

September 27, 2021

Dear Professor Mumtaz Ali,

We are writing to propose a lasting intellectual and pedagogical partnership between the Islam Actuel Institute and the International Islamic University of Malaysia, specifically the Department of Usûl al-Dîn and Comparative Religion.

Islam Actuel is an institute that aims to make the Qur'an and the Islamic worldview work in the fields of academic study and in daily activities. In this sense, we are in line with the problematic and research program of Islamization of Knowledge.

We wish for our two institutions to benefit mutually by developing Islam as Worldview and universal Wisdom. At the moment, this is what we have to offer:

- Synthesize and translate publications by professors and intellectuals who inspire the IIUM and that we can use in our 5-year training program;
- Select and encourage French and Maghrebi students to come and pursue their studies and research at IIUM.

This is what IIUM and your Department of Usûl al-Dîn and Comparative Religion can bring us :

- The initiation to Islam as a worldview, source of knowledge and universal wisdom (through texts and interventions);
- The initiation to an Islamic Methodology of Research (through texts and interventions);
- Pedagogical advice to help the Islam Actuel Institute to design a 5-year training program, inspired by the approach of Ismail al-Faruqi but lightened, considering the particular French context;
- The organization of a Summer School with approximately thirty French and Maghrebi Muslim students in 2022.

I hope that this proposal finds a favorable response.
I remain at your disposal for any need that might arise.

Sincerely,



Mohamed Oudihat
Director of Islam Actuel Institute (Paris)
10 Rue de l'Industrie
75013 Paris, France

September 27, 2021

Dear Professor Mumtaz Ali,

The Islam Actuel Institute extends its gratitude for your timely interventions during our annual Summer School in August 2021 on the following themes:

1. Critical thinking: An Islamic Perspective
2. Crisis in Knowledge and Education
3. Need for Rethinking Knowledge and Education
4. Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan — 1982 and 1989
5. New Perspective for Education
6. Rethinking Modern Science

We hope that we will be able to renew our collaboration in the near future.

Sincerely,

Mohamed Oudihat
Director of Islam Actuel Institute (Paris)
10 Rue de l'Industrie
75013 Paris, France

NEED FOR RETHINKING KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION

Significance of IOHK

For Ali Hassan Zaidi Islamization of Knowledge means:

...the reconstruction of knowledge more popularly...known as the Islamization of Knowledge, a debate that has been active now among Muslim thinkers for more than 25 years. Muhammad Iqbal's *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Isl m [1934]* was clearly a harbinger of this debate, and other early systematic attempts at the reconstruction of modern knowledge occurred in the 1930s and 1940s, when Khurshid Ahmad, a follower of Mawdudi's, began to define the field of Islamic economics. In the 1960s and 1970s, S. H. Nasr's writings on the philosophy of science and his calls for the development of Islamic science received modest public reception. The specific notion of 'Islamization' began with S.M. Naquib al-Attas' *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago [1969]*, and in a subsequent work entitled *Islam, Secularism and the Philosophy of the Future [1985]*, al-Attas argued that secularization of knowledge is the greatest threat to Muslims.

Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud argues:

The Islamization of knowledge issue is undoubtedly the most promising intellectual agenda of Islamic resurgence and one of the most controversial issues that has captured the imagination and elicited strong reaction of Muslim intellectuals and activists across the globe since the second half of the 1970s. At a time when Muslims are visibly vulnerable in all areas of collective life, the issue of Islamization of *contemporary* knowledge is really an “epistemological revolution,” as al-Attas calls it, which erupted like a wild fire blazing across the seas from Kuala Lumpur to Plainfield, Indiana, to many centres of learning across the globe.[3]

Daud further contends:

The intellectual conception of the Islamization of *present-day* Knowledge is indeed one of the most revolutionary and seminal contributions in modern Muslim thought. This is so because, modern Muslim thought has been trapped in an intellectual crisis and caught in the devastating dilemma between the wonderful appearances of the results of modern and pervasively secular knowledge and technology, and the apparent rigidity and bankruptcy of its own traditional thought, as conceptualized and presented by the jurists and theologians. [Daud, *The Beacon*, 1991, 32-33]

Misconceptions

We do not regard the Islamization of Knowledge as a project of relevance to the Islamic Ummah alone. On the contrary, we perceive it as a project that aims at the salvation of mankind – the way to show the world how the relationship between knowledge and values can be re-established. Indeed, from the moment the division between these two became pronounced, civilization has steadily declined.

The Islamization of Knowledge may also be understood as the attempt of Islamic culture and thought to open the channels of meaningful communication and cultural exchange so that it can offer mankind the divine truths for which it has thirsted for so long. In the words of Roger Garaudy, it is a means and an approach in the dialogue of civilization. [Al Alwani, Taha Jabir [1990] *The Reconstruction of the Muslim Mind: The Islamization of Knowledge. The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. 7: 3, 453]

Rationale

The pioneer's of the movement of Islamization of Knowledge [IOK], have identified several reasons for its emergence. These reasons can be categorized in to four categories. At the level of first category it is asserted that modern, contemporary, present-day, human knowledge which is referred to as disciplines, is a product of a particular worldview that goes against the worldview of IslÉm. Al-Attas said:

The present-day knowledge, as a whole, is not true knowledge because it is interpreted through the

worldview, the intellectual vision and the psychological perception of the Western culture and civilization. The essential spirit of this culture and civilization *is against the spirit of Islamic culture.*

It is asserted that Islamic worldview is based on certain fundamental pillars of *ÙawhÊd*, the Prophethood, and the Next world whereas; the modern philosophical or scientific worldview denies these basic pillars of Islamic worldview and accepts this world as the only reality.

Naturally, the knowledge and education which are deeply rooted in modern worldview have become problematic and undermined the worldview of Islam. Dissemination of this modern knowledge through the modern model of education to the Muslim youth becomes harmful.

It is further argued that if Muslims are determined to benefit from modern knowledge and education, then they must first go through the process of scrutiny or Islamization. It is contended that no doubt the modern knowledge contains several constituents which are factual and realistic but not all of these constituents are acceptable to the Islamic worldview.

It has several key concepts which reflect the modern paradigm. These key concepts, through which modern knowledge is presented in the modern world, must be identified and replaced by the key concepts of Islamic worldview.

At the second level, it is claimed that knowledge is not neutral; rather, it is value-loaded. Through knowledge and education, along with other factual information, the values, customs, and

traditions of a worldview are also transmitted among people in general and youths in particular.

It is further believed that the values of IslÉm are different from the values of the modern worldview. Hence, the transmission of modern knowledge means transmission of modern values such as the values of materialism, individualism, pragmatism, liberalism, and scientism.

Hence, the education of Muslim youths through a modern knowledge and education would be deemed treacherous. Muslim youths will rebel against Islamic values and accept modern values which, in fact, had, actually, happened and are still happening everywhere in the Muslim world.

To avoid the annihilation of Islamic values, it is necessary for Muslims to Islamize modern knowledge and education. Only through an Islamized knowledge and education, it is expected that they can transmit Islamic values among Muslim youths.

At another level, it is elaborated that the introduction of modern secular education and disciplines in the Muslim world has caused divisions among Muslims. Muslim unity has been destroyed.

For a long time, two types of educational institutions existed in the Muslim world, the modern and the traditional or religious educational institutions. These institutions have caused division amongst the Muslims into modern, traditional, religious and secular Muslims.

They are following different perspectives, worldviews and values and go against each other. There are several types of Muslims: traditional, modern, secular, moderate, liberal, progressive, conservative, militant, extremists etc.

This division and other factors finally caused the decline of the *Ummah*. The Islamization of modern knowledge [disciplines] and the integration of religious and modern institutions of education into one single institution are considered as the best resolutions to the problems of the *Ummah*.

It is anticipated that the Islamized knowledge and education would help Muslims to abate [stop] further division of the *Ummah*. All Muslims will receive the same kind of knowledge and education about the fundamental issues of life such as the worldview, its source and final destination in life. It will also help to create unity of thought and action.

The fourth level of category of argument includes a debate of the aim and objectives of education. Islamic worldview aspires to achieve Islamic goals of life which are different from the goals of life in the modern secular perspective. Hence, the adaptation of modern Western secular education and disciplines is considered detrimental to the development of the *Ummah*.

Definition and Meaning of IOK

The movement of Islamization of Knowledge [IOK] is a recent movement which emerged during mid-1970's and represents in reality an ideological program of IslÉm and its academic excellence.

The ultimate ambition of this movement is to provide a new but an intellectual basis and framework to knowledge and education inspired by and imbued within the Truth and Reality of this world.

The concern of this particular movement of our time has been the development of Islamic thought, its methodology, knowledge, education and development of human beings and societies.

One of the most important aspects of Islamization of Knowledge movement is the realization of the root cause of the decline of the Muslim *Ummah*.

These conditions were due to the emergence of religious and modern Western type educational institutions.

The discourse of Islamization of Knowledge [IOK], its origin, scope, subject matter, aim and method are variously examined by today's scholars.

Al-Attas suggested reformulation and reinterpretation of present-day knowledge and science. He conceived correctly the need for reformulation of present-day knowledge and coined the term "Islamization of present-day knowledge" for its process.

...the islamization of present-day knowledge refers to the process of isolating and removing these unislāmic, mostly Western elements and concepts. The isolation of the foreign elements from every branch refers mainly to the human sciences.

Our next important task will be the formulation and integration of the essential Islamic elements

and key concepts, so as to produce a composition which will comprise the core knowledge to be deployed in our educational system from the lower to the higher levels, in respective gradations designed to conform to the standard of each level. [Al-Attas, *Isl m and Secularism*, 1978, 156]

The 'islamization' of present-day knowledge means precisely that, after the isolation process referred to, the knowledge free of the elements and key concepts isolated are then infused with the Islamic elements and key concepts which, in view of their fundamental nature as defining the *fitrah*, in fact imbue the knowledge with the quality of its natural function and purpose and thus makes it true knowledge.

This islamization also simultaneously refers to the infusion of key Islamic elements and concepts into the new or foreign elements and concepts. Some of the key Islamic elements and concepts are that of religion [*din*], man [*insan*], knowledge [*ilm* and *marifah*], wisdom [*hikmah*], justice [*adl*], right action [*amal* as *adab*] which are in turn grounded in, and linked to the concept of God, His Essence and Attributes [taw d]; the meaning and message of the Holy Qur' n, the Sunnah and the *Shar h*.

In other words, the islamization of present-day knowledge is a method of interpreting facts and creating and producing meanings-- both individual and social--out of the metaphysics of Islam, and not by merely grafting or transplanting Islamic

sciences and principles onto the present body of 'knowledge' or science which will only produce conflicting results and intellectual schizophrenia.

In the individual, personal existential sense, islamization refers to the recognition and acknowledgement of the Holy Prophet as the exemplary leader and personality for both man and woman; in the collective, social and historical sense, it refers to the Community's striving towards realization of the moral and ethical perfection achieved during the age of the Holy Prophet.

Ismail al-Faruqi, for example, demonstrated his concern for the plight of the Ummah. He wanted to bring it out of the backwardness into the process of development and leadership. For this purpose, he suggested, as an effective strategy, firstly a *change* in the concept of knowledge and then in the educational system.

Refereeing to need of IOK Faruqi said: there is a need to redefine and re-order the data, to rethink the reasoning and relate the data, to re-evaluate the conclusions, to re-project the goals and to do so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam.

For him, by large, to Islamize a certain discipline is to teach, learn, and present that discipline in an Islamic way.

Identifying problems of various disciplines, al Faruqi asserted:

As disciplines, the humanities, the social sciences and the natural sciences must be reconceived and rebuilt, given a new Islamic base and assigned new

purposes consistent with Islam. Every discipline must be recast so as to embody the principles of IslÉm in its methodology, in its strategy, in what it regards as its data, its problems, its objectives, its aspirations. Every discipline must be remolded so as to incorporate the relevance of Islam, a long a triple axis constitutive of tawÍÊd. [Al Faruqi, Islamization, 1982, x]

Every Muslim youth is entitled to receive full instruction in the religion, ethic, law, history and culture of Islam. The ummah or any section of it, as well as its leaders, are legally responsible, and in the eye of God criminally indictable if they failed to give that basic instruction in IslÉm to every Muslim child. [Al Faruqi, Islamization, 1982, 10]

Al Faruqi suggested the Islamization of Knowledge project as an indispensable ideological program of Islam. It means:

To recast the whole legacy of human knowledge from the standpoint of Islam

To make the vision of IslÉm the vision of life, reality, the world and the various disciplines

To recast knowledge as IslÉm relates to it, is to Islamize it; i.e., to redefine, and reorder the data, to rethink the reasoning and relating of the data, to reevaluate the conclusions, to reproject the goals—and to do so in such a way as to make the disciplines enrich the vision and serve the cause of Islam. [Al Faruqi, Islamization, 1982, 15]

Before this definition al Faruqi said:

The greatest task confronting the *ummah* in the fifteenth *Hijri* century is to solve the problem of education. There can be no hope of a genuine revival of the *ummah* unless the educational system is revamped and its faults are corrected. Indeed, the system needs to be formed anew. The present dualism in Muslim education, its bifurcation into an Islamic and a secular system, must be removed and abolished once and for all. The two systems must be united and integrated, and the emergent system must be infused with the spirit of Islam and must function as an integral part of its ideological program. It should not be allowed to remain an imitation of the West; nor should it be left to find its own way; nor should it be tolerated that it serves merely the economic and pragmatic needs of the student for professional training, personal advancement, or material gain. The educational system must be endowed with a mission, and that mission must be none other than that of imparting Islamic vision and cultivating the will to realize it on the largest scale.[8]

In my view, the Islamization of Knowledge should be taken in broader context. Hence, we can define the Islamization of Knowledge as follows:

At the primary level, the Islamization of Knowledge means Islamizing the existing branches of knowledge; that is, bringing them into the fold of the Islamic worldview to achieve the objectives of Islam in human life. At a higher level, the Islamization of Knowledge means, on one hand, a deeper and profound understanding of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* and, on the

other hand, a comprehensive understanding of the human and Islamic heritage. In the light of these two [understanding of the Quran and *Sunnah* and the human and Islamic heritage] one must think and create new knowledge in each and every discipline along with its related branches. In the context of religious sciences the Islamization of Knowledge may also be defined as the evolution of thought in existing branches of knowledge and disciplines.

In light of the above definitions for the Islamization of Knowledge, we contend that the term Islamization of Knowledge seems to be equally applicable to all branches of knowledge, including the religious sciences. The following discussion will further strengthen and clarify this position.

Issues in Islamization of Human Knowledge

There are several issues which are involved in IOHK. They are related to various aspects of IOHK.

For a better comprehension one may classify them as historical, conceptual, epistemological, methodological, philosophical, and ideological issues.

The Issue of Relevantization

Other than this, there are some more issues which are specifically related to the Islamic Revealed Knowledge disciplines, traditionally referred to as religious sciences or Islamic sciences.

Issues that surround religious sciences pertain to the use of the term Islamization or Contextualization or Relevantization of religious sciences.

Some scholars object to the use of Islamization for religious sciences. They consider the term relevantization more appropriate for religious sciences.

This process of relevantization raises several other questions. For example: What is the definition of relevantization?

What is meant by relevantization? What could be the legitimate place and aim of religious sciences?

Will the act of relevantization require a new methodology? What was the methodology of religious sciences in the past?

Does that methodology need to go through the process of re-examination and revision?

Why were these religious sciences developed? Were these sciences just responding either to the social realities of their time or changing them?

Commenting on the application of the term “Islamization of Knowledge” for Islamic religious sciences Mohd Kamal Hassan suggests that instead of Islamization the term “relevantisation” should be used. Thus he explains his point:

It should be explained, at this juncture, that as far as the Islamic religious sciences,

studies, knowledge or disciplines which Muslim scholars have founded and developed on the basis of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are concerned, they [known in Islamic tradition as *'ulum al-din* or *'ulum naqliyyah* or *'ulum shariyyah* or in the 20th century as *al-dirasat al-islamiyyah*] too are in need of reform [*islah*], renewal [*tajdid*] and constant improvements in areas or matters which are subject to change over time [*mutaghayyirat*], to maintain their relevance to the contemporary issues of mankind, environment and civilization. [61]

He stresses that

A convenient term which we prefer to use for the sound development, reform, renewal and improvement of the Islamic revealed knowledge disciplines in i.i.u.m. is “relevantisation” rather than “Islamization,” because those disciplines were originally based and grounded on the belief system and normative values of Islam themselves. [62]

Hence, according to him

“Relevantisation” is a more appropriate challenge to the nature of I.R.K. disciplines which, in dealing with the classic heritage of Islamic thought and civilization, are susceptible or vulnerable to the inset of rigid traditionalism [*jumud*], blind adherence [*taqlid*] or self-imposed isolationism. [63]

However, he does not deny the need of reformulation of these religious sciences. Therefore, he he prefers to argue that:

In this respect, the term “relevantisation” is to emphasize the necessity of I.R.K. disciplines and academics to keep abreast with contemporary challenges and to possess the intellectual and doctrinal capability- achieved through the methodology of *ijtihad* [exercise of sound juristic reasoning] and the *maqasid al-*

***shariah* [objectives of Divine Law] – in order to address adequately the issues and problems of contemporary individual, society, state, culture and civilization. [64]**

Kamal Hassan argued strongly that religious sciences or Islamic sciences, such as *UsËl al-DdËn*, *UsËl al Fiq*, *SharËÑah* Studies; *the Qur'Ën and Sunnah* Studies etc. do not require the application of the same term as Islamicisation or Islamization. Rather, he advocated the use of a new term *relevantization* or contextualization for religious sciences. [Kamal Hassan, 2013b, 1]

Kamal Hassan argued that Islamic sciences “are in need of reform [*iËlËh*], renewal [*tajdËd*] and constant improvements in areas or matters which are subject to change over time [*mutaghayyirËt*], to maintain their relevance to the contemporary issues of mankind, environment and civilization.” [Kamal Hassan, 2013, 61]

For Kamal Hassan, relevantisation means “the academic and intellectual effort of re-examination or re-evaluation of classical or ancient Islamic works, treaties or manuscripts with the aim of highlighting their relevance, usefulness or otherwise, novelties or uniqueness”.

It also means “Integration...of useful and beneficial ideas, methods of research, analysis, perspectives or theories from the natural sciences/applied sciences/social sciences/human sciences [Kamal Hassan, 2013, 54] into the departments of Islamic revealed knowledge [*UsËl al-ddËn* and Comparative Religion, *Fiqh* and *UsËl al-Fiq*, *Al-Qur’Ën* and *Sunnah*, General Studies and Arabic Language and Literature] in the Kulliyyah” of IRKHS.

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