

Conferences/Seminars

Third International Islamic Geographical Conference Kuala Lumpur

Muḥarram 16-21, 1409/August 28–September 2, 1988

Development and the Muslims

The Department of Geography, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, hosted the Third International Islamic Geographic Conference at Institute Aminuddin Baki, Genting Highland, Malaysia *Muḥarram 16-21, 1409/August 28-September 2, 1988*, to discuss the effects of development on Muslim communities. Sponsorship for the meeting was jointly provided by the International Islamic Geographical Society, the International Institute of Islamic Thought, the Association of Muslim Social Scientists of the United States and Canada, the Malaysian Institute of Policy Research, and the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Altogether twenty-four papers were presented during eight sessions to some seventy participants from nine countries, including thirteen attendees from outside Malaysia. The first session on "Muslims and Development" included three presentations. Mansur Ahmad Saman led the discussion by exploring the generic meanings of "Islam" and "development" in his paper "Islam and Development: the Region Within." Mansur argued that because Islam sanctions peaceful living, it is a necessary condition for development, although the state of peace itself may not be a sufficient condition of the same end. In the second paper, "Muslims and Economic Development," A.H.M Sadeq observes that although Islam provides all the incentives for economic development, and despite the fact that Muslim countries as a whole are well-endowed with natural resources, they have continued to lag behind in economic development. Sadeq was hopeful that the future is bright for Muslim countries, if only there were more efforts towards economic cooperation among them.

S. Parvez Manzoor concluded the session with a deliberation on "Ideology of Development: An Islamic Critique." In this lengthy discourse on the concept of "development," the author asserted that the "The modern theory of development aims at the realization of certain societal values within a political framework. At worst, it perpetuates the view of man and the universe which is thoroughly materialistic." The Muslim community, therefore, must formulate its own theory of development on the basis of authentic values as enjoined in the Qur'ān. In this respect both Manzoor and Mansur, suggest that the

Islamic approach to development ought to begin with the development of the human soul, and should strive towards the attainment of the universal stage of inner peace (*Nafs al Mutma'inna*) among all Muslims. At the end of his paper Manzoor raised a thought-provoking question, "How might geography evolve into a strategic subdiscipline of Ummah studies?"

Harb A. Hunaiti led the second session with a factor analysis of "Development Patterns in Islamic World." Based on available data which include twenty economic and demographic variables covering twenty-four Muslim countries, Hunaiti observed that, unlike the postulates of the development-stage theories of the 1960's, progress in the agricultural sector of the Islamic World is, unfortunately, not followed by a concomitant development of the industrial sector. As a result, surplus labor unleashed from the traditional rural sector becomes inevitably involuted into the urban tertiary sector which is comprised mainly of low skilled "pseudo-activities" which yield low productivity. The next paper "The Growth of Malay Female Employment in Peninsular Malaysia" by Asmah Ahmad, presented a case study of the growth and change in the employment structure among female Muslim Malays. Malay females occupy some 20 percent of the labor market, which is considerably more than the usual involvement of less than 10 percent in most Muslim countries. Considering that Malays constitute only about one-half of the total labor force, the high rate of female Malay participation in the labor force may be attributed to the structural changes in the Malaysian economy, and the high level of educational attainment among Malay women. With greater emancipation of women the question arises, again and again, as to whether or not Muslim women should leave their traditional roles to participate more freely in the labor market.

Two papers, presented during the third session, addressed the general subject of resource mobilization at the international level. The first, on "Islamic Economic Cooperation" in the context of south-south economic relationship by Uzir Abdul Malik, discussed the existing pattern of collaborative ventures among Muslim countries and examined the various categories of multilateral and bilateral institutions which facilitate such ventures. Uzir concluded that cooperation among Muslim countries can be achieved and enhanced through concerted efforts to forge the "Ummatic" principle of brotherhood and common welfare, especially among the OIC member countries. Uzir's guarded optimism was followed by a disquietening report on "The Effect of South Asian Immigration to the West" by Shamim Naim and Gladis Kaufman. According to the authors, up to 1986, a total of 112,000 Muslims from the Indian subcontinent migrated to the United States. With very few exceptions these migrants were positively selected. Most of them were professionals with a good proportion holding doctorates and masters degrees in a variety of fields,

especially engineering, medicine and the physical sciences. Several factors were identified, but the main motivation was always associated with economic and professional considerations. The authors concluded that while the immigration of South Asian Muslims was clearly beneficial to the host communities, the burden of cost was heavily shouldered by the countries of origin. In a region where literacy rates were low, the expenses incurred in training the migrants prior to their departure, could only have come at the expense of millions of others who stayed back.

In the fourth session on "Population Movement," Abdul Rahim and Muhammad Fuad explored the relationship between "Economic Development and the Hajj," followed by a discussion on "Tourism in Muslim Countries" by Abdul Kadir. Using time series data on pilgrim flow, and per capita income, Abdul Rahim and Muhammad Fuad found a weak association between Muslim pilgrimage and economic development. The authors observed that although Hajj may in the structural sense be likened to touristic travel, it is certainly different in the motivational sense, so that the intensity of pilgrimage streams cannot be readily explained solely in terms of the economic situation obtaining at the source regions. On tourism, Abdul Kadir suggested that there are limited long haul visits among Muslims, and also very little attempt by Muslim countries to incorporate Islamic principles in policies and strategies affecting the tourist industry.

The fifth session on "Agriculture and Development" covered three papers. The first by Keith Sutton (presented in absentia) focused on "Algeria's Vineyards" whose operation, according to the author, presents both an ideological contradiction, as well as a problem of decolonization. While constitutionally proclaiming Islam as the state religion, Algeria has, since colonial days, been one of the world's major producers of wine. The second presentation on the "Malay Idle Agricultural Land" by Amriah Buang discussed the problem of widespread neglect of agricultural lands which were formerly productive tracts. Several physical, technological and sociological constraints, mostly attributable to the neo-colonial characteristics of the Malaysian economy, were discussed with an emphasis on the problems posed by the Islamic law of inheritance (*Farayd*). Whereas efficient management calls for the consolidation of plots into bigger scale operations, the inheritance law allows for continuous fragmentation into uneconomic holdings. The third paper by Mohammed A. Ali examined "Strategies for Developing Agricultural Resource in Oman." The author presented a lengthy overview of the Omani agricultural sector, with an extended discussion on the socio-economic consequences of agricultural intensification programs, and the various industrialization projects associated with it. The final section of the paper drew attention to a number of problems faced by the agricultural sector, followed by some recommendations towards sustainable practices for the future.

The sixth session offered three different subjects: mining, housing and industrial development. Wan Fuad Hassan started off by describing "The Origins, Practice, and Significance of Mining in the Malaysian Economy." The author concludes that mining activities (mainly tin and petroleum) in Malaysia have reached a developed state with little adverse consequences on the environment. But in view of the rapid depletion of tin deposits, Wan Fuad suggested that Malaysia begin to diversify into other types of mineral production. In the next paper, Harb A. Hunaiti looked at the "Housing Demand in Jordan" through the use of stepwise multiple regression to estimate the importance of price, income, household size, transport cost, and age of head of household, in determining demand for housing. He concluded that whereas demand is price elastic, especially in the larger cities, it is less affected by demographic variables (household size and age of head of household), and transport cost. The third paper by Hassan Abdul Kadir Saleh on "Industrial Resources of Jordan," attempted to evaluate industrial resources by looking at their evaluation, structure and contribution to the economy. Results from a stepwise regression analysis of factors affecting industrial production (1975-1984) indicates the important role played by credit facilities. He therefore calls for the provision of more credit facilities, and the establishment of an Industrial Marketing Corporation, to link together local ventures, while facilitating external linkages with other Muslim countries in order to take advantage of scale and scoping economies in production and marketing.

In the seventh session, two papers, by S.M.S. Ali and Abdul Kadir, were deliberated. Ali discussed "Agricultural Change in Bangladesh," followed by Abdul Kadir's paper on "The Normative and Positive Aspects of Muslim Travel Behavior." Ali's paper explored the relationship between agricultural demand crop intensification, with the aim of testing the hypothesis that crop intensification is responsive to changes in demand generated by either the population or the market. Data from six villages in the Bengal Basin support the above proposition, although, as Ali cautioned, the Boserupian intensification scenario for Bangladesh is rapidly approaching the Geertzian scenario of involution, with every possibility of the Malthusian prediction creeping into the future, unless major anticipatory measures are taken to arrest this trend.

Abdul Kadir compared the notions of normative travel, both from the Islamic and the conventional geographic points of view, to the pattern obtained in the contemporary Muslim World. Whereas from the normative notions one can expect more frequent and denser cross-cultural visits among Muslims, in reality their pattern of travel does not appear to have been influenced by the religious factor. The author urged Muslim governments and Muslim geographers to put more efforts towards promoting more reciprocal travel

among the Ummah, in line with the notion of purposeful travel which is clearly enjoined in Islam.

In the final session on "Development Strategies," three papers were offered for deliberation. Discussing "The Dilemma of Twentieth Century Planning," Muhammad Talhah Idrus addressed a number of issues related to planning with particular reference to Malaysia where he claimed, ". . . (planners) tend to copy the planning models developed by their former (Western) masters." Of these, the detachment of planners from the communities for whom their plans are expected to serve, seems to be a major source of problems in the built environment. Talhah believes that these problems can be overcome by adopting the Islamic approach to planning whereby the planners themselves can fully empathize with the inane needs of the Ummah. In short, planners must live and plan *with* the rest of the community.

The second paper by Abdul Samad Hadi described "Urbanization of the Malay in Malaysia," and explored an alternative urbanization strategy for the Muslim community. Discussing Malaysian urbanization policy, especially pertaining to policies directed towards uplifting the economic plight of Muslim Malays, Abdul Samad reexamines the notion of the modern urban center which, he claims, is an alien phenomenon grafted on to the traditional rural Malay background. This gives rise to a situation of incongruity in which the Malays, with their traditional values, were initially unable to adapt to the new demands placed upon them within an increasingly capitalistic environment. Consequently, the efforts to urbanize them, while successful to a degree in relocating them into the urban areas, have not been very meaningful in terms of greater participation in the urban economy. Abdul Samad believed that, while "bottom-up strategies" are still being given a hearing, it is opportune for Malays to have recourse to a search for an appropriate urbanization strategy from Islamic sources. The author then discusses the concept of *tazkiyah*, as a possible model for development which should be centered on the mosque as a broadly functioning institution. In some way, Abdul Samad's proposition concurred with the preceding suggestions by Muhammad Talhah, and the subsequent approach discussed by Mushtaqur Rahman.

Rahman's paper on "Rural Development in the Muslim World: Pitfalls of Progress" was the last presentation of the conference. The author began with a brief review of some foreign-inspired strategies, and proposed a rural development strategy based on the resource capability of the target region. Drawing ideas from K. Ruddles and T. Grandstaff's "incremental transformation approach," the author proposed a three-phase strategy for rural development. The aim of the first phase was to gather detailed information on the environmental milieu, and the existing patterns of resource-use. This amounted

to a careful survey of the environmental, demographic, institutional, and other relevant subsystems in the development region. Using this information base, the second phase introduced planning instruments designed to ensure efficient and optimum utilization of natural resources which should be spread equitably across the planning area. The third phase was devoted to the study and the upgrading of the capabilities of the institutions and implementing agencies, so that better coordination and managerial competency can be attained. This included the identification of the major socio-cultural obstacles to development, which have been commonly experienced among Muslim communities in the past.

In addition to the above presentations, four other papers were circulated owing to the absence of the authors. These were: "The Religious Composition of Bangladesh" by K. Maudood Elahi; "Afghanistan Ware: Some Geographical Dimensions" by Muhammad Said; "Development: The Algerian Experience: by Djilali Sar; and "Geographic Study of Agricultural Mechanization in Pakistan" by Muahmmad Yaqub Alizai.

Attendance during all the sessions was constantly full, and discussions throughout the four-day meeting were most spirited. In most sessions, the response from the audience ran well into the tea or meal breaks. Indeed one might have wondered whether the good support and participation from the audience had anything to do with the solitary and healthy ambience of Genting Highland. Despite the high quality of the discussions, a word must be said on the subject matter deliberated during each session. While a good number of the papers, especially during the first and the last sessions, were related closely to the theme of "Development and the Muslims," the majority made little reference to the subject of development, and fewer still treated Islam as an independent variable in deliberating on their respective topics. In this regard, there was little consensus on what the effects of modern development are on Muslim communities.

Nonetheless, the meeting, on the whole, did provide some insights into the development problems faced by Muslim countries, and to say the least, it provided another useful occasion for Muslim geographers to exchange views on professional and societal matters. During the out-of-session, informal meetings, some constructive ideas were exchanged on the next Islamic Geographical Symposium the theme of which is to be "Technology and Environment in Muslim Countries," to be held in Bahrain in 1990.

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