Social Justice, Social Welfare and Praxis in Islamic Societies in Africa

In April 1999, the University of Helsinki's research project on 'Zakat: poverty, social welfare and Islamic taxation' arranged a two-day workshop, together with the Department of Asian and African Studies of the University of Helsinki, on 'Social justice, social welfare and praxis in Islamic societies in Africa'. Researchers from the Nordic countries and Germany presented papers dealing with issues such as the possibilities of Islamic economy and Islamic banking as well as case studies of how various forms of social welfare programs have worked in Islamic communities in Africa (including North Africa). Seven scholars presented papers at the workshop.

Holger Weiss (University of Helsinki, Finland) pointed out that much of the debate in the field of Islamic economics has been dealing with morals and ethics rather than pure economics. He presented in his paper the position of two Nigerian scholars, Sule Ahmed Gusau and Ibrahim Sulaiman, and underlined that most of their writings are critiques of the present military rulers in Nigeria, but are vague in their dealings with social or economic questions.

Endre Stiansen (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden) gave an overview of Islamic economics. He presented in his paper the position of two Nigerian scholars, Sule Ahmed Gusau and Ibrahim Sulaiman, and underlined that most of their writings are critiques of the present military rulers in Nigeria, but are vague in their dealings with social or economic questions.

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The participants of the workshop are revising their papers for a collective volume, which is to be published in late 1999.

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