

Editorial

This December 2020 issue of *IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies* extends our commitment to engage with a wide range of topics related to civilisational studies. This time, all four articles included in this issue explore the most essential topics of contemporary intellectual discourse, which are human value and human rights in Islam, and the importance of religion in providing wellbeing, peace and balance as principal catalysts in civilisational and societal development.

The first article, “Human Value in Islamic Thought,” authored by Müfit Selim Saruhan engages in a critical analysis of the value of a human being from an Islamic viewpoint. A human being is characterised in Islam as an intelligent being or creature. The author argues that, at present, there is a deep need for an understanding of peace based on justice, as mentioned in the Qur’an. Human beings have constantly been stumbling in an atmosphere of marginalisation, polarisation, and discrimination that leads to depression, anxiety, and fear. Human beings need to live together to continue their lives and prepare for the hereafter, and this social structure should be formed in a way that will enable them to help and protect each other. According to the Qur’an, justice, peace, and love should be the primary values in human life as they not only bring comfort but also value to human life. According to Islam, the value of a human being increases when his behaviour is shaped based on peace and love. As the paper argues, the principles that make humans valuable are also the basic duties of human beings living together on earth. The principles mentioned in the Qur’an allow Man to choose between freely believing and not believing while respecting the beliefs of others. He must listen to the opinions of others, and let others define and explain themselves. Consequently, religion introduces principles that regulate the visible world of Man with the promise of happiness, and also binds the invisible world and the condition of peace after death in order for him to obey these principles.

The second article titled, “The Life and Political Role of Kurdish Women in the Ottoman Empire,” authored by Bzhar Othman Ahmed and AbdulWahed Jalal Nori is a good example of women empowerment in Islamic history. Based on primary sources such as *Seyahatname* (Travelbook) of Evliya Çelebi, this article presents an authentic elaboration of Kurdish women’s lives in their communities, particularly their highly influential roles in dynastic politics and their symbiotic careerism with their husbands and sons. As the article further elaborates, Kurdish women played a crucial role in the political sphere of Kurdistan, especially in ruling the principalities and fighting against their enemies, often supporting their husbands and sons as the power behind the throne, as well as exercising power themselves, notably during the Ayyubid dynasty and the Ottoman era. Also, the authors uphold the view that Kurdish women were notably freer than their counterparts in other nations in the Middle East, and Kurdish husbands had a great deal of trust in their wives.

The following article, named “Muslim Dynamics in America: Challenges and Opportunities,” is authored by Dinar Dewi Kania, Ariesa Ulfa, Sari Tri Stianawati, Erpy Reinita, Rere Jessika Purnomo and Agus Saefurohman. This paper describes the challenges and opportunities for Muslims in America and the role of American Muslim intellectual organisations in both domestic and global spheres. The authors suggest that influence of Islamophobia in US governmental and foreign policies are visible, particularly in counterterrorism policies, and this creates various challenges for Muslims living in America. However, at the same time, opportunities for Muslims to gain higher education and careers in various fields remain wide open in America. Besides, the paper highlights that the contribution of Muslim intellectual organisations to the American society and global society has always been present and cannot be neglected. Concerning the future, the paper envisages that Muslim intellectuals in the US who currently tend to unite and work together seem to be intensifying their research and education programmes as well as consolidating various Muslim communities in the US.

The final article written by Ismail Kadala Murutha and Saud Bin Mohammad, entitled “A Study of Dosteo Bisaka’s Contribution to the ‘Faith of Unity’ Religious Movement in Western Uganda,” discusses

the emergence and principles of a new religious movement in Uganda called Faith of Unity (FoU), which became a dominant religion in Uganda within the last three decades. The authors suggest that, in post-independence Uganda, the negative effects of colonialism, civil wars and recent struggles for power led to the inadequate and sometimes total absence of proper social, economic and political structures, leaving the country in a state of turmoil and uncertainty. Societies lost hope and became vulnerable and ready to accept any message that appeared to offer answers and solutions to their life problems. In such a midst, many new religious movements appeared on the Ugandan religious scene, and FoU is the most successful among them. As the authors argue, the main purpose of the founder of FoU, Dosteo Bisaka, was to bring back unity among the people, revitalise African spirituality and strengthen the African way of life that had been dispirited by foreign religions while, at the same time, be cognizant of the needs and requirements of the modern society by rehabilitating some of the indigenous African practices in new forms that are relevant to modern society. Despite the fact that FoU was founded around three decades ago, still, it has not attracted much scholarly research. Thus, this article is a valuable contribution in the field as it presents an original study of FoU from a neutral and non-judgemental perspective.

We are also pleased to carry a review of “Key Islamic Political Thinkers” edited by John L. Esposito and Emad el-Din Shahin (published in 2018 by Oxford University Press) contributed by Makmor bin Tumin. The reviewer considers that this edited book shows little nuances to provide a better understanding on contemporary Muslim intellectual discourse as it does not include thinkers from other regions such as the Southeast Asia. Also, the reviewer believes that this edited book has not seriously dealt with the richness of the thinkers’ ideas, but rather is more focused on their activities and ideology, leaving the readers unsure as to what the political take away was from the political thought that the contemporary intellectual thinkers left us with.

Finally, on behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heart-felt appreciation to all our contributors and reviewers. Their valuable and enlightened contributions will, I am convinced, be of interest to scholars worldwide. Finally, my thanks and appreciation go to all members of the Editorial Board, our

Editor Dr. Alwi Alatas, Book Review Editor Dr. Kaoutar Guediri and Assistant Editor Sr. Norliza Saleh. This issue became reality due to your dedication, efforts and sincerity. May Allah bless you all.

Elmira Akhmetova
Editor-in-Chief
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