Conferences and Seminars

International Conference on Islamization of Sociology and Anthropology: Implications for Social Development of Muslim Countries. Kuala Lumpur, October-November 1997

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) organized an international conference *on Islamization of Sociology and Anthropology: Implications for Social Development of Muslim Countries,* in collaboration with Islamic Development Bank from 31st October to 2nd November 1997 at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The conference attracted a considerable number of scholars from abroad and from within the country. Overall twenty eight papers were presented, out of which fourteen were directly related to Islamization of sociology and anthropology and the remaining to the different aspects of social development of Muslim countries.

The Minister of Entrepreneur Development, Dato' Mustapa Mohamed inaugurated the conference. In his address he emphasized the need for developing Muslim countries on Islamic principles. He said that the need of the time is to study the Muslim situations in a correct perspective and make systematic planning for over-all development of Muslim societies. The developmental plan should be in consonance with the Islamic worldview.

The conference deliberated on various issues and problems relating to the Islamization of sociology and anthropology and the development of Muslim societies. It was observed that Muslim sociologists and anthropologists should study Muslim social realities and develop theories and paradigms suitable for their own conditions. This will help to develop the disciplines from an Islamic point of view, and would enable the Muslim scholars to construct and reconstruct society on their own ideological bases. The major themes of the conference could be divided into four areas.

Methodology of the Social Sciences. Four papers were read on issues related to methodology. Dr. Nabeel El Samaloty in his paper *Methodological Approaches to the Islamization of Sociology* observed that most of sociological literature is based on certain ideologies:

liberal, Marxist, religious or mixed sociology. Such theories are influenced by the theorist's time, socio-cultural context, and economic position. They do not encompass the broad features of humanity, which are above space and time. It is thus necessary to take help from the divine revelation, which is not only true and perfect knowledge but provides a sound base for comprehending reality.

Prof. Ibrahim Ragab's paper *On the Methodology of the Islamization of Social Sciences*, initiated the discussion on methodology of social sciences from Islamization of Knowledge viewpoint. He opened his presentation by adopting al-Fārūqī's definition according to which Islamization is simply "the integration of Islamic revealed knowledge and human sciences." He explained the methodological strategy in the light of three major components: mastery of modern disciplines, mastery of the Islamic legacy, and a creative synthesis of the Islamic legacy and modern knowledge. Further, he presented a working model to integrate revealed knowledge with human sciences. It consists of two phases. In the first phase one has to develop a "unified theoretical framework" and in the second, one has to validate or verify that theoretical claim by research and practice. This model, according to him, should be considered as the basis of methodology for the Islamization of knowledge. Other papers on methodology were *Reconstructing Knowledge-Based Social Sciences* (Dr. Anis Ahmad), and *Islamic Theology as a Social Science Approach* (Dr. Ibrahim Abu Bakar).

Islamization of Sociology and Anthropology. The participants felt that the concepts and theories that are used in these disciplines to study social phenomena suit the conditions of the Western societies. They are embedded in a distinct socio-political milieu and thus accommodate the ethos of that society. The social factors that play a significant role in shaping the structure of those societies do not produce the same results when applied to non-Western societies, particularly those of the third-world. The theoretical constructs are "Eurocentric" and not relevant to the Muslim situation; thus they can not explain the social realities of Muslim societies. We require recasting of sociological and anthropological knowledge on a *tawhīdic* paradigm, developing Islamic Sociology and Anthropology to study and analyze the realities of Muslim societies. Prof. Rachid Mimouni in his paper, *Some Aspects of Islamic Sociology*, observed that Islamic Sociology should highlight the Islamic conception of man, society, social relations and institutions according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It should demonstrate the

influence of Islam that leads to social change and development. Further, it should display the role of Islam as a major means of social control, and initiate Islamic social values. He suggested that empirical methods, such as surveys and case studies, as well as classificatory, historical and linguistic methods should be adopted in order to achieve the said objectives.

Prof. Zaki M. Ismail's paper *Islamization of Anthropology* emphasized the need of Islamizing anthropology which is an old science and rooted in the Islamic heritage where Muslim travelers like Al-Maqdisi, and Ibn Batūta provided fruitful data to understand different kinds of people and their social life. Syed Fareed Ahmad and Jamil Farooqui in their paper *The Concept of Man and Society,* presented a comparative study of man and society within Western and Islamic paradigms. They pointed out that the paradigmatic differences between the two systems of thought brings about drastic changes in the construction of models and theory building. Other papers about different aspects of Islamization of the disciplines were *The Problem of Islamic Sociology* (Dr. Bashir Mohammad al-Hashim Mughali), *Comte, Spencer and Islamic Critique* (Dr. Wahdan Mohammad Rashad), *Reclaiming the Tradition* (Dr. Yadullah Kazmi), *The Wali and Faraid Principles: Reordering of the Malay Kinship Structure* (Datuk Dr. Zainal Kling), *Towards Social Dimensions in Usūlī Thought* (Dr. Sano Koutoub Moustafa), *A Muslim Perspective on the Origin of Human Association: Malik Bennabi's Contribution* (Dr. Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesavi), *Women Between Sociology and Islam* (Dr. Wahdan M. Rashad).

Developmental Process and Social Change. Some papers were also related to the Muslim situations in different parts of the globe, particulary the process of development in those societies; and pointed out the problems and prospects of such process in initiating meaningful changes. Dr. Sirajul Islam (*The State of Social Development: The Case of Bangladesh*) evaluated social development in Bangladesh. He took into consideration five important indicators of development: eradication of poverty, expansion of education, health, employment opportunities, and equitable distribution of income; and analyzed the measures taken to improve the situation in Bangladesh during different regimes. He observed that in spite of some effort and various strategies adopted by the government no significant improvement has taken place in terms of these aspects. The main reason of such failure, according to him, is political instability. Three papers described different aspects of the

developmental process in Indonesia: Dr. Sjafri Sairin (*Response of Islamic Community to Development: A Case Study of Indonesia*), Dr. Bustanuddin Agus (*The Islamization of Sociology and the Development of Indonesian Society: Necessities and Obstacles*), Dr. Irwan Abdullah (*Privatization of Religion: Islam and Society in Indonesia*). The authors also explained the problems and difficulties which Indonesian society faces in implementing the measures of development. Dr. Pute Rahimah Makul-Abdul (*Colonialism and Change: The Case of Muslims in the Philippines*) presented the case of Muslims in the Phillippines and described the process of change in that society in spite of many hindrances and colonial setbacks. Prof. Abdul Khabeer ᶜAtā discussed the political situation of Arab Gulf States with particular reference to a legitimacy crisis. Prof. Ghalib Hussain (*Muslim Identity: Indian Perspective*) discussed the Muslim identity with reference to India. He presented the findings of his empirical research and observed that Muslims in India portray religious identity even though the socio-political factors affect their sub-identities. Prof. Riaz Hassan (*Social Structure and Religiosity: A Comparative Study*) presented empirical data showing the degree of religiosity in different Muslim countries, and tried to relate it to their social structure.

Social Development: Concepts and Approaches. Development is a broad and comprehensive concept. It entails certain ideological premises. Prof. A. R. Momin in his paper *Development and the Holistic Framework,* exposed the weaknesses of the Western model of development which, according to him, is based on a unidimensional, mechanistic and reductionistic conception of human nature. It overemphasizes the role of economic and technological factors and neglects the qualitative, including cultural, moral and spiritual dimensions of human existence. Prof. Salah Abdel Mutaal presented a paper on *An Islamic Approach to Social Development,* in which he presented five principles on which the concept of development in Islam is based: *tawhīd, ᶜubūdiyah, khilāfah, ᶜumrān,* and social relationship according to Sharīᶜah obligations. Dr. Boualem Bendjilali in his paper *Economic and Social Development from an Islamic Perspective* explained the Islamic concept of development and discussed the major goals of development in Islam. Prof. Abdurrahmane Azzi's paper was on *Development: The Ethical Competence in the Information Age.* It focused on the ethical aspect of development and stressed the implementation of certain ethical values in social development. Dr. Hazizzon Md. Noon in his paper *Islamic Sociology and Development:*

Conflict or Coexistence highlighted the relationship between Islam, Sociology and Development. He observed that the Muslim backwardness is due to their attitude towards religion, modern knowledge and development. He suggested that socio-cultural realities should be studied from a new perspective so as to change the Muslim situation.

The closing session of the conference was addressed by Dato' Dr. AbdulHamid A. AbuSulayman, Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, who emphasized the need to continue the efforts for Islamization of the disciplines because the future of Ummah depends on the recasting of knowledge. Before the closing speech Prof. Haji Mohd. Aris Othman, the Head of sociology and anthropology department, IIUM, presented a brief summary of the deliberation of the conference. A committee of Muslim sociologists and anthropologists was formed to implement the programmes and suggestions of the conference.

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The world history is as much a history of civilisational clashes as it is of civilisational dialogues, the latter having become the rule rather than the exception as the evolution of a global culture unstoppably continues in the modern era. Human creativity, whether in art or in technology, is complex and universal, and as such cuts across all kinds of barriers such as political and geographical. Hence, it continues to contribute significantly to the increasing globalisation of cultural and religious traditions without diminishing their independent identities. With the advent of Islam in the 7th century, followed by the establishment of Muslim empires in various parts of the world, and through a series of crusades, contacts between English and Islam, and Arabic and Christianity were established. Whatever the argument is concerning the cultural invasion and political domination of the East by the West or vice versa, the fact is, both have influenced and learnt from each other