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The First House Built for Mankind (Qur'ān 3:96): Bayt Ḥarām, Ḥabs and Regulation of 'Umrān

Abderrazak Said Belabes*

Abstract

Purpose - This study reinterprets Qur'an 3:96 through an integrative framework combining thematic Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*), complex systems theory, and the concept of 'umrān. It examines how the Bayt al-Ḥarām, ḥabs, and 'umrān can be conceptually related to explain the organization, resilience, and disintegration of human collectives. **Design/methodology/approach** - The study employs a qualitative, conceptual approach based on thematic Qur'anic exegesis and systemic interpretation. Relevant Qur'anic passages are examined to reconstruct the conceptual and semantic relationships among Bayt al-Ḥarām, ḥabs, and 'umrān. Complex systems theory is subsequently employed as a second-order analytical framework, with entropy and negentropy used heuristically to interpret processes of organization, disorganization, adaptation, and resilience. **Findings** - The study develops a tripartite systemic model in which the Bayt al-Ḥarām functions as an anchor of shared meaning, ḥabs as a mechanism for stabilizing and sustaining material resources, and 'umrān as the dynamic field of human cooperation. The findings suggest that social viability depends on the alignment of meaning, institutional and material resources, and cooperative relations. Conversely, progressive misalignment generates social entropy, manifested in fragmentation of shared meanings, institutional dysfunction, weakening solidarity, and eventual systemic disintegration. **Research implications/limitations** - The proposed framework is interpretive and heuristic rather than deterministic. The concepts of entropy, negentropy, cohesion, and *kharāb* require further operationalization and empirical validation. Moreover, the relationship among Bayt al-Ḥarām, ḥabs, and 'umrān may vary across historical and institutional contexts. **Originality/value** - This study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by connecting *tafsīr mawḍū'ī* with complex systems theory without reducing Qur'anic interpretation to scientific explanation. It proposes an integrated conceptual model for understanding 'umrān as a dynamic system whose resilience depends on the alignment of symbolic meaning, resource continuity, and human cooperation.

Keywords: Thematic Tafsīr; Bayt al-Ḥarām; 'Umrān; Ḥabs; Entropy; Negentropy.

* Professor, Islamic Economics Institute, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
E-mail: abelabes@kau.edu.sa, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6805-6623>

1. Introduction

The Quranic verse from *Surah Āl ‘Imrān* (3:96), “Indeed, the first House established for mankind was at Bakkah”, occupies an important place in classical exegetical literature due to its historical, symbolic, and normative dimensions [1]. This study acknowledges the contribution of this exegetical tradition. It nevertheless seeks to extend its interpretative potential. A thematic reading allows us to examine the socio-analytical and systemic implications of the verse. It is thus considered a starting point for rethinking the conditions for the viability of ‘umrān. This approach goes beyond both its reduction to mere human regrouping in Ibn Khaldūn’s work and its dominant translation in European languages by the term “civilization”.

It is at the heart of this theoretical ambition that our research question is rooted: to what extent can the conceptual framework of complex systems reveal the profound socio-political and structural function of the *Bayt al-Ḥarām* [2] – referred to as the Ka‘aba by the Quraysh as early as the fifth year before the Revelation [3]– in the face of contemporary crises? Furthermore, how does the articulation between thematic *tafsīr* and social thermodynamics allow us to model the dynamics of collapse and regeneration of ‘umrān?

To address this issue, this work proposes to connect the verse with a renewed vision of ‘umrān, considered here as a comprehensive mechanism for mediation between humankind and its Creator. This framework allows for the concrete actualization of the function of *khilāfah* (lieutenant) and the inscription of human existence within the horizon of *‘ibādah* (worship), in direct resonance with the primordial covenant: “Am I not your Lord?” They replied, “Yes, indeed” (Quran 7, 172). Therefore, ‘umrān transcends the simple logic of functional cooperation aimed at ensuring *ma‘āsh* (subsistence), as theorized by Ibn Khaldūn [4], to designate the spiritual and structural coherence of the collectives [5]. This notion of collective is understood here in the sense of networks of actions where humans, institutions, and *aḥbās*, as a common living heritage [6], are inextricably linked, whether it be places of worship (*al-Bayt al-ḥarām*, mosques) or *awqāf* for charitable or family works.

This systemic coherence is decoded here using two major analytical tools for complex systems: entropy and *negentropy*, conceptualized in the study of self-organizing structures [7], and transposed here to the analysis of social dynamics [8]. These concepts offer a rigorous framework for understanding the constant tension between the natural decline of human collectives (*kharāb*) and their capacity to generate cohesion. From this perspective, the ‘umrān is conceived as a dynamic system of human cooperation where the forces of destructuring and self-organization continually clash. The collapse of ‘umrān no

longer appears as a series of historical accidents, but as the result of structural misalignments between the different levels of the social system.

From this perspective, this work highlights a conceptual triad of structuring mechanisms: the *Bayt al-Harām* as the anchor of meaning; the *ḥabs* as the regulator of material flows in service of the common good; and the *‘umrān* as a dynamic field of human cooperation, that is, a space of historical transformation that unfolds the variety of modes of existence and, in so doing, forges the resilience of collectives [9]. Based on this triangulation, this work puts forward its central hypothesis: the viability of any social order depends on its capacity to maintain strict coherence between its symbolic orientation, its institutional framework, and its dynamics of cooperation. Conversely, its disintegration resembles a surge of social entropy, marked by a fragmentation of meaning, a deregulation of flows, and the inexorable dissolution of bonds of solidarity.

This theoretical framework acquires particular resonance in the current geostrategic context, marked by the resurgence of power politics, the exacerbation of systemic competition, and the reconfiguration of international hierarchies. The intensification of multipolar rivalries, the reaffirmation of hegemonic strategies, and the centrality of resources –both material and symbolic– in global power relations testify to a profound transformation of the conditions for the stability of social orders.

Faced with such upheavals, purely economic or institutional analytical frameworks prove insufficient to grasp the current dynamics of cohesion and fragmentation. The triptych model *Bayt al-ḥarām-ḥabs-‘umrān* proposes an integrated, multi-level approach; it demonstrates that global crises do not result from mere material imbalances, but from profound misalignments between meaning, institutions, and social dynamics–fractures that geopolitical competition, moreover, renders particularly visible.

Ultimately, this study prioritizes the endogenous concept of *‘umrān* over the exogenous category of “civilization”, not to contest the academic use of this term, but to avoid considering civilization as its presumed conceptual equivalent. This precaution is all the more important given that Ibn Khaldūn employs several notions – *‘umrān*, *ḥaḍārah*, *badāwah* – whose relationships do not simply overlap with the modern terminology of “civilization”.

In the work of Guizot [10], for example, civilization becomes a general historical category for understanding the development of a European society. Using the notion of *‘umrān* thus allows us to avoid confining the analysis to a binary opposition between “Islamic” and “non-Islamic”, but rather to grasp, within the Islamic world itself, the historical plurality of *‘umrān*'s modes of

organization, which are neither a simple reproduction of an ideal model nor a single form of social organization. The objective is therefore to conceive of human grouping as a relational dynamic of cooperation, cohesion, and transformation. Consequently, the decline of societies cannot be reduced to an external threat, insufficient resources, or institutional failure: it can also result from progressive misalignments between meaning, institutions, resources, cooperation, and resilience.

Thus, *‘umrān* does not refer to a single Islamic social model to be reproduced, but provides a framework for understanding the diversity of historical configurations in which principles, institutions, and practices are articulated in different ways.

The proposed model, however, remains a systemic framework for interpretation, and not a deterministic theory. *Entropy* and *negentropy* are used as heuristic categories to understand the processes of disorganization and self-organization of the *‘umrān*, without mechanically transposing the laws of thermodynamics to the social world. Their significance thus lies less in predicting decline than in opening up a field of *worlds of intelligibility* [11] that allows us to examine the relationships between *Bayt al-ḥarām* as the anchor of meaning, *ḥabs* as the guarantor of material flows, and social dynamics as a space for cooperation, while acknowledging the historical and empirical limitations of this construct.

2. Epistemological clarification: *‘umrān*, civilization and nihilism

2.1. Critique of the category of civilization

The notion of civilization occupies a central place in modern social sciences. However, it remains historically situated, stemming from an intellectual trajectory specific to European modernity. Its use as a universal category of analysis thus tends to project an exogenous and homogenizing interpretive framework onto diverse historical realities [12].

Historically, the concept of civilization emerged from the Enlightenment and the social sciences of the 19th century as a process of moral, technical, and institutional improvement of human societies [13]. It gradually became associated with an implicit hierarchy opposing civilized societies to supposedly archaic or barbaric forms [14]. This genealogy imbues the category with a strong normative weight linked to the European experience of modernity, colonial expansion, and the hierarchical classification of societies [15].

From this perspective, civilization tends to function as an external descriptive category based on visible indicators: technological development,

institutional organization, urban density, or economic power. However, such an approach risks reducing social formations to their phenomenal manifestations, neglecting their internal logics of cohesion, their symbolic systems, and their specific goals.

This reduction is often coupled with a linear conception of history organized around an implicit succession of stages: emergence, development, apogee, and decline. The history of societies then appears oriented toward a teleology of progress or modernity [16]. Human formations are thus evaluated according to their proximity to a model considered more accomplished [17].

Such an interpretation contrasts sharply with the perspective of *Qur'ān* (11, 61) of *i'mār al-arḍ*, in which human societies unfold according to organic and non-linear dynamics. This approach finds echoes in certain models of cyclical historical sociology [18] or in morphological approaches to historical formations [19], where societies evolve according to autonomous cycles without necessarily converging toward a single terminal horizon [20].

The uncritical use of the concept of civilization ultimately carries a major methodological risk: that of decontextualizing the internal dynamics of the societies studied. By privileging external macro-structural variables, the analysis tends to marginalize internal mechanisms of cohesion, solidarity, and normative regulation [21]. However, in the case of Islamic societies, the stability of the human group depends precisely on endogenous factors such as *'aṣabiyyah* [22], which refers to group solidarity or social cohesion based on kinship, a shared identity, strong collective loyalty, or a common belief.

It is from this perspective that the present study prioritizes the concept of *'umrān* over that of civilization, in order to preserve the coherence of the analytical framework and to restore the internal dynamics of human formations. Such an approach clearly distinguishes itself from reductionist readings which, by equating *'umrān* with its purely material dimension, impoverish its transcendent and moral dimension. By aligning itself with a critical tradition that conceives of social degradation as a loss of spiritual and normative tension, this conceptual choice allows us to think of *'umrān* not as a static state of accumulation, but as a living system whose viability depends on maintaining its transcendent and moral orientation.

2.2. Semantic structure and value matrix of *‘umrān*

From a philological perspective, which introduces the reader to the art of rigorous exegesis and close reading, the notion of *‘umrān* derives from the triliteral root *‘a-ma-ra* (عَمَرَ). This root unfolds a dense semantic field, centered on the act of breathing life into something, inhabiting a space, and ensuring its continuity through construction, settlement, and ongoing rehabilitation. Grounding the analysis in this verbal morphology allows us to grasp that *‘umrān* is not a static state, but a dynamic process of animating and preserving the world.

Thus, the *‘umrān* cannot be reduced to a mere urban morphology or an accumulation of material capital. Placed within the historical trajectory of the *Bayt al-Ḥarām*, it designates an encompassing macro-structure within which the spiritual, symbolic, institutional, and material dimensions necessary for the continuity of collective life are articulated. This dynamic is manifested in an exemplary way in the scriptural account of Ibrāhīm, Hājar, and Ismā‘īl –peace be upon them–, whose plan to rebuild the *Bayt al-Ḥarām*, erected on the foundations submerged by the flood of Nūḥ –peace be upon him–, historically stands out as the founding act of a spiritual regeneration as well as a human settlement [23].

The *‘umrān* thus constitutes a comprehensive system of mediation between humankind and its Creator, embodying the function of *khilāfah* and situating human existence within the horizon of *‘ibādah*. Consequently, it refers less to a material accumulation than to the functional coherence of the collective.

The notion of *khilāfah* is understood here as humanity's lieutenancy or vice-regency on Earth. It establishes a fiduciary responsibility for the organization and preservation of the world, delegated by Allah, thus rejecting any idea of autonomous sovereignty, anthropocentric absolutism, or absolute ownership. From this perspective, human beings are never the ultimate possessors of resources, but rather the custodians of a common good whose growth and equitable distribution they must ensure, lest they initiate the systemic disintegration of the collective.

This coherence is revealed even more clearly through its structural opposition to *kharāb*. Far from being limited to the visible destruction of infrastructure, *kharāb* signifies a profound disintegration of the organizing principles of the social bond. Any dynamic leading to a loss of meaning, a fragmentation of solidarity, or a dissociation of collective goals is thus interpreted as an entropic destructuring of the *‘umrān*.

From this perspective, the divide between *‘umrān* and *kharāb* cannot be reduced to binary divisions between wealth and poverty, development and underdevelopment, or competitive advantage and disadvantage. What is at stake here is the internal coherence of the social system in the face of the progressive dissociation of its pillars. True *‘umrān* rests on the strict alignment between institutional structures, social practices, and the normative horizon of the collective, where *tawhīd* (monotheism) operates not only as a theological principle but also as a matrix of systemic unification. Conversely, *kharāb* describes the process by which institutions and forms of production become autonomous and detached from their founding purposes, initiating the cumulative decay of the social whole, as illustrated in Figure 1.

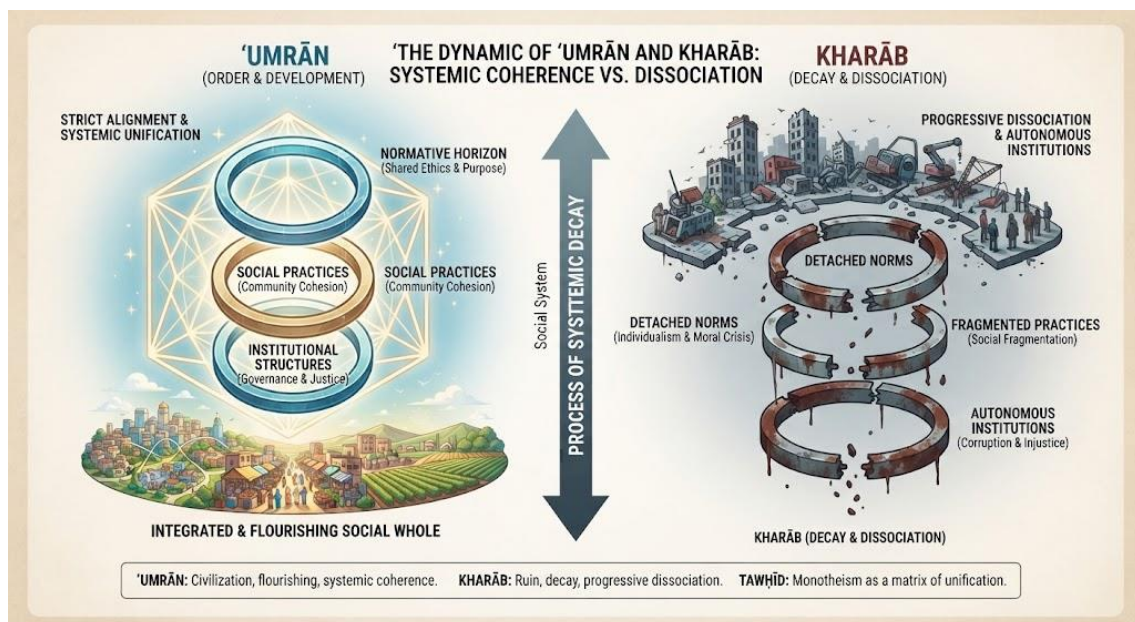


Figure 1. The Matrix of Unification: Institutional Alignment in *‘Umrān*. **Source:** Refined using generative AI (Gemini) in strict accordance with the author's conceptual and scientific orientations

This image graphically represents the transition between *‘umrān* (order and harmonious social construction, anchored in institutional alignment and *tawhīd*) and *kharāb* (systemic decadence resulting from the dissociation of social pillars). It highlights the internal coherence of a living system in the face of its cumulative decomposition.

2.3. *Umrān* and civilization: a fundamental epistemological distinction

The distinction between the notions of civilization (*al-ḥaḍārah*) and *‘umrān* goes beyond mere terminological preference; it involves two irreconcilable visions of human trajectories. While civilization is presented as a descriptive category of modern macrohistory, classifying societies according to exogenous attributes such as technological power, administrative apparatus, or the degree of material accumulation [24], it in reality only captures the visible sedimentations of the social order.

Umrān, on the other hand, designates the dynamic internal infrastructure of the collective, sustained by endogenous processes of cohesion, cooperation, and transformation. It is structured around cycles of solidarity (*‘aṣabiyyah*), vital energy, and historical transformations that unfold the variety of modes of existence, thus guaranteeing the renewal, continuity, and resilience of the system in the face of the corrosive forces of *kharāb* [25]. Therefore, *‘umrān* cannot be understood as a fixed entity, but as a living metabolism, perpetually subject to dynamics of growth, consolidation, and decay. Its elucidation requires a systemic approach, attentive to the intimate mechanisms of regulation of the human collective, rather than solely to the external manifestations of geoeconomic power or market competitiveness, where social order is too often reduced to its quantitative indicators alone.

For Ibn Khaldūn, the notion of civilization often refers to the stage of refinement and luxury characteristic of established urban societies, which follows the dynamism of Bedouin societies (*badāwah*) [26]. It corresponds to a phase of material, cultural, and institutional growth, marked by the stability and increasing complexity of social organization. However, this development can also herald a process of decline when abundance and comfort weaken the bonds of collective solidarity [27]. (*‘aṣabiyyah*). *Ḥaḍārah* is therefore not only a pinnacle of perfection, but also a moment of internal fragility [28]. It is thus part of a cyclical dynamic in which civilizations are born, flourish, and then decline.

2.4. 'Umrān, civilization and nihilism: hierarchy of analytical levels

To fully grasp the origin of current tensions, a third category must be introduced: "*nihilism*" [29]. While civilization describes the visible form of social structures and 'umrān the internal coherence of collective dynamics, nihilism designates a deeper rupture that affects the very foundations of shared meaning and values.

This rupture can be illuminated by the three stages of the religious and moral evolution of societies [30]. In the first stage, "*active religion*" directly influences customs and ensures the perfect alignment of the group. This is followed by the stage of "*zombie religion*": although deep faith has died out, the social reflexes, collective morality, and spirit of solidarity that stemmed from it survive through structural habit. 'umrān thus retains its coherence. The shift towards nihilism occurs at the third stage, that of "*zero religion*": when these residual moral structures collapse in turn, society is no longer guided by any shared belief, paving the way for an absolute moral void.

Faced with the abysmal emptiness of this zero stage, society loses its capacity to generate cohesion through adherence to a shared project or ideal. To compensate for this lack of internal drive and delay the disintegration of the social whole, the system is mechanically compelled to seek out or fabricate external enemies. Unable to cement the collective through a shared sense of purpose, attempts are made to artificially bind it together through fear and opposition to a designated adversary.

This nihilism of "*zombie religion*" is therefore not simply a lack of reference points. It characterizes the progressive divorce between the functioning of a society and its profound purpose, while simultaneously fueling external geopolitical aggression that seeks to mask the internal void. In this configuration, institutions continue to function, technology progresses, and control systems are refined, but the social structure gradually detaches itself from the human purposes it was meant to serve.

Consequently, a society can appear highly civilized on the surface while undergoing a profound degradation of its 'umrān through the entry into the era of "*zero religion*". Its material power and aggressive international projection grow even as its real solidarity collapses, its common goals disperse, and its symbolic markers lose their unifying force.

2.5. Implications for the proposed theoretical framework

This threefold distinction between civilization, *‘umrān*, and nihilism clarifies the theoretical positioning of this work. The objective is not simply to substitute a classical notion for a modern category, but to introduce a level of analysis capable of highlighting the potential misalignments between the visible forms of social order, the internal dynamics of cooperation, and the moral foundations that ensure the unity of the collective [31]. By employing the notion of *‘umrān*, this study transcends fragmentary approaches that artificially separate the economy, the social sphere, culture, and the sacred, in order to reintroduce the central question of the system's overall coherence. It is precisely within this analytical framework that the negentropic hypothesis developed here is situated. The *Bayt al-Ḥarām* is considered the pivot for stabilizing meaning and providing symbolic orientation for the human collective, while the *ḥabs* operates as a mechanism for regulating and perpetuating material and institutional flows.

Therefore, the triptych *Bayt al-Ḥarām-Ḥabs-‘Umrān* allows us to consider the resilience of societies not solely in terms of their material capacities, but through their ability to maintain a lasting harmony between power, organization, and purpose. From this perspective, social entropy is not simply a matter of economic decline or power crises; it more fundamentally signifies the progressive disconnect between meaning, institutions, flows, and structures of cooperation. Conversely, the negentropic force of *‘umrān* characterizes the capacity of a social system to preserve or restore this internal coherence in the face of the forces of collapse and fragmentation that permeate human history.

3. Literature review

A significant portion of classical Arabic literature emphasizes a central idea: human beings cannot live, produce, or sustain themselves in isolation. The continuity of social life necessarily depends on human grouping, mutual aid, and cooperation among individuals. Classical authors thus describe society as a space of interdependence where everyone contributes, directly or indirectly, to facilitating the lives of others.

Qudāma Ibn Ja‘far [32] explains that the stability of society rests on practical cooperation through which individuals support one another in their activities. Al-Shaybānī [33] also stresses that solidarity is an essential condition for the maintenance of communities, while al-Dalījī [34] emphasizes the importance of mutual assistance in organizing communal life. Several authors then link this cooperation to the necessity of a political and institutional framework. Al-Māwardī [35] and Ibn Jamā‘a [36] consider the primary function

of authority to be organizing common interests and preserving collective order. Ibn ‘Abd al-Salām [37] adds that social structures derive their legitimacy only from the realization of the common good, which presupposes organized cooperation among members of society.

Other authors place greater emphasis on the complementarity of social functions. Ibn Abī al-Rabī’ [38] and Ibn al-Azraq [39] demonstrate that individuals are interdependent through the division of roles and responsibilities. In this vein, Ibn Taymiyya [40] develops an important reflection on the necessity of political organization. According to him, neither religion nor social life can be sustained without an authority capable of ordering human relations. He explains that people naturally need one another and that no group can function sustainably without leadership and coordination. Even the smallest gatherings require minimal organization to preserve group cohesion and prevent the disintegration of social relations.

This insight finds its most structured formulation in Ibn Khaldūn [41], who elevates cooperation to the primary foundation of *‘umrān*. From his perspective, human existence is intrinsically collective: no individual can satisfy their basic needs or guarantee their survival in isolation. *‘umrān* thus defines a system of vital interdependence where human activities complement one another to make the continuity of social life possible. Following in this direct lineage, his disciple al-Maqrīzī [42] takes the logic further, demonstrating that no society can overcome crises without a solid framework of economic and organizational interdependencies.

All of this literature thus converges on a fundamental observation: the stability of societies depends on the capacity of human beings to sustainably organize their cooperative relationships, through three cardinal principles: the necessity of grouping, the imperative of mutual aid through the complementarity of functions, and the role of collective organization in preserving social order. While these reflections constitute the foundation upon which Ibn Khaldūn would systematically develop his theory of *‘umrān*, the epistemological stance of this work consists of approaching this intellectual heritage as the basis for a dynamic and systemic approach to social phenomena.

Following in this tradition, the present work posits that collective viability is not assessed solely by its visible structures or material dimension – usually called civilization –, but rather through the viability of its internal feedback loops. Analyzing these previous contributions thus legitimizes our own interpretive framework: understanding *‘umrān* not as a static entity, but as a living and interconnected order, whose resilience in the face of forces of

disintegration depends on the ongoing alignment between material organization and its shared goals [43].

4. Theoretical framework proposed

This study combines *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* (thematic Qur'anic exegesis) with a perspective derived from complex systems theory, some of whose concepts reflect and can be linked to the Arabic linguistic and rhetorical tradition. In this context, al-Jurjānī [44] drew particularly on the works of al-Farāhīdī [45], Sībawayh [46], Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī [47], and al-Jāhīz [48], which he extends into a relational conception of language and meaning, particularly developed through the notion of *naẓm*. Meaning is thus not considered an isolated property of linguistic units, but rather the product of the relations and configurations that articulate them.

From an exegetical perspective, it is important to distinguish between *tafsīr ʾamm* (general Qur'anic exegesis) and *tafsīr mawḍūʿī* (thematic Qur'anic exegesis). *Tafsīr ʾamm* is based on the fundamental principles of *tafsīr* transmitted by the exegetical tradition: the Qurʾān interpreted by the Qurʾān, the Qurʾān interpreted in light of the *ḥadīth*, the Qurʾān interpreted through the *āthār*, that is, the words and interpretations transmitted by the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), the *Tābiʿūn*, the *Tābiʿ al-Tābiʿīn*, and the scholarly generations that succeeded them, the Qurʾān interpreted through the analytical tools of Arab language, as illustrated in Figure 2.

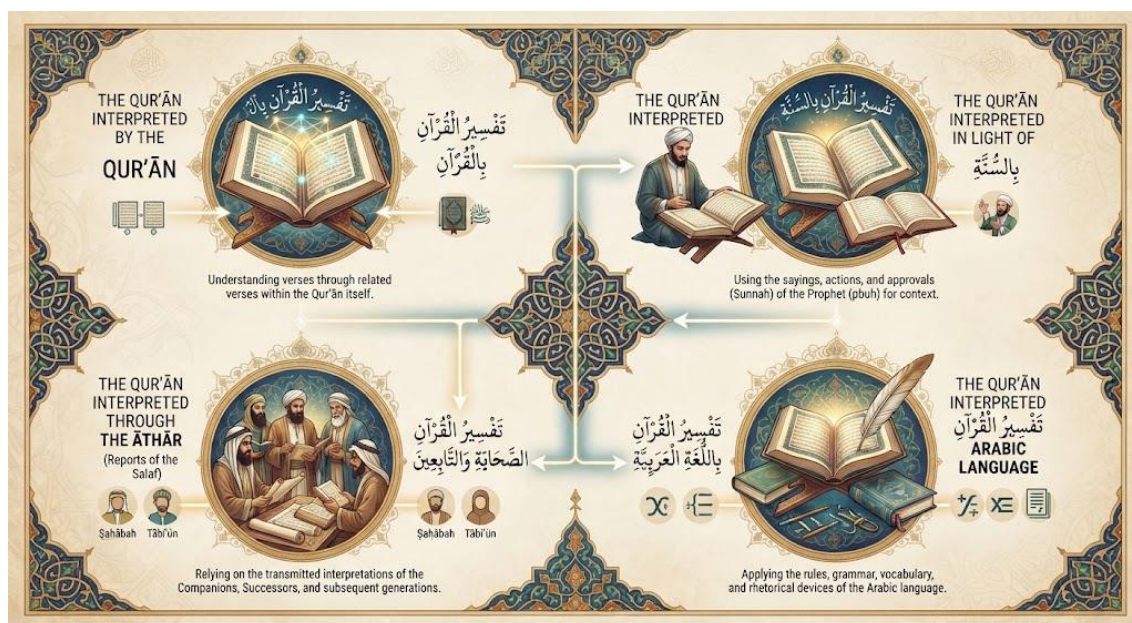


Figure 2. *Uṣūl al-Tafsīr (Methodology of Quranic Exegesis)*. **Source:** Refined using generative AI (Gemini) in strict accordance with the author's conceptual and scientific orientations

Tafsīr mawḍūʿī therefore breaks neither with the principles nor with the fundamental sources of *tafsīr*. It reorganizes them around a theme, a notion or a specific question, by bringing together the relevant Quranic passages and examining them in the light of the Qurʾān, the *ḥadīth* and the exegetical traditions transmitted. It can also mobilize, depending on the nature of the subject studied, the contributions of formal and natural sciences, engineering sciences, as well as human and social sciences, without renouncing their own methodological requirements. Its specificity therefore does not lie in the abandonment of the principles of *tafsīr*, but in the application of these principles to a particular question, in order to deepen its intelligibility and establish a fruitful dialogue with contemporary scientific knowledge.

In this study, this approach focuses particularly on *Bayt al-ḥarām*, *ḥabs*, and *ʿumrān*. It is not simply a matter of commenting successively on the verses that mention them, but of reconstructing the conceptual and semantic relationships that connect them throughout the Quranic corpus. This thematic configuration then forms the basis of a systemic analysis: complex systems theory intervenes as a second-order analytical level, allowing for the examination of the interactions, interdependencies, and processes of organization, disorganization, and resilience that emerge from these relationships.

Complex systems theory then serves as an analytical framework for examining the relationships identified through this thematic reading. The aim is not to reduce these elements to a linear chain of cause and effect, but rather to consider them as interdependent components whose interactions can generate processes of organization, disorganization, adaptation, and resilience. Entropy and negentropy are thus used heuristically to describe certain possible dynamics of social organization, and not as a direct transposition of the laws of thermodynamics to the social world. The approach can thus be summarized as a two-step movement, as illustrated in Figure 3:

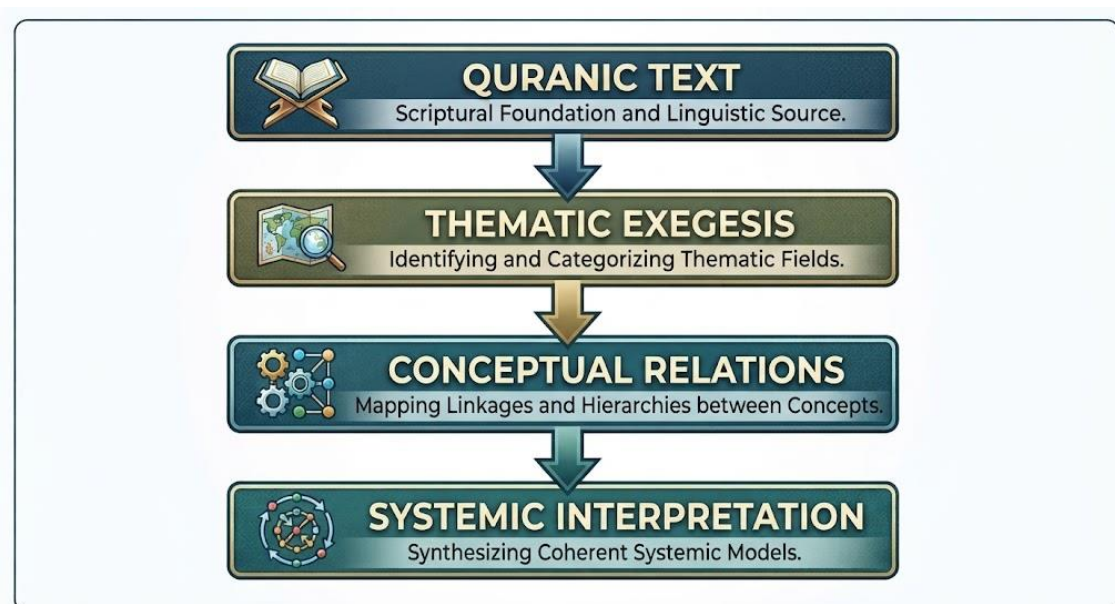


Figure 3. From scriptural exegesis to systemic modeling: A methodological trajectory. **Source:** Refined using generative AI (Gemini) in strict accordance with the author's conceptual and scientific orientations

This distinction is essential: the theory of complex systems does not replace *tafsīr*, but constitutes a second level analysis grid allowing the examination of the relational structure identified by the thematic interpretation. The objective is therefore not to deduce a scientific theory from the Quranic text as the dominant discourse on the *I'jaz* asserts, but to examine to what extent the thematic configuration identified by the *tafsīr* can be made intelligible through the notions of complexity, interaction, self-organization and resilience. The proposed model should therefore be understood as an interpretative and heuristic construction, the scope of which remains circumscribed by the textual, conceptual and historical materials on which it is based.

4.1. The Bayt al-Ḥarām as a Principle of Unifying Meaning

The *Bayt al-Ḥarām*, as the focal point of worship and the common direction of prayer, transcends its immediate ritual function. It stands as a central landmark that unites representations and guides collective goals. In a systemic reading, it acts as a fixed point in the space of meaning: it reduces the dispersion of references, limits the fragmentation of values, and maintains the symbolic unity of the community. Through this centrality, it helps stabilize the most fragile dimension of the social: that of shared meanings and common objectives.

4.2. The *ḥabs* as a means of stabilizing resources over time

The *ḥabs* constitutes the second level of the system. It introduces a relational dynamic for managing *amwāl*, understood as anything from which benefit may be derived (ما يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ), and which ultimately refer to the *rizq* of Allah. From a long-term historical perspective, the *ḥabs* can thus be considered an ancient mode of resource organization serving the collective, predating the modern category of the “third sector”, generally defined in terms of non-profit organizations [49].

Rather than leaving goods entirely subject to the vagaries of immediate circulation or the sole logic of the market, the *ḥabs* inscribes them in the long term by conferring upon them lasting functions serving the common good. This dynamic thus transforms resources that could be consumed or accumulated into enduring collective capacities: education, social assistance, infrastructure, healthcare, or support for vulnerable people. Resources then cease to be mere objects of consumption or accumulation to become sustainable supports of collective life, contributing to preserving the continuity and resilience of *‘umrān*.

4.3. *‘Umrān* as a Dynamic of Human Cooperation

‘Umrān refers to the most comprehensive level: that of social life in motion. Far from being a static state, it corresponds to the living network of relationships, exchanges, and organizations through which individuals produce and reproduce their collective existence. This field is constantly traversed by dynamics of cohesion and forces of fragmentation. While solidarity, trust, and complementary roles enable its consolidation, their weakening inevitably leads to its imbalance. *‘umrān* thus appears as a social metabolism whose stability depends directly on the quality of human cooperation.

4.4. Systemic Articulation of the Triptych

The model's strength lies in the strict interdependence of its three dimensions, which act as mutually regulating loops:

- *Bayt al-Ḥarām* ensures the stabilization of shared meaning and goals.
- *Ḥabs* guarantees the stabilization of resources and material flows.
- *‘Umrān* deploys the overall dynamic of social cooperation.

This integrated system implies that any local failure generates cascading entropic effects throughout the entire structure. The weakening of symbolic reference points fragments shared meaning, the instability of resources disrupts

the material structures of mutual aid, and the breakdown of cooperation shatters group cohesion.

Therefore, *‘umrān* must be understood as a comprehensive *negentropic* order. Faced with the forces of decay that permeate history, this triptych does not act as a passive structure, but as a powerful engine of regulation and active reorganization. It is the rigorous alignment between meaning (*Bayt*), resources (*habs*), and relationships that generates this *negentropic* force, the only one capable of neutralizing chaotic drift and sustainably protecting the collective against the disintegration of its social bonds. The Figure 4 summarizes the major components of the proposed analytical framework.

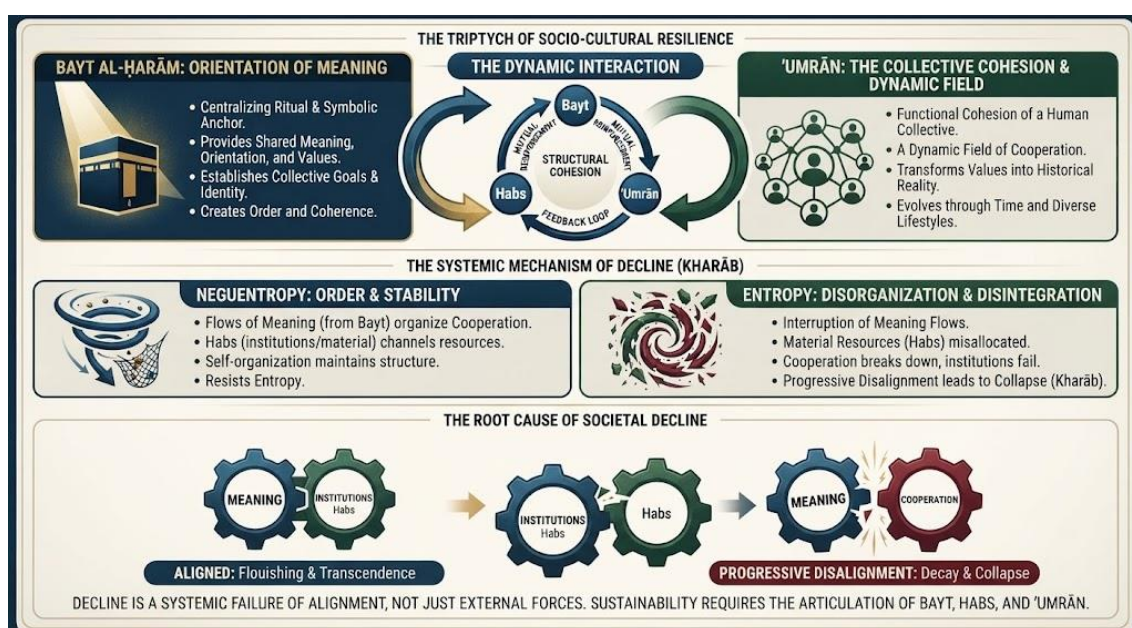


Figure 4. Systemic model of socio-cultural resilience: Interaction between Bayt al-Ḥarām, Ḥabs and ‘Umrān. **Source:** Refined using generative AI (Gemini) in strict accordance with the author's conceptual and scientific orientations

Thus, faced with the forces of decline that permeate history, this triptych does not act as a passive structure, but as a powerful engine of regulation and active reorganization. It is the rigorous alignment between meaning, resources, and relationships that generates this *negentropic* force, the only one capable of neutralizing chaotic drift and sustainably protecting the collective against the disintegration of its social bonds

5. Trajectory of decohesion: the entropy of *'umrān*

The degradation of a social system is never a matter of chance; it follows a mechanism of misalignment. When the *'umrān* weakens, it is because its descriptive feedback loops seize up one by one. Order gives way to entropy, leading to the ultimate disconnection between meaning, material structures, and collective action.

5.1. The Failure of the Symbolic Pivot

A society collapses first from the top down. The first symptom of social entropy is the loss of the central fixed point's power of attraction, that is, the reference point that unified individual trajectories and maintained the group's core imaginary meanings [50]. As soon as this core loses its legitimacy, the space of meaning fragments into a multitude of local narratives [51]. The collective ceases to move forward in a negotiated direction and instead expands into an agglomeration of categorical, atomized, and often rival interests [52]. Individuals no longer share a common horizon; they simply coexist within the same technical and administrative infrastructure, detached from the lived world [53]. Deprived of symbolic drive, the social structure falls into a purely functional inertia where the institution survives, but society dies out.

5.2. The Utilitarian Drift: The Comfort Trap

The second point of rupture lies in the redefinition of overall priorities. We are witnessing a reversal of values: the pursuit of demanding collective goals is sacrificed on the altar of immediate material comfort, rapid consumption, and passive security, echoing Tocqueville's prophecy of a retreat into vulgar pleasures [54], and the dissolution of the public sphere into the realm of needs [55]. Individual well-being ceases to be the fuel or the means of communal life and instead becomes its sole purpose [56]. This shift numbs the social body. The effort to cooperate weakens, and long-term commitments evaporate under the effect of accelerated time [57]. When shared goals disappear, society descends into pure instrumental rationality, that is, a technical and accounting-based administration devoid of meaning [58].

5.3. The atomization of the social fabric

The shockwave then reaches local structures. Deprived of common sense and undermined by individualism, local support networks disintegrate, illustrating the critical decline of social capital [59]. The complementarity of roles, which constituted the group's strength and characterized organic solidarity [60], fades before a mutual distrust that paralyzes collective initiatives [61]. The social fabric tears into watertight, polarized blocs incapable of consensus [62]. Flows of sustainable cooperation dry up, giving way to purely transactional relationships typical of market structures disconnected from any moral obligation [63]. The system shifts from an integrated organic state to an agglomeration of atomized units, incapable of presenting a united front in the face of crises.

5.4. The subterfuge of the external enemy: an illusory reprieve

It is precisely at the height of this internal paralysis that the command apparatus attempts its most desperate maneuver: exporting the crisis by fabricating an external enemy and calling for arms. Unable to regenerate cohesion through meaning, the system's governance attempts to simulate it through fear, reactivating the systemic dynamics of conflictual diversion [64]. Highlighting an international threat can contribute to shifting the focus of public debate towards external issues, to the detriment of the economic and social tensions affecting the country internally [65]. These tensions stem from a structural dynamic characterized in particular by unemployment, the persistent effects of inflation, the accumulation of debt and the widening of wealth inequalities [66]. However, from a systemic perspective, this strategy has significant limitations. External conflict can temporarily displace social tensions without addressing the structural determinants of the crisis. It also mobilizes considerable material, financial, and institutional resources. These resources are then no longer available to meet social needs and rebuild collective infrastructure [67]. This reallocation of resources can reinforce processes of social atomization. It also reduces the capacity for coordination, cooperation, and reconstruction of the social system. The conflict thus produces a short-term effect that does not alter the structural conditions of the crisis. From this perspective, it does not constitute a response to the crisis of *'umrān*. On the contrary, it can contribute to deepening its imbalances.

5.5. The threshold of widespread breakdown

The breakdown of a system is not linear; it is exponential. Dysfunctions accumulate insidiously until they reach a critical mass, triggering an irreversible critical transition. Beyond this tipping point, the collapse becomes self-sustaining through positive feedback loops [68]. The three pillars then give way synchronously: meaning disappears, the institutional apparatus spins its wheels, and basic forms of solidarity vanish in a systemic cascade of failures [69]. This is the stage of total disintegration. The structures of civilization (infrastructure, administration, technology) continue to exist through simple bureaucratic inertia [70], but the soul of the collective – its negentropic life force – has already ceased to exist. The Figure 5 highlights the dynamics of the decohesion of the *‘umrān* through a structured synthesis.



Figure 5. Trajectory of decohesion of the *‘umrān*

6. Limitations and scope of the systemic interpretation model

All human research endeavors are necessarily limited. The further a researcher progresses in exploring an object, the more they become aware not only of what they can understand, but also of the limitations of their own concepts, methods, and analytical tools. The progression of research, therefore, does not consist solely in expanding the realm of the knowable; it also leads to a clearer definition of the framework within which a proposition remains valid and the conditions beyond which its validity can no longer be presumed.

Recognizing these limits is thus not a weakness of the model, but a condition of its epistemological rigor.

The interpretative framework proposed in this research must be understood from this perspective. It seeks to open up a possibility of interpretation by articulating thematic *tafsīr*, theory of complex systems and the concept of *‘umrān*, without claiming to reduce historical and social reality to a single schema. It is therefore appropriate to specify what this model allows us to clarify, but also what it does not allow us to state. This clarification is all the more necessary as the use of the notions of *entropy*, *negentropy* and flow in social analysis could lead to an excessive extension of concepts initially developed in other fields.

This interpretative framework thus presents several limitations that need to be clarified. First, the use of the notions of *entropy* and *negentropy* here stems primarily from a heuristic transposition of concepts from thermodynamics and complex systems theory to the domain of *‘umrān*. It is not a matter of directly equating a society with a thermodynamic system, nor of assuming that social transformations obey strictly equivalent physical laws. Rather, in this model, *entropy* designates a tendency toward the breakdown of relationships, while *negentropy* refers to the mechanisms that allow the collective to maintain or rebuild its cohesion.

Secondly, the model should not be understood as a deterministic theory of societal decline. The weakening or interruption of *negentropic* flows does not mechanically lead to *kharāb*. Societies possess capacities for adaptation, learning, reorganization, and recomposition that can alter their trajectory. From the perspective of complex systems, the model thus aims less to establish a necessary causal sequence than to highlight conditions of possibility, structural tensions, and mechanisms capable of influencing the dynamics of *‘umrān*.

Third, the relationship between the *Bayt al-ḥarām*, the *ḥabs*, and social dynamics cannot be reduced to a universal functional architecture. These three dimensions are historically mediated by different institutions, practices, power relations, normative interpretations, and economic configurations. Their articulation can therefore vary considerably depending on the historical context. The model provides a framework for analysis but does not claim to encompass the plurality of forms of *‘umrān*.

Fourth, the notion of the orientation of meaning attributed to the *Bayt al-ḥarām* raises a particular methodological difficulty. It presupposes a transition between a normative or symbolic meaning and observable effects in the collective organization. This transition cannot be presupposed: it must be studied through the practices, institutions, and concrete forms of cooperation

that make this orientation operative. In other words, meaning does not directly produce social order; it operates through historical and institutional mediations.

The model also has one significant empirical limitation: the concepts of cohesion, *negentropic* flows, misalignment, and *kharāb* require operationalization before they can be subjected to comparative empirical validation. Without this step, the framework remains essentially conceptual and interpretive. This limitation also relates to a fundamental distinction between language as a system of signifying relations and *‘umrān* as a human group embedded in lived, historical, and institutional relationships. While language organizes and makes experience intelligible through the relationships it establishes between signs, meanings, and utterances, *‘umrān* engages these meanings in a different register: that of relationships between people, institutions, resources, practices, and forms of cooperation. Thus, there is a mediating link between language and *‘umrān*: meaning takes shape in language, but it extends into the practices, institutions, and social relations that give *‘umrān* its historical consistency. It is precisely this shift from a system of meaning to a system of human relations that prevents us from reducing *‘umrān* to a mere formal structure.

Its contribution, therefore, does not lie, at this stage, in the quantitative prediction of a society's decline or stability, but in proposing a new world of intelligibility that allows us to jointly examine the relationships between language, meaning, institutions, resources, and human cooperation, and to question how their articulation—or disarticulation—can contribute to the dynamics of *‘umrān*.

7. Conclusion:

This work laid the foundations for a unified systemic framework based on a reinterpretation of the Quranic verse (3:96), articulating meaning (*Bayt*), structures of continuity (*ḥabs*), and the living field of human relations (*‘umrān*). The fundamental hypothesis is confirmed: the viability of a complex social system is not reducible to the accumulation of its material resources or the sophistication of its governance structures. It depends on the system's capacity to generate negentropy, that is, a force of organization, coherence, and structure capable of counteracting natural entropy. This negentropic force arises from the rigorous alignment between its symbolic foundation, its stabilizing mechanisms, and the intensity of its cooperative dynamics.

Conversely, the misalignment of these three dimensions triggers an increase in social entropy, initiating a trajectory of decomposition manifested by the loss of shared reference points, the ineffective functioning of institutions, and the erosion of organic solidarity.

7.1. The contemporary paradox: the asymmetry between power and negentropic potential

The contemporary international environment, characterized by radical uncertainty, escalating geopolitical rivalries, and threats of internal implosion, critically illustrates the relevance of this model. Societies with high technological and economic performance find themselves caught in a structural paradox: an unprecedented capacity for external power projection coexists with an advanced decay of their internal *‘umrān* (spiritual integrity).

When the logic of competition, short-term returns, and accounting optimization becomes the sole objective, the space of meaning fragments. Institutions continue to function through mere bureaucratic or technological inertia, but they lose their role as guarantors. The external structural edifice remains visible, but its vital force is extinguished. Individual material well-being replaces shared horizons, transforming the social fabric into an agglomeration of atomized and rival units. The diagnosis of the model is unequivocal: a macro-social formation can possess all the attributes of global domination while simultaneously being on the verge of an internal systemic rupture due to the exhaustion of its negentropic potential.

7.2. Strategic and theoretical recommendations for an uncertain order

Faced with the risks of collapse and the illusion of diversionary strategies through external conflict, four major orientations are necessary to reintroduce negentropy into social systems:

- **Rehabilitating the central symbolic pivot as the negentropic core**

Quantitative and institutional approaches in the social sciences prove powerless to anticipate implosion crises. It is urgent to reintroduce axiomatic coherence and the sharing of common horizons as critical variables for the viability of systems. Meaning is the primary driver of negentropy; without it, atomization and informational chaos prevail.

- **Substitute continuity structures for the accounting management of entropy**

Institutions must be freed from the pure logic of immediate efficiency and market fluidity, which accelerate entropy. Following the model of the *ḥabs*, the current imperative is to design mechanisms for neutralizing and safeguarding critical resources (economic, environmental, social) to prevent their dispersal and anchor the social structure in the long term.

- **Reversing polarization dynamics through cooperative loops**

Resilience to exogenous shocks depends entirely on the quality of social capital and the reciprocity of support networks. Generating negentropy on the ground requires repairing cooperation structures by targeting the reduction of systemic mistrust and the rebuilding of local solidarity, otherwise the system risks collapsing as soon as a critical mass of tensions is reached.

- **Subjecting external power to the evaluation of internal entropic balance**

The governance of a system must integrate the internal cost of its external projection. A political or military strategy that generates superficial cohesion through fear, while simultaneously depleting internal resources and polarizing the social fabric, accelerates the overall negentropic deficit. The true power of a macro-social formation lies in its capacity to preserve its own internal feedback loops, not in its capacity for external destruction.

7.3. Epilogue

The conceptual triptych proposed in this work offers a dynamic framework for moving beyond both cyclical interpretations of crises and approaches based on the categories of “Islamic civilization” or “clash of civilizations.” While international tensions, the specter of widespread disintegration, and the emergence of AI-powered agents [71] are shaking the certainties associated with economic models, both orthodox and heterodox – including those developed within the field of Islamic economics – historical sustainability seems to depend less on adherence to a pre-established model than on the capacity of macro-social formations to preserve their symbolic orientation, institutional coherence, cooperative dynamics, and resilience. It is in maintaining this systemic equilibrium, a true bulwark against processes of social entropy, that the future trajectory of ways of life is played out, often invisibly but decisively.

Finally, it is important to remember that concepts do not simply reveal reality: they help to define it, order it, and guide how it is perceived and understood. They illuminate certain aspects while necessarily leaving others in the shadows. This is precisely what makes their constant renewal necessary. However, renewing a concept does not mean systematically seeking novelty; it also means revisiting the old with a fresh perspective, capable of revitalizing its meaning, shifting its viewpoints, and revealing previously unnoticed dimensions.

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