



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (The Aga Khan University (AKU-ISMC), 2012)
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**“The Evolution of Qur’anic Hermeneutics in British India, 1857-1974
Projects, Ideas, and Trends”**

Department of History

Friday, June 22, 2018
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Derryl Maclean, Department of History, Simon Fraser University (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Neilesh Bose, Department of History, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Greg Blue, Department of History, Uvic (Member)
Dr. Marcus Milwright, Department of Art History and Visual Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Bruce Lawrence, Department of Religious Studies, Duke Trinity College

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Sarah Macoun, Department of Education Psychology & Leadership Studies, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Histories of *tafsīr* in South Asia have been mainly focused on identifying extant works of Qur'anic scholarship in the region. There are only a few academic works that explore the primary sources in detail. Surveys of the present state of the study of modern Qur'anic commentaries also highlight the lacunae in our knowledge of regional *tafsīr* and Qur'anic hermeneutics. Focusing on Urdu and Arabic works, the current study as a work of intellectual history is the first systematic attempt to open a new area of inquiry. Building on the earlier historiography of the pre-modern *tafsīr* in South Asia, it charts the development of Qur'anic hermeneutics in British India by focusing on the works of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898), Ashraf °Alī Thānawī (d. 1943), and Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī (d. 1930), along with larger exegetical literature that emerged in North India. Looking beyond the artificial dichotomy of modernity and tradition and of reform and revivalism, as forces making an impact on Muslim Qur'anic thought, the current study focuses on two questions. What were the continuities and shifts in Qur'anic hermeneutics in British India since the latter half of the nineteenth century? Why did Qur'anic hermeneutics evolve the way it did in the multiple milieux of colonial India? The thesis also investigates an ancillary question: In developing their positions on Qur'anic hermeneutics, how did Muslim scholars in the period under examination conceive their relationship with the Muslim intellectual tradition in terms of their continuity or discontinuity? The study demonstrates the impact of historical forces and Muslim creative thinking on the development of modern Qur'anic hermeneutics in South Asia. Disagreeing on some key points with the current scholarship on modern Qur'an commentaries and Muslim scholarship in British India, the study shows that the period witnessed to the rise of new approaches to the study of the Qur'an in addition to the continuation of earlier trends. Moreover, it shows that Muslim scholarly ideas on the nature of the Muslim intellectual tradition in general, including Qur'anic exegesis, had a decisive impact on the development of thinking about the Qur'an in this period.