

Islamic Studies in World Institutions of Higher Learning

Issues and Challenges in The Era of Globalization



KOLEJ UNIVERSITI ISLAM MALAYSIA

Islamic Studies in World Institutions of Higher Learning



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Edited by:

Abd. Samat Musa
Hazleena Baharun
Abd Karim Abdullah



Islamic University College of Malaysia

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CONTENTS

Preface	1
Chapter 1 Islamic Studies in British Universities: Challenges and Prospects <i>MA. ZakiBadawi</i>	5
Chapter 2 Islamic Studies at Universities in Japan: Challenges and Prospects <i>TjahjoPranato</i>	13
Chapter 3 The Making of Islamic Studies in Indonesia <i>AzyumardiAzra</i>	27
Chapter 4 Islamic Studies In institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia: Challenges and Prospects <i>MuhamadMuda</i>	39
Chapter 5 Issues and Challenges in Islamic Studies in the Era of Globalization <i>Sidek Baba</i>	61
Chapter 6 Islamic Studies in the Era of Globalization: A Special Reference to Undergraduate Economic Programmes in Malaysia <i>NikMustaphaHj. NikHassan</i>	69
Chapter 7 Islamic Studies in Egypt <i>AhmadMossadZaki</i>	81
Chapter 8 Islamic Studies at Universities in Pakistan: Challenges and Prospects <i>Anis Ahmad</i>	85
Chapter 9 Islamic Studies in Universities in the Era of Globalization: Challenges and Prospects <i>Ala'eddinKhorafa</i>	99

Preface

The papers collected in this book were presented at the *International Conference on Islamic Studies in World Institutions of Higher Learning*. The conference was organized by the Islamic University College of Malaysia, KUIM on 29-30 July 2002, in Kuala Lumpur. The contributors explore various challenges as well as the prospects of Islamic studies in the United Kingdom, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, Pakistan and the United States. The contributors agree on the urgent need to equip teachers and students of Islamic studies with relevant skills and dynamic approaches to prepare them to face the many challenges of globalization.

The primary objective of the conference has been to gain a better understanding of Islamic education and to chart the way forward. The conference aimed to evaluate the role, direction as well as the potential of Islamic studies for promoting Islam as the best alternative for solving problems in the world. Hopefully, the conference has also contributed towards strengthening the cooperation among Islamic academicians and their respective nations.

The contributors agree on the need to reform the education systems in Muslim nations. The traditional model, where Islam is studied in isolation from modern studies, needs to be reviewed. The very understanding of Islam needs to be revitalized. Certain branches of Islamic studies need to be revisited.

Zaki Badawi surveys the status of Islamic studies in the UK. Special training colleges are required to teach Islam, he reports, as the British universities are too secular and offer at best a superficial understanding of Islam. He stresses the need to teach students the ability to think critically while maintaining loyal commitment to Islam. Hence, at the Muslim College in London, the dialogue form of instruction is encouraged. He supports the call for a new *ijtihad* as way of overcoming the limitations of some of the former

scholars' approaches.

Thahjo Pranato traces the development of Islamic studies in Japan. While the Japanese people have advanced economically and technologically, many remain stranded in a spiritual void. They are ready for Islam. Accordingly, he highlights the da'wah potential of expanding Islamic studies in Japanese universities. He sees the universities as the ideal platform for introducing the true religion to the Japanese people.

Professor Azyumardi Azra acknowledges the debt Islamic studies in Indonesia owe to the universities in the Middle East. He notes the increasing interaction between scholars trained in the Middle East and those trained in western universities. He expects the interaction to give rise to a unique approach to the study of Islam, where traditional study of the text is complemented by historical, psychological, sociological, and other approaches.

Professor Muda of KUIM investigates the educational system in Malaysia. He observes that the system has been afflicted by a crippling dualism. This dualism has isolated Islamic education from the study of contemporary or 'modern' subjects. He recommends that Islamic studies be offered together with modern studies in a way that, while strengthening the student's commitment to Islam, at the same time enhances his or her employment prospects.

Associate Professor Sidek Baba of the International Islamic University of Malaysia, argues for the need to implement – on a wider scale – what he calls the *eclectic model* of education. In this model, Islamic and modern studies complement each other. The *eclectic model* is already being implemented in a number of universities in Malaysia, including the International Islamic University of Malaysia and the Islamic University College of Malaysia.

Nik Mustapha Hj. Nik Hassan supports the call to widen the curriculum of Islamic studies to incorporate modern studies in

institutions of higher learning. Ethical and moral concerns must be strongly emphasized. Islam has a global responsibility and does not support the view according to which man is a mere *homo economicus*. Traditional Islamic studies should be linked with the study of modern subjects such as economics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

Professor Ahmad Mossad Zaki gives a practical example of how Islamic principles have already been successfully integrated into the curriculum of a science faculty, the Faculty of Medicine, at Al-Azhar University in Egypt. A Muslim physician, for example, is obliged to extend medical care to people regardless of whether the person is rich or poor, Muslim or non-Muslim.

Professor Anis Ahmad examines Islamic studies in institutions of higher education in Pakistan. He notes that while the programmes are generally strong, some weaknesses persist – even at the International Islamic University of Islamabad. More attention needs to be paid to the study of English and to modern Islamic thought, such as the contributions of Syed Qutb and Muhammad Asad. Also, more attention needs to be given to western civilization.

Professor Ala ‘Eddin Kharofa argues that while Muslims should adopt whatever good comes out of globalization, aberrant practices such as homosexuality and lesbianism should be firmly rejected. While Islamic studies in western countries cannot be compared with Islamic studies in Muslim countries, there are areas where Muslims can learn from western universities. Unlike in Muslim countries, for example, insulting PhD candidates does not appear to be a part of the academic process in American universities.

Abd. Samat Musa, Hazleena Baharun, Abdul Karim Abdullah,
Editors

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