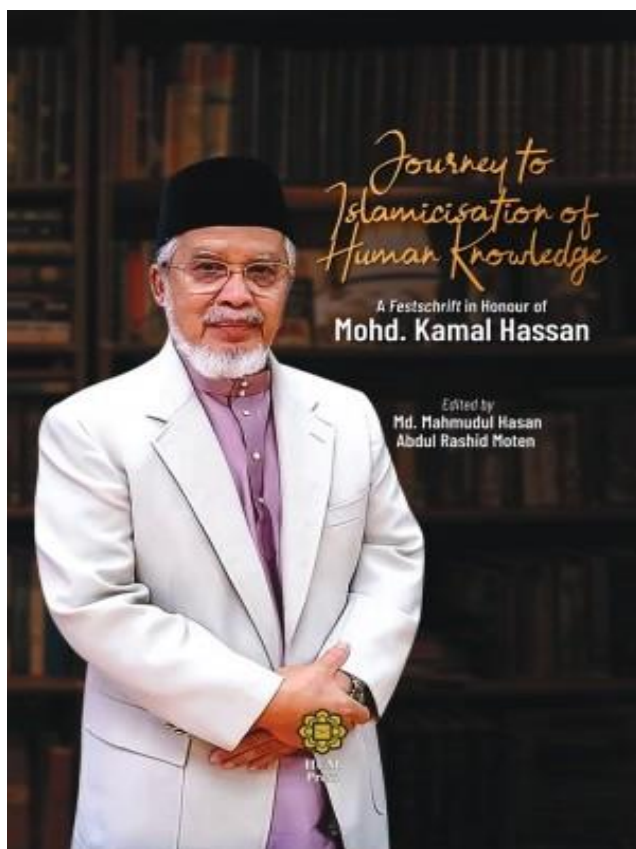


Md. Mahmudul Hasan & Abdul Rashid Moten (eds.), *Journey to Islamicisation of Human Knowledge: A Festschrift in Honour of Mohd. Kamal Hassan*, Gombak: IIUM Press, 2023. 150 pp. ISBN: 978-967-491-343-4.



Integration, Islamicisation, and Relevantisation – one would not fail to recognise these scholarly and captivating terms gracing any dedicated chapters chronicling the life and intellectual voyage of the esteemed Distinguished Professor Tan Sri Dr. Mohd. Kamal Hassan (1942–2023). Such is also evident in the present *festschrift* under review. The presence of these terms, especially integration, is pervasive, threading seamlessly in almost every single paragraph of the eight chapters of this celebratory work. Then, does this *festschrift* merit a review? While it is true that one should exercise caution in critiquing this work, particularly out of respect for the editors and the esteemed academics, and since the *festschrift* serves as a tribute for the honoured scholar, it is worth considering

the delicate balance between constructive feedback and celebratory acknowledgment.

Indeed, while a disparaging review may lack tact, a meticulously crafted assessment can yield invaluable insights for future scholarship. This aligns soundly with Irving Horovits' perspective on scholarly publication, asserting that *festschriften* (festschrifts) endure and proliferate because they are not just retrospective, but prospective endeavours. They represent a *Beruf*, a vocation for further work and improvement in light of the vision and legacy of the celebrated scholars. Furthermore, although celebratory works are occasionally perceived as veering towards a more relaxed demeanour and stylistic approach, within the original envisaged German tradition, both *festschrifts*, celebrating the living academic, and *Gedenkschrifts*, commemorating them posthumously, embody a distinct literary genre within scholarly discourse. Therefore, they have a responsibility to maintain the rigorous standards and scholarly integrity inherent in academic publishing.

Now, let us embark upon the review of the present work before us, titled *Journey to Islamicisation of Human Knowledge: A Festschrift in Honour of Mohd. Kamal Hassan*. Shall we commence by elucidating the overarching themes delineated within each of its eight chapters? The introductory exposition, deftly curated by the editor, Md. Mahmudul Hasan, has already stood as a veritable gateway to the subsequent chapters. Leveraging his expertise in English language and literature, Mahmudul Hasan skilfully intertwines personal anecdotes, scholarly insights, and eloquent prose, inviting readers on a captivating journey. Within moments of delving into the introduction, one finds oneself enraptured, traversing a tapestry woven with personal narratives, institutional histories, academic visions, and practical applications – all interwoven with threads of wisdom. If Kamal Hassan were renowned for his masterful command of the English language, enriched by his mellifluous voice and meticulous selection of words, Mahmudul Hasan and his co-editor have admirably succeeded in upholding this linguistic legacy, ensuring that readers are enveloped in an ambiance reminiscent of Kamal Hassan's linguistic prowess.

As a *liber amicorum*, this *festschrift* presents a unique amalgamation of scholar-comrades, each upholding a testament to camaraderie. Each contributor, a distinct facet in the multifaceted prism of Kamal Hassan's influence, lends their own hue to the portrait of his legacy. From Abdul Rashid Moten, a colleague who at one point in time walked alongside Kamal Hassan in the morning to an earlier campus of the university for three years, to Sayyed Mohamed Muhsin, a member of the later generation of Kamal Hassan's students, the *festschrift* offers a kaleidoscope of perspectives. Mohamed Aslam Haneef, belonging to the

inaugural batch of IIUM students, and Faridah Abdul Manaf, who encountered Kamal Hassan during her undergraduate years in New Zealand before becoming his colleague, offer diverse perspectives. Thameem Ushama, Kamal Hassan's long-time colleague almost since the inception of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and Rosnani Hashim, a witness to the blossoming of Islamic education in Malaysia, enrich the book with invaluable insights. Notably, the editor himself, Mahmudul Hasan, relinquished a career as an academic at the most prestigious university in his homeland to join IIUM and subsequently interacted with Kamal Hassan on various scholarly projects. In addition, the *festschrift* is enriched by the voices of Kamal Hassan's present-day disciples, as Mahmudul Hasan's students embark on a voyage of discovery, unearthing hidden treasures of Kamal Hassan's personal life and wisdom through intense interviews and shared anecdotes.

One might naturally wonder: will the *festschrift* then offer fresh insights even to those well-acquainted with Kamal Hassan's legacy? For the newcomer stepping into the intricate realms of Islamisation discourse or delving into the annals of Islamic education and universities, this volume undoubtedly serves as a fascinating introduction to the philosophical concepts elucidated by contemporary Muslim scholars and educationists. Furthermore, for those grappling with the perceived complexity of such discussions, the text becomes a friendly guide, presenting complex ideas in a lucid and accessible manner.

However, seasoned readers need not despair, for within these pages lie not only scholarly discourse but also intimate glimpses into Kamal Hassan's persona, crafted through individual encounters. This is facilitated by the authors' freedom to reminisce about commendable moments and actions of Kamal Hassan, liberties perhaps not permissible had he been among us today. For instance, Mahmudul Hasan elaborates on a seemingly minor incident, recounting Kamal Hassan's objection to being dubbed a "polymath" out of his well-known humility. Kamal Hassan, in a gentle yet poignant remark, advised Mahmudul Hasan against comparing him to the esteemed Islamic poet-philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal, humbly stating that he saw himself merely as a humble house "boy," tasked with running errands for the great master or pouring hot tea with sugar into his cup. These anecdotes collectively offer a fresh perspective on the publication of a *festschrift*, particularly from an Islamic viewpoint—a perspective I shall delve into further in this review.

Allow me now to observe the authors' struggle to balance novelty and memory, as well as academic rigor and rhetorical flair, within the pages of this laudatory work. Throughout its chapters, the *festschrift* inadvertently sheds light on key lectures delivered by Kamal Hassan, wherein he expounded upon his

ideas. For instance, one such discourse, titled “Islamicisation of Human Knowledge,” held at IIUM’s Experimental Hall, aimed at the integration of Islamic principles into the fields of the social sciences and humanities.

Additionally, the *estschrift* meticulously traces Kamal Hassan’s perspective on *tasawwuf*, delving into the influences that shaped his understanding of the subject and elucidating the rationale behind his profound engagement with *Ihya’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* of al-Ghazali. Furthermore, emphasising the practical manifestation of the key Islamic concepts, the volume offers a detailed exploration of the history and significance of IIUM’s strategic and spiritual Ibadah Camp. Here, Kamal Hassan ingeniously employed this platform to instil the importance of “Islamicisation of the self,” intertwining it with Quranic concepts such as *‘Ibād al-Raḥmān*, *Ulu al-Albāb*, *Murabbi*, and *Ummatan Wasāṭan*.

To many, Kamal Hassan’s involvement in the establishment of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (and the Islamic justification behind its nomenclature), as well as his contributions to the foundation of the International Islamic University Malaysia, are well-documented. However, the *estschrift* presents additional, if not startling, insights. It delves into pertinent questions: How was the establishment of IIUM interlinked with various Islamic organisations and institutions, including traditional seminaries? To what extent did the First World Congress of Muslim Education contribute to its inception? Why is Anwar Ibrahim associated with IIUM’s model of Islamic integration while his predecessor Mahathir Muhammad is linked to the business-management model of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)?

Irrespective of one’s interpretation of the answers to these inquiries, the overarching sense is that the endeavours of that historical period were driven by the overarching agenda of Islamisation. Active terms such as *iṣlāḥ* (reformation), *tajdid* (renewal), *iḥyā’* (revival), and *takāmul* (integration) permeate the discourse of that era, concepts later encapsulated by Kamal Hassan in the term he coined, relevantisation. For Kamal Hassan, this primarily applies to Islamic revealed knowledge, which inherently embodies Islamic principles and thus obviates the need for explicit Islamicisation. On this note, I recall personally suggesting to the scholar the inclusion of *izbār*, which, in my view, would better conceptualise the perspective of what some refer to as “the scientification of Islamic studies.” Notwithstanding, it is inconceivable that the *estschrift* would overlook key issues such as the nuanced distinction between the terms *aslamat al-ma’rifah* (Islamisation of knowledge) and *islāmiyyat al-ma’rifah al-bashariyyah* (Islamicisation of human knowledge), as emphasised by Kamal Hassan. While these concepts may be familiar to many, the *estschrift*’s approach not only simplifies understanding but

also revitalises sources that were almost forgotten, such as *The Handbook of the Department of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage*.

Having said the above, it is incumbent upon me to make a candid observation: throughout the work, there are instances where the authors appear to reiterate certain facts, which may impede the reader's continuous enjoyment of the volume. Repetitions of biographical data, educational backgrounds, main ideas, projects, or actions attributed to Kamal Hassan, as well as definitions and explanations of key concepts, are glaringly discernible. Such repetition may suggest a lack of synchronicity among the authors in preparing their manuscripts. While this may reflect the natural composition of their works, it does, to some extent, detract from the pleasure of reading. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, this repetition, particularly concerning the commendable attributes of the scholar, not only serves to authenticate these traits but can also be interpreted as a form of *tadhkirah*, or a reminder. Consequently, this *festschrift* transcends mere celebratory or prospective intentions; it embodies the principle that a person's life serves as guidance for others. In this light, viewing the *festschrift* as a reminder may lead us to appreciate that through reemphasis, new avenues of meaning can be unveiled. Thus, the scholar's legacy endures, both intellectually and spiritually.

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