

**ORGANISATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE (OIC)
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC HISTORY,
ART AND CULTURE (IRCICA)**

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1980-2000**

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**Compiled and edited by
*Zeynep Durukal Abuhusayn***

**Introduction by
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FOREWORD

IRCICA, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, is an inter-governmental institution with fifty-six Member States as of the beginning of 2000. IRCICA was established in 1980 as the first cultural subsidiary of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

The Centre carries out activities relating to research, publishing, documentation and the dissemination of information in a wide spectrum of subject areas concerning Islamic culture and civilisation, including the history of Muslim nations, arts and sciences in Islam, and cultural development issues. Its studies cover a broad geographical area extending from Southeast Asia to West Africa and address an international audience. It acts as a catalyst and avenue for cooperation between governments, cultural institutions, universities, researchers, artists and the interested public for the purpose of promoting scholarly, cultural and artistic endeavours. It initiates and follows up collaborative studies on an international level to make the Islamic culture and civilisation better known throughout the world and foster relations between its Member States and other nations. It tries to monitor and contribute to advances of research in its fields, while steadily expanding its scope to adjust to changing needs.

During the past twenty years, IRCICA was able to complete its structural development and undertake a large number of activities in the diverse fields covered by its mandate. The present publication is a record of the activities of IRCICA from its establishment in 1980 until the beginning of 2000. It is intended essentially as a reference and commemorative publication marking the twentieth anniversary of IRCICA which will be celebrated in 2000 together with the thirtieth anniversary of its parent organisation, the OIC. The preparation of this book was a modest attempt motivated by the understanding that every institution comes out of an idea shaped by special needs and circumstances and that its evolution mirrors the trends and developments associated with that idea. In the case of IRCICA, the idea was, essentially, to undertake scholarly research for promoting a deeper understanding of the Islamic culture and civilisation and strengthening the common cultural, religious and historical grounds among Muslim countries. This was translated into a set of objectives which made up the framework of IRCICA's mission. Within this framework, the Centre's policies and programs were devised on an annual basis by taking into consideration a wide range of factors: tasks assigned by the higher decision-making bodies of the OIC, requests received from cultural authorities and institutions, needs assessed in the field of research within and outside the Muslim world, developments observed in international relations concerning cultural issues, and the expansion of the OIC's membership base, among others. Such factors influenced the points of emphasis in the Centre's course of action, its institutional progress and other aspects of its evolution that are sketched in this book.

As the present book is a corporate review rather than an outside study, a descriptive approach was adopted to make it as objective and as comprehensive as possible. Thus, analyses or interpretations of specific themes were avoided. It is hoped that the lack of details is compensated for, at least partly, by the advantages of first-hand reporting. Complementary information on any aspect of the activities is available in the Centre's *Newsletter* and its other publications. A vast quantity of materials were used for this book, including published and unpublished documents, reports, articles, speeches, interviews, statements and various sources from the Centre's archives some of which are reproduced in the Appendices for direct reference.

The multiple and diverse features of IRCICA's mission ensuing from its particular character as both a diplomatic and a scholarly institution must certainly have required delicate policy planning and a lot of discretionary measures. As far as it may be observed, the Centre adopted a pragmatic approach in the fulfillment of its objectives and proceeded steadily on its course, prompted by the leadership provided by its Director General Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu.

Prof. İhsanoğlu's views and reflections recorded on IRCICA's twentieth anniversary give the gist of the Centre's evolution process; I believe they make the best introduction to this book. Certainly, the Centre owes much to Prof. İhsanoğlu for its present stature, its global outlook, diverse orientations and varied work schemes. His broad vision steadily pushed forward the Centre's horizons. He had the foresight to emphasise, from the early 1980s, that IRCICA would increasingly contribute towards fostering harmonious relations between the Eastern and the Western worlds. It is seen today, at the beginning of the third millennium that since then, this function assumed by IRCICA has proven to be of crucial and ever-growing importance for the world opinion. In all, Prof. İhsanoğlu's commitment to excellence was a continuous motivation for improvement. The collaborative effort invested in this book is dedicated to him in recognition and gratitude for his inspired leadership and a most fulfilling work environment and experience at IRCICA.

Zeynep Durukal Abuhusayn
Head of Corporate Research, IRCICA

February 2000

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