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## **Editorial**

This June 2021 issue of IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies extends our commitment to engage with a wide range of topics related to civilisational studies. All articles included in this issue deal with Islamic concepts and civilisational traits in four different areas namely education, governance, architecture and politics.

The first article is by Saheed Afolabi Ashafa with the title “Rebranding Islamic Studies in Universities in South-western Nigeria: Islamic Finance to the Rescue”. It discusses the academic scenario in South-western Nigeria where Islamic Studies, as an academic discipline suffers a setback due to several challenges namely, ideological sentiment, low enrolment of students, uncertain prospect for graduates, as well as high tuition and service fees. To stimulate the interest of prospective students to pursue their study in this discipline and sustain the vitality of the discipline, this paper proposes a holistic review and rebranding of the Islamic studies by introducing Islamic finance into the university curriculum. Not only will this change, argued by the author, render the discipline more functional and relevant with the current global trends especially since the Islamic finance is being widely accepted by corporate bodies and government agencies, but also produce more versatile graduates whose knowledge and skills will fit well into the current socio-economic reality. At the same time, the fusion of the Islamic finance into the current Islamic Studies program will enable the latter to address the problem of paucity of students, hence, making the discipline to remain relevant in the curriculum of the universities in South-western Nigeria.

The second article entitled “Regional Dynamics and Governance in Modern Middle East: From the Ottoman Empire to the Cold War” authored by Ramzi Bendebka provides an overview of regional dynamics and governance in the Middle East which include 22 modern-nation states stretching from Iran to Morocco,

and from Turkey to Sudan. Making use of a Historical Dynamics (HD) approach, the author assesses different historical periods starting with the Ottoman era, then colonial period, independence, nationalism, and the Cold War eras in determining their effects on the Middle Eastern regional governance and dynamics, as well as the future of the region. While the author acknowledges the differences between the Middle Eastern states such as economic structure, form of government, social and ethnic composition as well as religious affiliation, he maintains that they share many similar traits in terms of politics, economic, culture, religion, and historical experiences, which makes the study of the region as one entity and some general observations possible. The study concludes that the regional development and good governance generally took place after independence, with the idea of pan-Arabism as the main factor for the regional cooperation observed among the states at least until the 1990s.

Next, “Historic Jeddah as a Unique Islamic City” by Omer Spahic dwells on the unique traits of Jeddah, a city which originated from a small primitive fishing settlement in 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and later evolved into a major port and commercial center of the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With the objective to enrich discourses on Islamic urbanism and architecture, the author highlights the city’s main features focusing on at first the city’s history having been ruled by different powers such as the Mamluks, Ottomans and al-Sa‘ūd dynasty, and in contact with the West particularly the Portuguese. The author then indulges in the city’s cosmopolitan character which is much related to its status as the gateway to the holy city of Makkah where the activity of pilgrimage led to Jeddah becoming a multinational and multicultural city. Additionally, being closely linked to Makkah as an entry point, this contributes to, according to the author, both cities sharing the same fortune and destiny, and finally, the distinctive historical and traditional architecture of the city renders the city one of its kind that it has been recognised as an UNESCO World Heritage site.

The fourth article entitled “Reforming Political Islam: A Critical Reading of Aḥmad al-Raysūnī’s Perspectives” by Mohamed Zacky Mohamed Fouz and M. Moniruzzaman critically examines the

views and works of a renowned scholar of Moroccan origin in contemporary Islamic political thought, Aḥmad al-Raysūnī, on the concept of 'Islamic State' where he re-interpreted the concept by developing a new understanding on the nature of state and its role including topics like democracy, equality, plurality and freedom in Islam using the *maqāṣid approach*, which is a broader idea than *maqāṣid al-sharī'a*. This undertaking by al-Raysūnī was prompted by various conceptual errors of the Islamic State as perceived by Muslim masses and scholars which, if left unattended will affect the foundations of Islamic world views. Nevertheless, al-Raysūnī's views are not free from criticisms particularly since there are a few shortcomings in his analysis with regards to some modern political concepts which leads the authors of this article to conclude that a new analytical model is needed to provide a more accurate concept of Islamic State from Islamic perspectives while taking into considerations the modern socio-political concepts. Still, al-Raysūnī's views deserve attention as they contribute to a new understanding of political Islam regarding the discourse of Islamic state.

This issue also contains a book review entitled *The Faces of Muhammad: Western Perceptions of the Prophet of Islam from the Middle Ages to Today* by John Tolan (published in 2019 by Princeton University Press), contributed by Farhain Zaharani. In reviewing the work which deals with Western perceptions of the Prophet Muhammad saw from the Middle Ages until modern times, the reviewer observes that the perceptions vary, where at first, the Prophet Muhammad saw was described as an imposter and trickster, but these gradually changed where he was depicted in a more positive light, being painted as a religious reformer, lawmaker, and inspirational leader not only for Muslims but also non-Muslims. Such a change calls for explanations and in doing so, the author as noted by the reviewer, highlights the historical contexts which conditioned the Western perceptions, namely some political and religious conflicts that occurred in Europe.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all contributors and reviewers who involved in this issue. It is my conviction that their valuable

ideas and works will contribute to the enrichment of knowledge particularly in civilisational studies and 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 Editors, Dr. Bukuri Zejno and Sr. Norliza Saleh. This issue becomes a reality due to your dedication, efforts and sincerity. May Allah bless you all.

**Fauziah Fathil**  
**Editor-in-Chief**  
**June 2021**