

EDITORIAL

This Special Issue of *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* carries selected papers from the ‘International Conference on the Family Institution in the Twenty-First Century: Ideals and Realities’, held at IAIS Malaysia on 13–14 December 2010. The event was jointly organised by IAIS Malaysia, the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), Yayasan Pendidikan Islam (YPI), Yayasan Ubaidi, the Journalists and Writers Foundation, Istanbul, Turkey, the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), and the Malaysian Turkish Dialogue Society, and officiated by Senator Dato’ Sri Sharizat Abdul Jalil, Malaysia’s Minister of Women, Family and Community Development.

The two-day international conference was a parallel event to an earlier three-day international conference entitled ‘Family as a Value in Religion, Tradition, and Modernity’, held in Antalya on 26–27 November 2010. The aim of the Antalya conference was to go back to the roots of the family institution and the family values that are common to *all* religious traditions and cultures. The Kuala Lumpur conference was more focused in the sense that it dealt only with some of the themes that were discussed in Antalya. Moreover, it concentrated on the family traditions in Southeast Asia and their common challenges and problems.

The family is universally acknowledged as the most fundamental social unit and institution. As such its state and condition is of paramount importance to the development and progress of society as a whole. IAIS Malaysia, the main convener of the Kuala Lumpur conference, has as its core, long-term agenda the active pursuit of civilisational renewal (*tajdīd haḍārī*) in the twenty-first century. The stabilisation of the family institution and the restoration of its health and societal dynamism following the progressive degradation of traditional family values in modern times are completely in line with the objectives of the Kuala Lumpur conference. There is an urgent need to stem the tide of degradation of traditional family values and the family institution through identification of all the factors responsible for it and by formulating policies and programmes that will address them in the most effective way.

As a think-tank concerned with contemporary policy-oriented issues, particularly from the Islamic perspective, IAIS’ interest in the conference was to pursue a

balanced approach to family issues that would place practical considerations on a sound conceptual and theoretical understanding of the issues.

The following points had been among the **objectives of the conference**:

1. to assess the state and condition of the contemporary family institution, especially in Malaysia and Southeast Asian countries;
2. to identify the major challenges and problems, both ideological and practical, confronting family values and the family institution that have brought about their degradation and decline;
3. to help formulate national and regional policies and programmes that would address the above identified challenges and problems most effectively;
4. to learn lessons from the various experiences of Southeast Asian communities in family life in blending tradition with modernity; and
5. to submit to the relevant authorities practical recommendations on how best to deal with the numerous issues and problems impacting the family institution in our times.

The present issue of *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* then features **eight articles** which had been selected from the conference presentations:

The ‘focus article’ of this Special Issue, “Family Values, the Family Institution, and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century: An Islamic Perspective”, is by Professor **Osman Bakar**, the Deputy CEO of IAIS Malaysia and Emeritus Professor of Philosophy of Science, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. He discusses the concept of family and its values and its place and role as a multi-dimensional institution from the Islamic perspective. Among the most valuable suggestions of Professor Bakar’s article are the following three:

- more studies and research need to be taken on contemporary challenges faced by the family institution;
- eventually, a national Malaysian research institute is needed that is dedicated to the pursuit of intensive research on Islam and family values and the family institution; and
- it is important that policy makers in all fields of community and national development should take cognisance of the importance of good household governance or home economics to a healthy family life.

“Islamic Family Law Reform: Problems and Prospects” has been written by myself. The main purpose of this contribution is to visualise the broader picture of qur’ānic dispensations and the manner they are manifested in the *sharī’ah* and to provide a

brief outline of the higher objectives (*maqāṣid*) on family welfare and reproductive health. I have also provided an overview of twentieth-century Islamic law reform and identified some of the more challenging issues that call for further reform efforts. From among the several proposals made I would like to highlight here only two, which are perhaps the most important ones:

- reform measures and adjustment of the existing rules of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) on family welfare and women should be based on the broader guidelines of Qur'ān and *Sunnah* on fairness, human dignity and justice;
- the principle of selection (*takhayyur*) and cross fertilisation of ideas among the existing schools of *fiqh* offer flexibility that merits greater attention in the reform efforts especially of the Islamic laws of inheritance and bequest.

Zainab Alwani, Program Director and Adjunct Professor of Arabic Language Studies at Northern Virginia Community College and Adjunct Professor of Arabic Studies at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, United States, is the author of “The Qur'ānic Model on Social Change: Family Structure as a Method of Social Reform”. Her article argues that Islamic teachings regarding the family structure are unique in providing theoretical and practical answers to modern challenges and have the ability to reform any deviation. The author suggests that

- there is a need to negotiate some aspects of the scholastic rules of Islamic jurisprudence in light of the broader qur'ānic guidelines; and that
- the existing laws of some Muslim countries such as that of Egypt which stop short of reforming its divorce laws should be revised.

“Dysfunctional Families and Crime: Righting Wrongs” is an article by **Zaleha Kamaruddin**, the Deputy Director-General of the Malaysian Institute of Islamic Understanding (IKIM), Kuala Lumpur. As a social scientist, the author feels disturbed by the rise of violent crimes committed by youths, especially in Malaysia. She argues that these concerns need to be addressed seriously and comprehensively. Among her various recommendations are:

- curbing crime requires combined and concerted efforts by all parties – from neighbours to government agencies – in promoting a multi-agency approach in addressing the problem. Religious leaders from *all* faiths should be included;
- within the religious communities themselves, specific long term solutions would be to build up the inner strength of the faithful by inculcating religious and moral values. One of the most effective ways to do so would be through life-long learning.

“Gender Relations in Singapore Malay Dual-Income Households: (Un)Changing Perceptions and Practices” is a contribution by **Suriani Suratman**, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Malay Studies of the National University of Singapore. Her article shows that there are existing cultural perceptions of Malays regarding the roles of women and men in the family. She concludes that

- there are changing practices in contemporary Malay dual-income households in Singapore in terms of household and child-caring tasks;
- there are *unchanging* perceptions pertaining to notions of women’s and men’s work such as in the unequal distribution of labour;
- it is therefore imperative to take into account these normative guidelines of appropriate gender behaviour in an attempt to explain the persistence of an unequal division of labour.

Ömer Çaha, a Professor in the Department of Public Administration at Fatih University, Istanbul, Turkey, is the author of “The ‘Islamic Women’s’ Movement: Transition from the Private Domain to the Public Sphere”. His article focuses on the development of the Muslim women’s movement in Turkey, tracing its historical roots as well as its evolution toward two different understandings of women. He concludes that

- the ‘Islamic women’s’ movement not only undermined the culture and social pillars of the centuries-old tradition; and that, in his view,
- the ‘Islamic women’s’ movement developed an alternative manner of existence and self-realisation through a different and subjective identity and a system of values.

“Filial Piety in Confucianism and Islam: A Comparative Literary Analysis of Qur’ān, *Ḥadīth*, and Four Chinese Classics” has three authors: **Osman bin Abdullah (Chuah Hock Leng)** and **Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri**, Associate Professors in the Department of *Uṣūl al-Dīn* and Comparative Religion, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and **Normala Othman** who is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at the same university. This contribution tries to compare the teachings of Confucius and Islam, specifically *The Four Books*, which are authoritative works on Confucius, and the original sources of Islam, Qur’ān and *Sunnah*. The authors conclude that

- Confucian and Islamic teachings have their own ways to develop the personality, establish the family, and maintain the rules of a peaceful society, a peaceful nation and an empire. However, although the means to achieve them differ, the objectives are the same.

“Analogical Reasoning (*Qiyās*) and the Commodification of Women: Applying Commercial Concepts to the Marital Relationship in Islamic Law” is a contribution by **Mohammad Omar Farooq**, the Head of the Center for Islamic Finance at the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF). He argues that the present generation of Islamic scholars, with women as scholars and jurists needs to follow in the footsteps of the original scholars of Islam by disregarding their mistakes and building on their successes as theirs’ has been a vital contribution to the systemisation of the various Islamic codes and laws. He observes that

- a forward-looking approach and perspective, guided by the Qur’ān and the Prophetic legacy, and enriched by the learning of the past becomes the present and future imperative. An essential foundation of this forward-looking approach has to be steadfast acknowledgement of the fundamental human dignity;
- human beings *cannot* be commodified: women or men cannot be owned and cannot be traded (bought and sold) and their rights and duties *must not* be framed in commercial exchanges or buy–sale type contracts.

This time we carry **five viewpoints**:

“The Greeting of Peace-Security (*al-Salām* ‘*alaykum*): Uncovering the Basis of Islamic Peace” is by IAIS Principal Research Fellow **Karim D. Crow**. His piece continues a series of viewpoints of this journal on ‘Peace, Security, and Islam’.

“The *Sharī‘ah*’s Stand on Abandoned Children” by myself reviews the perspective of Islamic law with reference especially to a general consensus that it is a collective obligation (*fard al-kifāyah*) of the Muslim community to save abandoned children.

“The Blame-Game: The Politicisation of Western and Muslim Sexual Vices” is presented by IAIS Principal Research Fellow and Co-Chair of Publications, **Christoph Marcinkowski**, and addresses the often prevailing double-standards when discussing the supposed ‘moral decadence’ of ‘the Other’ by referring to recent rather shocking developments in one of Malaysia’s most prestigious Islamic institutions of higher learning.

“Contemporary Malaysian Families: Evidence-Based Interventions” – a bit longer than our usual Viewpoints due to this volume being a Special Issue on the family – by the Director General of Malaysia’s National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB), **Aminah Abdul Rahman**, argues that family friendly policies should continue to be the main focus on strengthening the marriage and family institution, especially in a multicultural society such as Malaysia.

“The Dilemma of Abandoned Babies Needs a Unified Approach” by **Zarina Nalla**, IAIS Malaysia’s Project Development Consultant, suggests several comprehensive long-term solutions toward the currently prevailing ‘baby-abandonment crisis’ in Malaysia.

This issue also carries **six book reviews, two event reports** (among them one with recommendations from presentations not included in this issue from the ‘International Conference on the Family Institution in the Twenty-First Century: Ideals and Realities’), and **one interview** with renowned Professor John O. Voll – Professor of Islamic history and Associate Director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Center for Muslim–Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, Washington DC, United States – on the future of Islamic Studies.

Last, we carry one obituary which commemorates the passing of a great scholar of Islam: Ibrahim Abu-Rabi’.

In closing, I would like to thank our authors and the IAIS Editorial Committee for their contributions and dedication.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali
Editor-in-Chief

Errata

In the previous issue’s article “Contemporary *Fiqh* in Singapore: Some Observations” by Muhammad Haniff Hassan and Sharifah Thuraiya S.A. Alhabshi two printing mistakes have occurred. The correct wording of those two passages is as follows:

- p. 697: “Superficiality of academic activities among religious teachers (*asātidhah*) and the Islamic community, as a result of lack of proper academic environment.”
- p. 703: “Active efforts to elevate the academic profiles of religious teachers by enabling them to obtain MAs or PhDs through various incentives and support need to be alleviated for the sake of producing more experts in various aspects of *fiqh*.”

We apologise to the authors.

The Editors