ON A CURRICULUM FOR A GEOGRAPHY OF ISLAM

A Study Prepared by
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Teaching 'Geography of the Islamic World' has first been introduced into 'Al-Azhar University' in 1961 (1381 H.), then into some Arabic and geography departments in some colleges and higher institutes. A number of studies have also appeared, in Arabic, dealing with some Islamic questions from a geographical viewpoint.

The study manages to form a concept for a curriculum of a geographical study of Islam as God's Seal Religion, to demonstrate the elements more deserving of study and have them properly arranged in a scientific order based on the characteristics of both the geographic method and Islamic religion.

The author divides his study into five parts as follows:

1. Between a teaching curriculum and the geographic method.

2. Geography of religions and its curricula.

3. The nature of Islam and the geographical method for its study.

4. A curriculum for the geography of the fundamentals of Islam.

5. A curriculum for an applied geography of Islam.

Here we have a concise statement of the last or the fifth part as it pours direct into the main theme of the writer's essay and provides the main basics in a curriculum for an applied geography of the Islamic world arranged in a logical sequence.

First

Definition of the Islamic Region (World):

This can be done on two levels: geographical and political. On the first level, we trace the real places where moslems live regardless of their political loyalties to the countries they belong.

In this sense, the Islamic world can extend to include all moslems wherever they are, whether as big masses or small scattered groups. The means for this pursuit is maps. Through maps we can define the major and the secondary regions of the Islamic world together with zones of moslem minorities and scattered groups as in central Africa and the new world.

Politically, the criterion of definition can be on the state level if moslems in each Islamic unit (state) constitute 50 percent or more of its population or the greater percentage among its religious groups. The criterion can be constitutional if the country's constitution stipulates that Islam be its official religion. It can also be organizational if the country belongs to a world Islamic league as the Organization of Islamic Conference.

With regards to the present distributional position of the Islamic world geographically and politically, the two levels should better be observed in the definition of the Islamic world.

Second

The Emergence of the Islamic World

Here, we have to study the various stages and processes through which the Islamic world came into being. The study is not meant to be a follow-up of the

historical events of Islam, its spread, battles and famous figures, etc., which is mainly a concern of historians. It only cares for some decisive periods in the making of the Islamic world each of which represents a distinctive stage. The following are examples in chronological order:

– **The prophet's call stage.**

– **The conquest stage of the Guided Caliphs and the Omayyads.**

– **The stage of peaceful spread of Islam through trade, cultural contacts and Suphi ways.**

– **The contemporary stage of worldwide faith in Islam.**

The geographer has to define the spatial boundaries of each stage, how the geographical features have helped to push or hinder the Islamic drive in this or that area, which ways and routes Islam followed, the places laid open to it and the communities more persuaded by the Islamic call. The significance of the spatial dimension in the emergence of the Islamic world is more emphasized by the fact that the spread of Islam took place in a chain-like series. For example, during the prophet's call stage, Islam spread in the Arabian Peninsula whereas in the conquest stage it swept over the Middle East and the Mediterranean basin. During the third and peaceful stage, Islam continued its drive in the old world. As for the present period, its stage of action has become the world at large especially in Europe and the new world.

In this way, the geographer can define the role each stage has played in the emergence of the Islamic world on both the spatial and the population levels.

Third

The Structure of the Islamic World

The stress here lies on the analysis of the present internal structure of the Islamic world which represents a pure regional geographic study. This world can be studied *as one region* or *as* having *various regions.* In each, the study must analyze the following elements:

– The physical features of land, climate, vegetation and water, etc.

– The human element: the population and their social, cultural and demographic conditions, their different housing types, etc.

– The economic structure: where a political map of the Islamic world has prime importance.

The analysis of these elements should aim at reshaping them into major forms or, in other words, in regions of distinguished characteristics to facilitate comparisons and integration studies.

Fourth

Evaluation of the Islamic World

The evaluation study of the Islamic world can include the following basic elements:

– **Points of strength and weakness in the comprehensive geographical structure of the Islamic world as a prerequisite for a future overall planning of that world.**

– **The international position of the moslem world – for moslems do not live in isolation but interact with the outer world they live in. The product of this interaction determines the international weight of the moslem world.**

– **Problems of the Islamic world – some of which may be due to external causes, others, a product of internal factors while some problems may be the result of both.**

– **The future of the Islamic world, which is indispensable of the working of the former three elements, should be directed to adopt all the issues of the Islamic world giving priority to problems of comprehensive development, spread of Islamic call, and promotion of moslem solidarity, integration and unity.**

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