

Editorial

From the “clash of civilizations” to the “dialogue of civilizations” and now to the “alliance of civilizations”, contemporary world communities are debating and deliberating on modules of mutual recognition and positive engagement among world civilizations and religions. In the Editorial of Issue Number 2 of our last volume (in 2014), we introduced the word “*ḥikmah*” (wisdom) as a Qur’ānic keyword that could be, and indeed has been, used in engaging with secular sciences and communicating Islamic values to peoples of other faiths. Another Qur’ānic keyword that could be introduced here and which is also closely related to *ḥikmah* is *‘ibrah* (plural: *‘ibar*), meaning lesson or admonition. Many Muslim scholars have used *‘ibrah* to justify their respective fields of study as aptly summarised by Mahdi (2006, pp. 66-67), but it was in relation to history that *‘ibrah* was most commonly used in the Qur’ān and in the tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.). The Qur’ān narrates several historical accounts of the messages and messengers of God, of the believing and non-believing communities, and of the heroes and tyrants. It then urges people to take *‘ibrah* over the account given (Qur’ān, 12:111) so that one may emulate virtues and shun vices. Nothing is said to have been told or retold in the Qur’ān purposelessly. Whether the event or figure is of good or bad character, there is an *‘ibrah* contained within the narratives. *‘Ibrah* thus signifies historical reasoning that motivates one to investigate the postulates of other cultures and civilizations, to learn from their mistakes, to appreciate and (re)search their findings and to transcend their horizons (Solihu, 2014). While the word connotes the existence of barriers between the present and the past or between one culture and another, it also suggests the bridging or crossing of that barrier and the possibility of communication between the rivals (Mahdi, 2006. p. 66). *‘Ibrah* could then form a bedrock of relations among world civilizations.

One preeminent application of *‘ibrah* which has truly and successfully engaged other world communities came from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), a prominent Muslim statesman,

sociologist, political thinker, historian and, more importantly, philosopher of history. He was born in Tunis, Tunisia, into a family of Spanish-Arab descent. Following the decline of Muslim rule in Spain, his family migrated to northwest Africa, first into Morocco and later into Tunisia. Brought up in traditional religious disciplines and the philosophical sciences, Ibn Khaldūn studied the Qur'ān, Arabic, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), as well as logic, philosophy, and mathematics under leading scholars of his time. He also taught and occupied high positions in Tunis, Algeria, Morocco, southern Spain, and Egypt.

Ibn Khaldūn authored several books but is best known for his *Kitāb al-ʿIbar* (The Book of Admonitions, often referred to as the Universal History), the most important part of which is its Introduction and Book One that came to be known together under the title of *al-Muqaddimah* (the Prolegomenon) (Ibn Khaldūn, 2003).

Ibn Khaldūn wrote about the history of the Arabs and Berbers, but, to make his principles and conclusions universal, he framed it under the generic historical term of *ʿibar*. He drew lessons from his predecessors, criticising and praising whenever it is due. By so doing, he hoped that more lessons could be drawn from his own accounts and conclusions. The use of this term as synonymous to or in connection with history has a far-reaching dimension in his concept of history. As Mahdi (2006. p. 66) explains, the word indicates essentially, “the activity of looking for the unity of the plan underlying the multiplicity of events, of grasping the permanence pervading their ever-changing and destructible character, and of using the results of such reflections in the management of practical affairs.” *ʿIbrah* is then the bridge between the external and internal aspects of history, but could also be the bridge between civilizations.

Ibn Khaldūn was undoubtedly an accomplished student of Islamic disciplines and his *ʿumrān* (social) science is framed on *ʿibrah* based on the Islamic worldview (Dhaouadi, 2005, Sahin, 2013, pp. 206-207). He was successful in branding his universal history as *ʿibrah*, a bridging concept that could be employed to reach out to others and connect with various cultures and civilizations. His contribution is consequently well recognised across different cultures and generations. While Ibn Khaldūn lived in a generation and wrote about a world that was largely different from ours, the ideas he propounded continue to find their relevance in contemporary scholarship. His approaches and conclusions in sociology,

historiography, philosophy of history, political economy, education, and others, have been extensively studied and compared with those of the leading contemporary experts.

The first two articles in this issue deal with Ibn Khaldūn's thought. First, Haniza Khalid compares Ibn Khaldūn's economic thought with the New Institutional Economics (NIE), focusing on Douglass C. North's ideas. The author discusses Ibn Khaldūn's and Douglass C. North's methodologies and elaborates on their thoughts on the role of institutions in economic growth and decline. She explains Ibn Khaldūn's key economic concepts and themes such as *badāwah* (tribal lifestyle), *ḥaḍārah* (sedentary lifestyle), and *'aṣabiyyah* (social solidarity, group consciousness), and their role in economic structure and development, as condensed in his *'ilm al-'umrān* (science of civilisation), and then identifies their equivalents in North's NIE. Next, Salah Machouche and Benaouda Bensaid explore the roots and determinants of Ibn Khaldūn's critical mind in their attempt to underscore religious dimensions of critical thinking. To be critical does not necessarily mean to discard every conceivable value. Critical thinking is a guided judgment framed on a particular value. Ibn Khaldūn's critique of uncritical acceptance of others' statements is widely applauded. Yet the categorical concepts and fundamental theoretical framework of his critique are drawn on Islamic concepts and worldview. Machouche's and Bensaid's article demonstrates how a widely acclaimed critical mind is shaped by salient religious values.

The third article is a critical discourse analysis of two Arabic speech texts issued to fight Islamophobia. Zouhir Gabsi analyses the textual strategies and uncovers ideologies behind the linguistic categories used in these two Arabic Islamic discourses to combat Islamophobia and create social solidarity between the speakers and their audience.

In the fourth article, Saadia Izzeldin Malik discusses the compatibility of Islamic ethics with the Western applied ethics in the field of journalism. Diversity, impartiality, individual freedom, freedom of speech, social justice and responsibility, equal access to news information, and accountability are core ethical values which Islam promotes and which are central to the contemporary ethical code of journalism. Thus, the author believes that Islamic ethics could contribute considerably to the debate on reconciling global conflicting media values.

In the fifth article, Lambe Kayode Mustapha and Saodah Wok explore the agenda-setting potential of online newspapers by analysing the agenda covered in selected Nigerian online newspapers and how they were perceived by Nigerian diasporas in Malaysia during the 2011 Nigerian presidential election. Their study could provide a better understanding of how the online media contributes to political socialisation and participation of diasporic audience in the contemporary globalised world.

We are happy to announce that this second issue of *Intellectual Discourse* will be followed by a special issue on Islamic banking and finance. The Editorial Board would like to thank Ahamed Kameel Mydin Meera, a Professor of Islamic Banking and Finance, for honouring our invitation to be the Issue's Guest Editor.

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