

## REVIEW

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*Islamic Studies*, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University,  
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The forty-one years of *Islamic Studies* fill several bookshelves in any library. Since 1962, the Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan, has published four issues of the journal each year, leading to a veritable corpus of research and scholarship.

The journal was founded by the Islamic Research Institute, Pakistan, which came into existence on the basis of Article 197-(1) of the 1956 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan which had provided for the setting up of an organization for Islamic research and instruction in advanced studies to assist in the reconstruction of Muslim society on a truly Islamic basis. Established in 1960 under Statutory Notification by the Government of Pakistan, the Islamic Research Institute merged with the International Islamic University in 1985.

The Institute was set up to (i) explore fundamental beliefs of Islam through a rational and liberal approach and to emphasize the basic Islamic ideals of universal brotherhood, tolerance and social justice; (ii) to interpret teachings of Islam in the context of contemporary intellectual and scientific thought; (iii) to carry out research on Islamic contributions to intellectual thought, science and culture with a view to enable Muslims to regain an eminent position in these fields; and (iv) to take appropriate measures for organizing and encouraging research in Islamic history, philosophy, law, and jurisprudence.

Two years after its establishment, the Institute of Islamic Research launched the new Journal to address intellectual needs of the Muslim Ummah, to provide a forum to scholars, and to disseminate knowledge about Islamic tradition. The first issue of the Journal summed up its *raison d'être*:

The Journal means to uncover both the actual need of the *Ummah* and the ideal content of the ought-to-be, that in the consciousness of both, the will may complete that which destiny had left unfinished. But it has no illusions that Muslim will may proceed anywhere without the consummate examination of the Islamic legacy, of the capacity of its figurizations

to bridge the gap between that which is and that which ought-to-be.<sup>1</sup>

One of the goals of the journal was to cast new light on the Islamic tradition and to reevaluate this tradition in order to serve the contemporary needs of the Ummah. But it was recognized that “in doing this, the Journal must remain an open platform for all ideas and positions”. The journal celebrated the traditional view that a Muslim’s right to free enquiry is a God-given right and emphasized that the duty to tolerate others’ views is the other side of that same right. Hence, the journal welcomed “articles from all thinkers in matters Islamic, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, satisfied that the truth, which is one and God is One, and is irresistible, as God’s will is irresistible, will not fail to break through every barrier...”.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past four decades, *Islamic Studies* has published a large number of articles in disciplines such as jurisprudence, law, political science, religion, philosophy, sociology, culture, civilization, language, and history. A reflection and sampling of current scholarship in Islamic thought, it has drawn contributors and readership from both Muslims and non-Muslims.

An overview of the articles published in the journal reveals a number of consistent themes or categories. Research articles on various aspects of the Qurʾān and ḥadīth, the two fundamental sources of Islam, are an integral part of the Journal’s publication history. These studies have covered a large range of topics—from Qurʾānic hermeneutics to anthropomorphism, and from studies on ḥadīth literature to articles dealing with legal, social and religious aspects of Sunnah. Studies in *fiqh* form another major subject-area covered by the Journal. The Journal has, for instance, published articles on various aspects of laws of inheritance, on *ribāʿ*, *jizyah*, *ijmāʿ*, land ownership, legal injunctions, the institution of *waqf*, and on Muslim family laws in various countries.

The Journal has, likewise, published articles that explore various contours of Islamic tradition in different places and times. Many issues have carried an article that highlight the life and works of a single

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1. “Introducing the Journal” in *Islamic Studies*, vol. 1 (March 1962), no. 1, p. 3.

2. *Ibid.*

individual from the Islamic tradition with elucidation and analysis of his or her impact upon both the tradition and various movements within it. These luminaries range from the well-known to those relatively shrouded by the alternate veils of history, and either, as in the case of the former, shed new light upon their already-established eminence, providing a fresh glimpse of hitherto obscured aspects of their personage, or, as in the case of the latter, bring them forward to the contemporary eye, that their works and contributions might not be forgotten in this age of supercomputers and nanotechnology.

Another theme of the Journal has been the cognizance of the previously non-existent issues which have arisen as a result of interaction of the Islamic worldview with others, specifically those of the West. These issues, pertaining to the post-colonial era, include globalization, Islamic banking, integration of legal and moral systems in contemporary society, Islamization of laws, modern education, feminism and questions of ethics in contemporary social context.

Analyses of movements of thought form another large body of the Journal's oeuvre. Specific Islamic political entities of the past have been scrutinized, as have the development of social and cultural movements and art forms such as calligraphy and literature within their historical contexts. The role of state has been explored from Islamic perspectives. Articles have also been published on various aspects of relationship of individuals and the state, as well as on Islamic concept of international relations, economics, history and culture.

Comparative study of Islam and other religions, Christianity and Judaism in particular, has been an important facet addressed by *Islamic Studies*. Threads of commonality have been explored, such as prophecy in Judaism and Islam. Likewise, certain common religious themes, such as the Flood Narrative, have been explored in comparative religious studies.

*Islamic Studies* has, over the years, paid considerable attention to intellectual conflicts and considerations arising from various specific regions. For instance, Africa, the "forgotten continent" of the Muslim World, has been given special attention. Similarly, a host of issues that emerge out of the interaction between Orient and Occident, have been scrutinized and analyzed.

A consistent feature of the Journal, its growing section of book reviews, provides valuable criticism and critique of newly published works. Even a

cursory glance on book reviews published in the journal over the last forty years is richly rewarding. At its bare minimum, such a perusal provides a kaleidoscope of scholarship on Islam; at its best, it is a rich repository, leading to further insights into the works of leading men and women who have enhanced our understanding of Islam during this long period.

In addition to its characteristic standard of articles and book reviews, however, *Islamic Studies* has also included personal accounts, obituaries, reports on conferences and seminars, commentaries and viewpoint. Documents published include analytical views on constitutions of various countries such as Pakistan and Turkey, Libyan Act no. 89, 1971 in respect of Zakāh, and “The Law of Qiṣāṣ in the Islamic Republic of Iran”.

The journal’s volume in terms of number of pages has increased over the years, and its cover and format have been redesigned and its fonts have been refined. Notes to articles have been made more convenient by being moved from endnotes to footnotes which appear at the bottom of each page. The Journal publishes an annual table of contents in the fourth number of each volume, which becomes a source of quick reference for the whole volume. *Islamic Studies* is abstracted in *Science and Religion* and indexed in *Index Islamicus* and *Middle East Journal*.

In June 1976, the Journal issued a 50-page “Foundation Day Supplement” that provided an historical analysis of the Islamic Research Institute, presented a reorientation of the Institute and looked at the method and scope of Islamic research.

The first editor of *Islamic Studies* was Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi (January 1962 to September 1962). Since that time, the Journal has had nine other editors: Fazlur Rehman (December 1962 to December 1963), A. S. Bazmee Ansari (January 1964 to September 1967), S. Q. Fatimi (December 1964 to September 1967), Mazhar Uddin Siddiqi (December 1967 to December 1974), Muhammad Khalid Masood (January 1975 to June 1975), Zia-ul-Haq (September 1975 to December 1979), Mazher Uddin Siddiqi (January 1980 to January 1984), F. A. Shamsi, Acting Editor (June 1984 to December 1984), Muhammad Khalid Masood (January 1985 to June 1989); the current editor, Zafar Ishaq Ansari, took over in September 1989.

### **Special Issues**

Under the editorship of Zafar Ishaq Ansari, the journal started publishing special issues that focused on specific topics. These allowed for a larger,

lengthier collection of articles and their foci brought current scholarship in the field together. In this way, these issues have become valuable resources for research.

The special issue on Muslim Spain (Spring-Summer 1991) had a very serious, scholarly focus on various historical aspects of al-Andalus, including studies on cultural, economic, political, mystical, and sociological movements within the Peninsula.

The special issue on Central Asia (Summer-Autumn 1994) contained nine articles that examined various aspects of Central Asia such as Islam and political culture, significant movements in history, the future of education, and language. It included an overview of the current status of Muslim countries which emerged after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union.

The special issue on Islam in the Balkans (Summer-Autumn 1997) was timely in its significance, with a major portion devoted to the interplay between religion, nationalism, and international politics. It also included sections on contemporary Islamic thought in the Balkans, education and historical perspectives on the region.

The special issue on Islam and Science (December 2000), edited by a guest editor, Muzaffar Iqbal, included seven articles on some of the fundamental aspects of the discourse as well as a number of book reviews and shorter pieces.

The special issue on Jerusalem (Autumn-Winter 2001) brought together a plethora of writers under the guest editorship of Salma Khadra Jayyusi. Divided into three sections—the contemporary, classical, and visual scenes—it included historical documents, personal accounts, poetry, and essays from forty-four contributors. Taken as a whole, it provides not so much a mine of research than an aura of the Old City and those rooted in its streets and olive trees would find an irresistible attraction to this creative and eloquent expression.

In this age of mass dissemination, the journal suffers from certain marketing shortcomings. One would expect a journal of such long-standing scholarly tradition to be part of every major university collection in the world. But a quick search reveals that very few universities in North America and Europe know about it. Although this situation has improved over the last few years, without an organized effort to introduce the journal to a larger readership this important source of Islamic scholarship

remains out of reach for many readers and scholars. More recently, this neglect has been partially addressed by the Islamic Research Institute by creating an electronic edition of the complete file of the journal. It is now possible to obtain the complete set of forty-one volumes on CDs. This complete set of *Islamic Studies* is now available on the World Wide Web at [www.al-qalam.org](http://www.al-qalam.org). Some of the back issues are also available in print form.

*Islamic Studies* continues to provide an important resource of Islamic tradition on an international level. While it maintains a very quiet presence, it has substantial spirit and solid erudition, giving it the potential to both build a community of scholars and spearhead the movement which seeks to revitalize Islamic tradition—a much-needed role which has yet to be filled.

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