

Editorial

This issue begins with what we expect to be a series of writings we intend to publish under *Reflections*, short articles which may not be considered research articles in the traditional sense, but which make some important point. The first one in the series describes the experiences of the author—an eminent Malaysian scholar and educator—with the idea and reality of Pakistan, and how it influenced the South-East Asia.

Prof. Fikret Karčić who has been writing on the history of Muslims in Balkan, has come up with another interesting article, regarding the office of *Ra'īs al-'Ulamā'* in Bosnia. This unique position grew out of the special situation in which the Bosniaks found themselves, namely, a large Muslim population living under non-Muslim authority. Establishment of this office allowed Muslims to exercise some control over their affairs.

Dr. Mohd Daud Bakr has written on the origins of Islamic legal theory before. Contributing to the debate on the origins of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*, Dr. Bakr shows that *al-Risālah* of Imam al-Shāfi'ī actually marks the beginning of this discipline, although it does not mean absence of any earlier contribution.

Al-Ghazālī is a major source of inspiration and guidance for Muslim scholars. Dr. Abdullahi Hassan Zaroug critically examines al-Ghazālī's thought on Ṣūfism. He raises some important questions regarding the nature of *kashf*, the meaning and interpretation of *shath*, freewill and determinism according to the mystics etc. While not fully agreeing with the doctrines of al-Ghazālī, he believes that the world as seen by ṣūfīs, is possible and may even be accessible to the non-ṣūfīs, if one uses the methodology appropriate for this task.

Dr. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi' reviews an important area of contemporary Arab thought—cultural decolonization and the challenges of the 21st

century. Reviewing the book of Mahdi Elmandjra, he raises the important issue of the cultural hegemony of the West, particularly that of US, and its impact on the Third World cultures. He argues that the only way to safeguard global cultural diversity is by affecting major changes in the thinking of both North and South. The North must recognize the importance of cultural diversity, and the South must assert its independence.

Muslim countries are torn by severe internal conflicts. These conflicts are religious, social, ethnic and political. We propose to start a discussion on the nature of these conflict, and present case studies highlighting both harmony and conflict. The next several issues will contain some articles in this area. We look forward to your contribution!

Zafar Afaq Ansari