

Conferences

International Conference on Islamization of Human Sciences: August 2000, Kuala Lumpur

The Kulliyah (faculty) of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRK&HS), International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), organized an international conference to evaluate the process of Islamization of Knowledge and to develop the agenda for the Islamization of Human Sciences. The Kulliyah declared itself to be the major custodian of the Islamization process and the Conference was considered to be a determined move to further the cause of Islamization of Knowledge. The Conference also marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Kulliyah. It was held in the University's main campus in Gombak near Kuala Lumpur, the nation's capital from 4 to 6 August, 2000. Two keynote addresses, 24 papers on various aspects of Islamization, and 11 reports on the progress of Islamization of Knowledge in various disciplines were presented. Eight of the 24 papers were presented in Arabic language. The conference was attended by a fluctuating audience of 120 to 300 individuals, which was ideal for a discourse on a variety of lively and critical ideas.

The opening ceremony consisted of a short programme briefing and an explanation of the rationale for this conference by Prof. Dr. Mohamed Aris Othman, the Dean of the Kulliyah and the Director of the Conference. The Rector of IIUM, in his short introduction, commended the Kulliyah's effort in organizing the Conference as an intellectual forum for self-evaluation and to chalk out strategies for future development. This, he felt, was one of the ways to achieve the University's mission of Integration, Islamization, Internationalization and Comprehensive Excellence (IIICE). The Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Dato' Paduka Dr. Abdul Hamid Othman, officially launched the Conference. The Minister lamented that the Muslims have for too long been harping on Western prejudices and biases. It is time to take positive steps to overcome the "crisis of

confidence” and to better the conditions of the Ummah. The Minister stressed the need, among others, to integrate revealed knowledge with human sciences and thus to make the truth prevail. The Conference, he concluded, was a right step in the right direction.

Keynote Addresses

As announced, there were two keynote addresses. The first keynote address was given by Prof. Aris Othman. The address first evaluated the efforts made by the Kulliyah in Islamizing the curriculum in the last few years and, second, highlighted some of the issues relating to Islamization of Human Sciences which need to be discussed by the Conference participants. Prof. Aris commended the efforts made by the Kulliyah in integrating the Revealed Knowledge courses with Human Sciences courses. He, however, pointed out that the Kulliyah must deal, as a matter of urgency, with the problem of the lack of suitable textbooks based on the holistic approach. The Kulliyah must also try to produce intellectuals who are religious experts and at the same time have scientific understanding of social problems. It is these experts who can study Islamic values and ideals which are consistent with progress. Scholars working in Revealed Knowledge disciplines should adopt a critical and creative bent of mind and make themselves relevant to the contemporary issues. They may address themselves to the issues like environmentalism and post-modernism. Finally, those engaged in Islamization project should not neglect the need to Islamize their personalities in terms of thinking, behaviour and action.

Prof. Yusoff Hussain in his keynote address discussed several issues of relevance. First, he pointed out that the International Islamic University is an ideal centre of Islamization of Knowledge and that it has progressed despite criticisms leveled against it. He, however, stressed the need to produce University level textbooks, based upon a unified methodology, within a stipulated time. Second, he cautioned the audience of the challenges posed and the opportunities provided by information technology. The Internet is being used to belittle the efforts at Islamization and to de-Islamize the general masses. It, however, provides the opportunity to universalize the message of Islamization. The Muslims must create their own websites and use them effectively. Finally, he reminded the audience that Islamization is not a seasonal enterprise. It is a life-long process to be carried out with full commitment, total dedication and with the sole intention of attaining the pleasure of Allah (SWT).

Papers

The paper which attracted a great deal of interest was the one presented by Professor Mahmoud M. Ayoub of Temple University, USA, entitled "The Place and Universality of Knowledge in Islam." Professor Ayoub argued that knowledge in Islam is necessary for a life of human dignity and civilization as well as for felicity in the hereafter. Knowledge, to Professor Ayoub, is universal and is a divine gift to humanity. In that sense all true knowledge is Islamic in nature. Consequently, there is no possibility of Islamizing knowledge and no need for Islamizing Human Sciences. What is needed is human sciences with a Qur'anic worldview and within the framework of *imān* (faith) and *ʿamal ṣāliḥ* (right action). Professor Ayoub was severely criticized by the participants for his failure to really appreciate the nature of the Islamization project. Some even argued that the objections he raised were raised two decades ago and were appropriately answered. His co-panelist, Abdul Rashid Moten of IUM, presented a paper on "Approaches to Islamization of Knowledge." He discussed four models of Islamization: Human Science model of late Ismail al-Faruqi, Shari'ah model of Sheikh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Human Science (Political Science) model, and finally the Musa model advocated by Dr. AbdulHamid Abu Sulayman, all belonging to the International Institute of Islamic Thought, Washington, USA. Some participants wondered if these approaches differed fundamentally from each other and if it was possible to work out a chronological sequence in the formation of these models.

Professor Ghulam Nabi Saqeb's presentation in the following session was informative and evaluative. He has catalogued the achievements of Islamization of knowledge since the 1977 Makkah conference and also highlighted some of its failures. The paper was descriptive rather than analytical. Professor Jamil Faruqi provided an interesting paper on how to approach human sciences from the Qur'anic perspective. He discussed the principles of reality, universe, man and society from the Qur'anic perspective and showed how these could be used to arrive at useful knowledge. It received an encouraging response from the audience. Other papers of note include: "A Comparative Historical Analysis of Early Attempts at Islamizing Human Sciences" by Professor Nizar M.S. al-Ani; "Approaches to Islamization of Knowledge: A Case of Psychology" by Prof. Mokdad Mohamed; "Islamization of Communication" by Dr. Mahmoud Galendar; "Self-referencing Methodology of the Qur'an" by Professors

Masudul Alam Chaudary and Muhammad Al-Buraey; "Political Pluralism" by Dr. Elfatih Abdel Salam; "Reorientation of Sociology" by Dr. Hazizan Noon, "Islamic English in Speech and Writing" by Dr. Haja Mohideen and "The Linguistic Roots in Understanding the Text of Revelation" by Dr. El-Hassan Simsaa.

Reports on Islamization of Knowledge

The evening sessions of the second day of the Conference was marked for the presentation of reports on Islamization of Knowledge by eleven departments including the departments of Uşul al-Dīn and Comparative Religion, Qur'ān and Sunah Studies; and Fiqh and Uşul al-Fiqh. In each case, the departments examined the curriculum to see whether the courses offered were of relevance to the contemporary world. They also analyzed the course outline for each course offered to see the extent to which it integrates revealed knowledge with human sciences. Some departments also submitted their evaluation of examination question papers and pointed out that they reflect integration as expected. Interestingly, they also made available, on a selective basis, the areas of research of the members of the department, their publications and the project they were engaged in with respect to the Islamization of knowledge.

The reports presented gave the impression that the departments have made some progress in the direction of the Islamization of their discipline. Some departments have produced books of readings used as textbooks. Most of the departments reported that they were happy with the progress made in the direction of producing text books to be used at least at the introductory levels. Nevertheless, they were unanimous in pointing out that their efforts at Islamization are hindered by problems of time constraints (teaching load is heavy leaving less time for research), non-availability of textbooks (requiring them to produce anthologies and handouts) and man-power shortage (most of the departments are under-staffed). Though an internal affair of the Kulliyah, the session generated interest among the participants and was attended to the full capacity of the hall.

The Closing session

The closing session was chaired by the Dean of the Kulliyah and was addressed by the Honourable Rector, Prof. Dr. Kamal Hassan. The Rector explained that Islamization of knowledge is a comprehensive and complex process of changing everything from what it is, to something in conformity with the Islamic *tawhīdic* paradigm, values

and norms. Applied to Human Sciences, it aims to critique, analyze and reformulate Western disciplines in a form that deals with Revelation as a source of knowledge. Its objective is to rebuild, reconstruct, remould; and eventually produce theories based upon *tawhīdic* paradigm. This process may also be called, according to Prof Kamal Hassan, *tawhīdicization* which is a form of *jihād*. As for the disciplines in Revealed Knowledge, the need is not to Islamize but to reform the disciplines, to contextualize them. Here, the proper terminology is *Islāh* and not *aslama*. Kamal Hassan concluded his remarks by stressing the need to produce, within next five years: (1) systematic reading, literature on Islamization of Knowledge; (2) research works based upon *tawhīdic* paradigm and (3) works with interdisciplinary approach. He also underscored the importance of addressing vital areas like post-modernism which has not received much attention from Muslim scholars.

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The Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders: The United Nations, New York, August 2000.

Despite the best efforts of individual religious and spiritual leaders from different parts of the world, the human family is still unable to prevent the eruption of savage acts of war. Even at this moment terrible conflicts threaten the lives of large numbers of people in various parts of the globe. There is a growing conviction that new measures must be sought to arrest violent conflict in the years ahead. It is for this purpose—to find new ways of preventing hostilities and ensuring peace and security—that the world’s most prominent religious and spiritual leaders were asked to gather for a Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual leaders.

The organizers had the blessings of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi A. Annan, who delivered the inaugural speech of the conference. The conference also had the blessings of Dr. Ted Turner, Vice Chair of Time-Warner Incorporated, who was Honorary Chair of the Conference, and delivered a keynote address at the first session. The Conference was supported by a number of prestigious institutions and organizations such as the Scholar’s Group at Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University Center for the Study of World