

Conferences, Seminars, and Addresses

Strategies for an Islamic Perspective of History and Historical Writing

AMSS First History Seminar
Buffalo, New York

Dhu al Qi'dah 1-2, 1410/May 26-27, 1990

The idea of holding the first History Seminar, which was introduced at the 18th Annual Conference of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists (AMSS), came to realization in Buffalo, New York on *Dhu al Qi'dah 1-2, 1410/May 26-27, 1990*.

A total of fifteen papers were presented by Muslim historians coming from across the United States. Tāhā J. Al-'Alwānī's opening address was presented by Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, the General Secretary of the AMSS. Al-'Alwānī, who is the President of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), challenged Muslim historians to devise concepts and methodologies based on the wisdom of the Qur'an that will demystify human global history and make it possible to present solutions and alternatives to today's problems. He asked historians to look for the unifying factors that can make sense out of human history and to think about mankind's reactive or proactive role in the historical process which might lead to universal goals.

The banquet speaker, Professor Pareshan G. Khattak, Vice Chancellor of the Azad Kashmir University at Muzaffarabad, a historian himself, dedicated his address to an account of the Kashmiri Muslim struggle for freedom and its place in current history.

The first session included two papers designed to present an overview of issues to be considered at the conference. The seminar coordinator, Aftab Ahmad Khan of Buffalo State College, spoke on "Establishing Some Principles and Guidelines for Islamization of History," in which he focused on the need for Muslim self-reliance in the writing and interpretation of their own history as well as that of the rest of the world with the aim of exposing the world-unifying concepts and reflections of *tawhīd*. He called for the adoption of a five point program toward beginning the process of Islamization of history. This was followed by Professor Akbar Muhammad of SUNY at Binghamton, who presented a paper entitled "On Islamic History, Muslim History, and the Social Milieu."

Focusing on the legacy of certain individual historians or thinkers, three panelists presented the ideas of men spanning North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Ausaf Ali of Los Angeles spoke on Ibn Khaldun, Ibrahim

Abu-Rabi' of the University of Texas at Austin spoke on Sayyid Qutb, and Arifa Farid of the University of Karachi, Pakistan, presented Iqbal's approach to history. Mohammad Yusuf Siddiq of MIT looked at epigraphy as another source of Islamic historiography.

Expanding the scope of interest to entire geographic areas, Omar Khalidi of MIT spoke on the historiography of Muslim India, analyzing three different schools of thought, and Musa Hakim of SUNY at Buffalo presented a paper on West African Islamic history from the viewpoint of ideas that have been generated on the subject.

Shifting the range of vision to historiography and interpretation, Ghulam Haider Aasi of the American Islamic College in Chicago spoke on the history of religions and Islamic historiography, Muhammad Mukhtar Curtis of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor outlined some principles for understanding and interpreting classical Islamic texts, and Khalid Y. Blankinship of Temple University in Philadelphia suggested an Islamic periodization of world history. Connecting approaches to history with other disciplines, Ahmad S. Massasati of the University of Utah at Salt Lake City presented an Islamic perspective of the relationship of history with geography.

In order to zero-in on how the West views the East, Sheikh M. Safiullah, also of the University of Utah, gave an Islamic critical review of the book *The Cambridge History of Islam* while Mohammad M. El-Behairy of Buffalo, New York, spoke on countering the Western stereotypes of "Islamic fundamentalism."

At one of the concluding sessions, Aftab Ahmad Khan outlined a proposal for establishing an American Islamic History Society, which was warmly received and is seriously under discussion.

The Seminar was attended by over one hundred persons. For further information please contact: Aftab Ahmad Khan, 299 Allenhurst Road, Buffalo, NY 14226. Tel: 716 834-0716.

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