

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN the study of Islam, it can be said with some accuracy that the Qur'ān has come to the forefront in recent years, both in its role as scripture and as literature; this is true both outside and within the Muslim world. However, the traditional interpretation of the book, commonly termed *tafsīr* or more widely '*ulūm al-Qur'ān*', still remains a vast, virtually untapped field of investigation. Although the state of research has improved over the past twenty years, many modernist and revivalist Muslims tend to ignore the material, seeing it as a storehouse of traditional restraints, while Orientalists continue to gloss over its importance as a historical record of the Muslim community, as revealed in comments that declare the material to be 'dull and pettifogging' and the like.

The essays gathered here represent an attempt to expose and explore various aspects of the field of *tafsīr* and their potential for scholarly research. The papers have their origin, for the most part, in presentations given at a conference held at the University of Calgary in April 1985 called 'The History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān'. The papers were invited from scholars, with contributions from within their own fields of specialization requested, with ultimate publication envisioned from the start. All the papers were revised, and often enlarged, by their authors, in light of the opportunities for discussion which the conference provided, in order to ready them for this volume and their subsequent presentation to a wider audience.

It is my pleasure as the convener of the conference to express thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and to the various branches of the University of Calgary—the Special Projects Fund, the International Activities Advisory Committee, the Research Grants Committee, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Department of Religious Studies, along with several other individual units of the University—for their financial support. A special note of appreciation is due to Dr Leslie Kawamura, Head of the Department of Religious Studies, for the extent of his contribution to all the facets of this conference; the

Department's support for such activities continues to play a major role in the effective teaching and research of its members.

In editing these papers, an attempt has been made to impose consistency upon the individual contributions, while, at the same time, making each paper stand on its own. In the citation of authors of texts, for example, the date of death is given on the first occasion of their citation in each chapter; the same holds true for bibliographical data. A uniform system of transliteration has been implemented; modern Indonesian orthography has been used where appropriate, however. The assistance of Mrs Vi Lake at the University of Calgary in preparing the essays for publication is most gratefully acknowledged. Floyd MacKay gave generously of his time in the preparation of the indexes.

A.R.