

Editorial

Ever since its existence on earth, human society has become a unique composite of individuals - males and females - that continued to make history of its own incomparable to that of any other creatures. This is commensurate with the nature and status of man as “the best among God’s creatures”. Once human intellect and experience began to explore the nature of human social life, society becomes the object that drew continuous attention of curious investigators. No aspect of human society is then left unattended once these people of curiosity, be they scholars, thinkers, researchers or simply students, realise of such unexplored area of study.

As society continued to develop, it naturally transformed itself into a more complex one, making the study of it equally more challenging. Human and social sciences in particular grew out of this particular circumstance. Triggered by continuous changes, human collectivity grew from what was once a single human society into human societies which became more and more diversified as they travelled over the long journey of human history. At the core of this dynamic human movement stand a few key concepts that explain the progress of human society in its most general sense and this may be best represented by such buzzwords as development, civilisation and globalisation.

When the issues related to these broad themes are further examined in connection to religion, the discussion is certainly going to be more interesting and delicate. Added to this complexity is the interplay between religion and contemporary societies which is now being redefined in the light of unprecedented advancement of knowledge, science and technology and such redefinition naturally influences peoples’ perceptions and interpretations of their own socio-cultural and civilisational realities. Responding to such developments, countless conferences, seminars, workshops are being organised to try to understand various aspects of modern society. Myriad writings in the forms of conference papers and proceedings, books, academic

articles and reports also continue to add to the current literature on development, religion, civilisation and globalisation.

It is against this backdrop, that this Journal finds its birth in order to participate in the contemporary discourse on various issues in these important areas of study. The Journal intends to provide an opportunity, particularly for those who are interested in the above themes to contribute with their research findings and thoughts to be shared and exchanged with other readers.

The idea to publish this journal, *IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies* (IJECS), was mooted early this year by the Dean of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), Prof. Dr. Mohammad Abdul Quayum, who wanted to see more rigorous academic and intellectual discourses taking place in various forms and this Journal is one of the platforms that is hoped to be able to realise such as a noble desire. After a series of meetings and discussions, it was decided that the focus of the Journal would be on religion and civilisation and hence the title of this Journal. It is thus expected that the themes, issues and topics of the manuscripts to be received and considered by the Journal Team should be related to these main areas in one way or the other. Since the proposal for the publication of a new journal has to go through a number of stages before it is finally approved by the University's management, the time left for the Journal's team to work on publishing its first issue this year was quite limited. Hence, we might have overlooked some aspects or technicalities necessary for a Journal and for that we hope to be able to address such deficiencies in future issues.

To begin with, we started this first issue with a modest number of contributions consisting of four articles and one viewpoint besides the Editorial note. The articles in this issue are all country-specific. This has its own advantage particularly in gaining deeper insights into the religious/civilisational issues that take place in the respective countries. For this issue, a special concentration is on Nigeria (three articles) with the inclusion of two other writings on Russia and Malaysia respectively. For future articles, we hope to be able to select the ones that represent the countries of different continents. In brief, the contents are divided

into two sections; the first section consists of four articles and the second section consists of one viewpoint.

The four articles included in this first issue are: *Globalisation and the Muslim Ummah: Issues, Challenges and the Ways Out* by Babayo Sule, Muhammad Aminu Yahaya and Rashid Ating; *Understanding the Islamic Viewpoint on Religious Pluralism in Nigeria with Special Reference to Ahl Al-Kitab* by Aliyu Alhaji Rabi'u and Yakubu Modibbo; *Innovative Funding of Nigerian Private Islamic Universities: The Option of Islamic Financial Products (IFP)* by Rafiu Ibrahim Adebayo and Abdulganiy Ibrahim Jawondo; and *Factors Preventing the Actualisation of Ummah Wasata in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia* by Ildus Rafikov. Meanwhile, the only Viewpoint for this Issue is contributed by Mohamad Firdaus bin Mansor Majdine entitled *The Administration of Muslim Affairs in the Straits Settlements*.

The first article, *Globalisation and the Muslim Ummah: Issues, Challenges and the Ways Out*, discusses the phenomenon of globalisation as a process that transforms the entire world into a single political and economic system. This conceptual paper highlights the dilemmas faced by the Muslim community in the globalisation era including the threats of the Western political and economic forces to Muslim cultures and civilisation which have resulted in such problems as cultural impoverishment, educational and technological backwardness, economic emasculation and ideological battles for powers. Despite its drawbacks, the Muslims are urged to benefit from the merits of globalisation, so as to strengthen the *ummah*. It was also recommended that the Muslim *Ummah* should resort to the original teachings of Islam if it is to be united and advanced.

The second article, *Understanding the Islamic Viewpoint on Religious Pluralism in Nigeria with Special Reference to Ahl Al-Kitab*, is premised upon Islam's acknowledgment of the existence of other religions with special focus on the Jews and the Christians known as *Ahl al-Kitab* as expounded by the Qur'an. In brief, Islam allows Muslims to interact with the followers of other religions in a peaceful and harmonious way. Despite this clear Islamic teaching, hostile interactions do take place in society including in Nigeria which witness

unfortunate violence that led to the loss of lives and the destruction of properties and places of worship. Ignorance and misconceptions among the adherents of the involved religions can be attributed to such a sorry state. The paper discusses the Islamic viewpoint on religious pluralism particularly the position of Islam on *Ahl Al-Kitab* and suggests that manipulation of religion for personal and group interests be checked and that religious bodies use dialogue to enhance understanding among followers of various religious faiths.

Meanwhile, the article on *Innovative Funding of Nigerian Private Islamic Universities: The Option of Islamic Financial Products (IFP)* highlights the inability of Nigerian higher learning institutions to compete with other institutions at the global level despite the government's huge allocation to the public universities which are channelled through various government agencies. On the other hand, the private tertiary institutions particularly those established by Muslim individuals and organisations are not adequately funded due to various factors. This has also affected their capability to compete with others. To address this issue, the paper proposes that the Islamic financial products are used by the Islamic universities, particularly in helping students from poor economic backgrounds.

The last article entitled *Factors Preventing the Actualisation of Ummah Wasaʿa in the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia* touches on the traits of the concept of *Ummah wasaʿa*, its historical roots, and its application to the modern Muslim community of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia. In addition, it also discusses the main factors that prevent the actualisation of this concept in Tatarstan including disunity among the Muslims at various levels, the pressures from the law enforcement agencies, and the absence of a strong umbrella organisation.

Meanwhile, the Viewpoint note entitled *The Administration of Muslim Affairs in the Straits Settlements during the 19th Century* revisits the administration of the Muslim community under the British colonial government, including the British policy and its methods of governance, the attitude of the British administration towards the Muslim community and the general Muslims' outlook towards the

British rule on the other scale. The discussion is based mainly on survey of relevant literatures with critical commentary on relevant issues.

I would like to end my Editorial note by taking pride in thanking the leadership at the Faculty and University levels for having trust in us to run this new Journal. Special thanks go to the members of the Advisory and Editorial Boards who have agreed to be included in the team. In particular, I must mention the hard work of the Editor, Assistant Professor Dr Elmira Akhmetova for her commitment and tireless efforts in ensuring the successful publication of this first issue. She, together with Assistant Editors, Dr Alwi Al Atas and Sr. Norliza Saleh and Book Review Editor Dr Kaoutar Guediri, have been very industrious in putting their energy, ideas and time to ensure the completion of this publication. While we accommodate the diversity of opinions and views, we must state clearly that the views expressed in this Journal are of the writers' and are not necessarily reflective of the Journal's stand and perspectives. With this modest beginning and constraints of resources and time, we hope to be able to gain more experience and insights as we move forward to publish the subsequent issues.

Thank you

Hazizan Md. Noon
Editor-in-Chief