

# Islam & Muslims in South Africa: A Bibliographical Update

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## *1. Introduction*

Since the publication of *Muslims in South Africa: An Annotated Bibliography*<sup>1</sup> in 1997, there has been a fair amount of changes in the Higher Education sector as far as teaching and research in Islamic studies is concerned. Whilst some of the changes have been negative, there have been some positive developments as well.

Starting with the negatives, since 1997 several departments have been closed down, staff retrenched and, as a result, research output has generally been on the decline. The Committee for Higher Education in South Africa's Department of Education has made adjustments to departments, aimed at introducing economically viable programmes at various universities. The country's departments of Arabic and Islamic Studies were amongst those affected by the Department's new policies, viewed as economic liabilities for not attracting sizeable student numbers. This downsizing process took effect after 1997 and universities were forced to decide the fate of these departments.

Lamentably, at the University of Durban-Westville, where the Departments of Arabic, Urdu & Persian and Islamic Studies has existed for more than three decades, the university administration decided to close both departments and place the staff in new academic structures. Three of the staff members retired and one passed away. The Department of Islamic Studies staff joined colleagues from other 'religious studies sectors' to form the School of Religion & Culture; those in the language department were slotted in with other staff members in the School of Languages and Literature. Whilst it can be viewed negatively, this new arrangement also had a positive spin-off, since it compelled the staff to share interdisciplinary skills and forced them out of their cocoons.

The University of South Africa's Department of Semitics had set up a Centre for Islamic Studies about a decade ago but it remained dormant for most of its existence, and the university was forced to close it. Its appointed director, Mr. Iqbal Jhazbhay, had too many things on his plate and was unable to implement the Centre's worthy objectives. Members of the Semitic Studies staff retired and one moved into the political arena; these natural developments reduced the number of staff members in Arabic and Islamic studies to three. At the Rand Afrikaans University's Centre for Islamic Studies no one was appointed to replace Professor Abdurahman Doi after his untimely death; this also impacted upon the supervision of the many post-graduate students. The professorship post remains vacant and there is no certainty that it will be filled within the next year or two because of financial constraints and other administrative decisions at the university.

The University of Cape Town's Centre for Contemporary Islam and the Department of Religious Studies lost Dr Ebrahim Moosa to Duke University; he opted to move after extremists bombed his house. Before moving to Duke he served at Stanford University. At present the post he vacated remains empty and the university administration seems hesitant to appoint a new staff member to assist Professor Abdulkader Tayob in the Islamic studies programme. UCT's sister institution, the University of the Western Cape retrenched 40 of its permanent staff members, two of whom belonged to the then Department of Arabic Studies. The latter department was closed and Dr Yasien Mohamed, who was left to take charge of the Arabic programme, was transferred to the newly established Department of Foreign Languages. Small student numbers in Arabic (and Islamic studies) have been the main reason for the university's drastic actions and this effectively meant the end of the former department's Islamic culture course and the effacing of the Islam component in the new department of Theology and Religious studies. The latter was a fully-fledged faculty until the end of 1999 and is currently located in the Faculty of Arts. A number of its staff shifted to Stellenbosch University and others were part of the retrenched 40. In the light of all these changes, the research sector was negatively affected.

However, despite all of this there have been other developments. Some of the academics who had been in the fields of Arabic and Islamic Studies for more than one

and a half decades have been promoted to full professorship positions. At UNISA Dr Yousuf Dadoo was promoted in 1999, and both UCT's Dr Abdulkader Tayob and UDW's Dr Suleiman Dangor were accorded these posts this year. They and other colleagues who have been fortunate to move up within the academic structures have also been active in participating in conferences abroad, holding research fellowships and lecturing at foreign institutions. Professor Tayob spent time at the University of Hamburg conducting research and lecturing. Dr Shamil Jeppie was awarded in 1999/2000 a Chevening Fellowship to Oxford University and participated in a conference on sub-Saharan Africa at the University of Leiden this year. Dr Yasien Mohamed lectured at ISTAC in Malaysia for one semester earlier in the year, whilst preparing his thesis for publication.

Moreover, there have also been individuals who have not formally specialized in Arabic or Islamic studies who have made an input to the field. These individuals were trained in the fields of Sociology, History, Law and Education. Amongst the historians Dr Goolam Vahed, a UDW academic listed hereunder, may be considered amongst the noteworthy contributors. New researchers such as Rehana Ebr-Valley – a sociologist, attached to the University of Witwatersrand, have also slowly added to the growing list of research projects and publications. In addition to these, other openings such as the possible appointment of an Arabic specialist at UCT with funding from the Shah Mohamed Trust will assist in maintaining an interest in Arabic and Islamic studies in the region. In fact, the part-time appointment of Dr. Abdul-Hakim Quick at UWC was also a positive step; it is hoped that he and others will contribute scholarly works to South African society.

Furthermore, *Muslim Views'* editorial board members and Dr. Fadiel Essop of the Shah Mohamed Trust mooted the idea of offering financial awards to individuals who produce excellent research on any aspect of South African Islam. A specially selected committee spearheaded by Stellenbosch University's Associate Professor Yusuf Waghid was set up to scrutinize works which have been forwarded for consideration. Although this might not be the first of its kind in the South African academic arena, it may however be considered an important incentive at a very critical period to encourage and support quality research.

## *2. Research List:*

The research material in this compilation varies in terms of quality and length. However, it was felt that since they are useful for interested readers and researchers, they should be left as they appear.

In this compilation annotations have been excluded, the publications have not been slotted under thematic headings and those which have not appeared in the above-mentioned bibliography before have been included. The reader should be alerted to the fact that not all the necessary information was at hand and this article should be viewed as a bibliography in progress. It should also be mentioned that a few publications included in the list hereunder do not specifically deal with South African Muslims but makes reference to them when discussing certain issues of importance.

### *2.1 Published Articles & Books*

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## 2.2 Unpublished Research

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### *2.3 Newspapers & Magazines*

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<sup>1</sup> Haron, M. 1997. *Muslims in South Africa: An Annotated Bibliography.* (Cape Town: The South African National Library).