

## **Special Feature 1:**

### **Islam as a Source of Contemporary Thought: New Advances and Outlooks The Editors' Preface**

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This special issue highlights some important aspects of Islam as a source of contemporary thought.

It goes without saying that Islam has been a fount of ideas and thought in various fields of intellectual and social activities in the premodern periods. It was once, however, considered to be losing its inspirational power under the advent of modernity, and for many this was an expected consequence of Islam's withdrawal from the actual political, social, and juristic domains, even if it survived as a personal creed, as all other religions seemed to be moving in this direction, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. By the turn of the century, we were safe to refer to the return of Islam in many dimensions, due to its resurgence in modern times through the Islamic revival, and it has since proven to be the source of contemporary ideologies for many Muslims.

This phenomenon of Islamic resurgence or revival became apparent from the 1960's to the 70's. Before that, Arab nationalism was prevalent in the Middle East, and liberalism, nationalism, and socialism dominated the Islamic world as well as many parts of the non-Islamic world. We used to refer them as the Third world.

Turning our minds to the sequence of events that underscored the beginning of the Islamic revival, we recall the Arab defeat and the fall of East Jerusalem in the Third Middle East War (1967), which marked the turning point from nationalist themes to Islamic motifs from the convening of the Islamic Summit and the resolution to establish the OIC (1969), to the Fourth Middle East War (1973), in which Islamic motifs such as Jihad and Ramadan were mobilized, and the establishment of the Dubai Islamic Bank as the first commercial Islamic bank (1975). In the year of 1979 we witnessed the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Makka (Mecca), and the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Army, which triggered the struggle by Mujahideen.

However, it has since become apparent that the revival of Islam in a broad sense had actually begun in the latter half of the 19th century and was gradually spreading as an undercurrent even during the periods when nationalism, liberalism, and socialism flourished.

Researchers have often questioned why the Islamic revival occurred and why it was possible. The answers have been offered in various ways: the failure of modern Western

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thought, the resilience of the Islamic religion, the oil money brought by the sudden rise of oil-producing countries (i.e. conservative Islamic countries), the rise of Islamist movements and their leaders' achievements, among many other explanations. Criticism and refutation against them have also been offered.

What is clear is that Islam, which was dominant in premodern times, has not been restored to its original form. The Islamic revival is not the return of the same Islam which existed in the premodern eras. If Islam has a vital presence in the modern age, it means that Islam can live in the present as a viable religion or as a relevant idea only when there are interpretations that make this possible, or more specifically, innovative intellectual practices that can respond to the times.

Islam is a religion based on the scriptures that originated in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century, namely, the message of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad who delivered the religion to mankind as a whole. Although the Prophetic sayings were finally compiled as manuscripts two to three centuries after the period when they were originally spoken, they are already more than a thousand years old. In the case of other religions, it is rare for an early scripture to remain in force, as seen in the case of Islam today, no matter how old it may be. Strong insistence on the maintenance of the "primordial" is one of the characteristics of Islam. Therefore, throughout time, jurists and intellectual leaders have faced the demand to prove that these texts originating in the seventh century were still valid, or in other words, scholars have needed to interpret them to make them applicable according to the contemporary conditions of successive eras.

In the premodern times, regions and religious spheres were quite distinct from each other and the people lived autonomously in segregated worlds so that it would not have been difficult to conduct such interpretations. However, after the western powers started to integrate these many premodern "worlds" into one modern world and dominate it under the modern ideological hegemony, confrontation and competition with Western thought had a great influence on such intellectual practice. The nation-state system became the de facto global standard in politics and international relations, and capitalism and socialism became the two dominant economic ideologies. The Islamic world was divided and involved in these systemic competitions during the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Progressive intellectuals took the initiative in adopting these dominant economic/political ideologies during this time, while Islamic intellectuals were left behind among the "backward" Muslims until the beginning of the Islamic revival. Even after the surfacing of the revival, Islamic thinkers and leaders had to face a tough and difficult struggle. As the articles in this special feature reveal, the Islamic theater of ideological competitions, where both Islamic and non-Islamic ideas from various camps are competing, is quite complicated and often contradictory. One thing clear to all observers is that Islam is a source of contemporary thought

and is firmly rooted in modern Muslim societies.

The five articles in this Special Feature focus on the dynamic relationship between ideas and politics and society in the modern Islamic world.

Ikehata and Kosugi's paper focuses on the concept of *ijmā'* (consensus), one of the major sources of Islamic jurisprudence in both classical as well as modern times. It explores the nature and significance of this concept for the Umma, or the Islamic community, in historical eras, and argues for the new consensus making, which may be becoming a new approach of building a global *ijmā'*, utilizing the theoretical findings on consensus building for intra-regional diplomacy in the modern world.

Yamamoto's paper analyzes the disputes among Muslims over visiting Jerusalem under Israeli occupation from religious and political perspectives. Although the world witnessed the historical rapprochement of some Arab states and Israel in 2020, his paper shows that religious scholars and intellectual leaders have been divided over whether a visit to Jerusalem under the Israeli occupation would lead either to Israel's recognition as a state or to strengthening Palestinian Muslims in the city, thus shedding light on sensitive dimensions of the Arab/Islamic world's relationship with Israel.

Watanabe's paper explores how the Islamic discourses produced by the Arab monarchies have played a critical role in their legitimacy and diplomacy. His paper provides a new perspective to understand the mechanism of the survival of Arab monarchies especially after the Arab Uprising, by focusing on Islam not only as the source of popular support, but as a royal motif appealing to domestic and international actors, thus functioning as a double-edged sword.

Kuroda's paper focuses on the practice of karate, a martial art originating in Japan, in post-revolutionary Iran, and analyzes how the Islamic values are embodied in the practice of karate that pursues physical and moral cultivation. Furthermore, his paper observes that such a phenomenon is partly the result of the promotion of Islamic ideology by the state which aims to educate new generations in the spirit of the Islamic revolution.

Kirihara's paper analyzes the structure of halal standards in Malaysia and clarifies that, despite a simplified understanding commonly held that these standards are based on the Islamic Shariah, they are actually a complex body of Islamic principles, jurists' judgments, and the statute laws of the Federation, as well as the various directives and instructions brought by the administrative organs of the country. It also argues that forces to bring back halal issues in the official and political arenas have actually stemmed from the religious and ethical principles of the Muslim populations, since in many Muslim countries, the Shariah laws were sidelined in the making of the modern state. The return to Shariah was an amalgamation of the religious and ethical demands of ordinary Muslims and the state's aspiration to build its legitimacy upon Islamic values.

All in all, Islam is seen in these papers to be a source providing inspiration and support to contemporary ideas in the domains of international relations, Muslim solidarity, political and diplomatic discourses, sport, and dietary regulations.

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