undergo thorough testing to ensure their accuracy, as errors in these matters are not acceptable. Zakat involves the rights of the poor, and inheritance laws determine the rightful shares of heirs.

G- Translation Applications: These applications would focus on translating religious texts and spreading them, specifically distinguishing them from general Islamic outreach materials mentioned earlier. Here, the emphasis is on translating scholarly religious books and making them accessible to students of knowledge and Muslims who are non-Arabic speakers. While learning Arabic is encouraged, some information might

be better understood in the students' native language, especially fundamental principles and basics that every Muslim should not remain ignorant of.

H- Applications for Serving the Arabic Language: Serving the Arabic language is a form of serving the religion, and preserving it is essential for the preservation of the faith. The Arabic language can be supported through artificial intelligence applications, such as creating apps for grammatical correction (I'rab), spelling correction, text vocalization (Tashkil), and reading texts to disseminate knowledge.

Results and Recommendations

The researcher has concluded several key findings, including:

Enduring Good Deeds: Waqf (charitable endowment) is one of the most notable acts of goodness that continues to yield rewards after death.

Legitimacy of Waqf on AI Applications: It is permissible to endow AI applications.

Priority of Waqf for AI Applications Serving the Religion: Waqf on AI applications that help preserve the religion both in terms of existence and prevention is one of the most important types of endowments, as they serve major aspects of Islamic law.

Various Fields for AI Applications in Preserving the Religion: There are numerous areas where AI applications can be used to protect and promote the religion, including:

Educational applications, such as those with the Quran in writing.

Applications for inviting people to Islam (Da'wah).

Applications to address doubts and misconceptions.

Applications supporting religious service activities.

Applications for safeguarding Islam's integrity.

Calculative applications for Islamic duties, such as Zakat calculations.

Translation applications for spreading and inviting others to Islam.

Applications for enhancing the Arabic language.

Recommendations:

The researcher recommends utilizing all modern means to protect and promote the broader objectives of Islamic law, particularly the overarching ones.

The researcher also advises employing AI to safeguard all objectives of Islamic law, not just religion-related ones.

The researcher encourages donors to contribute towards AI applications that serve the purpose of waqf.

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