

# ISLAMISATION OF KNOWLEDGE: ISLAMIC SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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## *Introduction*

One of the most important aspects of the Islamic Revivalism Movement since the 1970s is the effort to Islamize knowledge. This is fundamental, as the structure of knowledge, i.e. how knowledge is constructed and validated actually conditions how we think and behave. The Malaysian scholar, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, was the first person to use and propose the phrase "Islamisation of Knowledge" in his book *Islam and Secularism*. The project was then extended by the Palestinian philosopher, Ismail Al-Faruqi (1989) through his Workplan for the Islamisation of Knowledge. Since then, it has attracted great interest among Muslim scholars in various fields of studies. Terms such as Islamic Economics, Islamic Science, Islamic Methods, Islamic Sociology and Islamic Anthropology were coined. In Malaysia, the International Islamic University is the major centre for the effort to Islamize knowledge. The Introduction section of the University website states that: <sup>1</sup>

Through its unique educational model of integration and Islamisation of knowledge, IIUM unifies reason with revelation, science with religion and ethics with professional courses. Undoubtedly, this is one place where great leaders of the future are being trained and nurtured to hone their potentials. It tempers the spirit of

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<sup>1</sup> At <http://www.iiu.edu.my/about/about.shtml>, accessed on 9 Sept 2009.

optimism with moderation. Its establishment in 1983 was a fulfillment of one of the major aspirations of the contemporary global Muslim community to regain the leadership of the *Ummah* in the quest for knowledge as encapsulated in its vision statement: "To be an international centre of educational excellence which integrates Islamic revealed knowledge and values in all disciplines and which aspires to the restoration of the *Ummah's* leading role in all branches of knowledge."

One of the keys to the Islamisation of knowledge project is the Islamisation of Social Sciences, especially Islamic Sociology, while much has been achieved in the field of Islamic Economics. Islamic Sociology is still under construction and is supposed to be consistent with the Islamic worldview. It draws its inspiration from the revelation of Islam and Muslim traditions, as well as from "Western Sociology." According to Haneef:<sup>2</sup>

All proponents of IOK (Islamisation of Knowledge) see the problem with modernity as being its philosophical outlook, more specifically its exclusive reliance on rationalism and empiricism as its basis of acquiring knowledge. Hence, the IOK has to be seen primarily as an epistemological and methodological concern against the position taken by the 'modernity project'... Rather than pushing an 'exclusion' or 'confrontation' agenda, proponents of IOK are, by definition, calling for interaction, engagement and dialogue (*Sic*).

Indeed, the objective of the original proponents of Islamisation of knowledge, such as Faruqi was to lay a new foundation for a social science that is concordant with the universalism of Islam.<sup>3</sup> This issue

<sup>2</sup> Haneef, M. A. (2009). *A Critical Survey of Islamization of Knowledge*, IIUM Press: Kuala Lumpur, p.

<sup>3</sup> Faruqi, I. R. A. (1989). "Islamization of Knowledge: Problems, Principles and Prospective", *Islam: Source and Purpose of Knowledge*, Herndon, VA., USA: *The International Institute of Islamic Thought. [Islamization of Knowledge Series, No. 5]*, pp. 13-63.