

## Editorial

### LOCAL ISLAM AND CURRENT ISSUES

Themes in this edition vary ranging from feminism, literature, films, politics, charitable organization, Sufism, to the relation of Islam and Soviet Union, and the relation of a Jewish group and Islam. To begin with, the paper by Laila Khalid Alfirdaus presents the analysis of the involvement of *kyais* (religious teachers) in local political affairs in Kebumen Central Java during the reform period. Due to their charisma in Indonesian society, *kyais* had advantage in entering politics in the period. However, Alfirdaus sees that their involvement in politics does not always lead to the birth of better impact on public policy. In the case of Kebumen, the leadership of a *kyai* in the governmental body was marked by lessening development in terms of public infrastructure and social services.

Fachrizal Halim writes in his article in the edition that on his careful study of literature on the history of Muslims in Russia, the two were not always in a continuous conflict. In fact, aside from conflict and subjugation, the two enjoyed a considerable level of peace and shared a similar attitude of flexibility in mutual cooperation. Furthermore, Halim sees that the portrayal of the relation of Muslims and Russian rulers needs to be revisited, given the extent of flexibility of Muslims in their encounter with the Russians throughout the Czar and the Soviet regimes.

Hilman Latief's article analyzes the efforts of political parties in sponsoring the birth and operation of Islamic charitable organizations in the post New Order era. Latief compares the roles of charitable organizations set up by the nationalist and Islamist parties in formulating strategies to promote their political agenda. Based on the study of three political parties, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Golkar Party, and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), he finds that the practice of charity has become a popular way used by politicians to

patronize their constituents.

Euis Nurlaelawati and Arskal Salim discuss female judge and women litigants at Islamic courts in Indonesia. The two explore the way in which women were recruited to be judges at the Islamic courts and some factors leading Indonesian women to engage in the judicial practice. Additionally, their paper sees how the female judges exercise their authority to protect rights of disadvantaged women litigants. The two writers are critical, arguing that despite female judges have the same skills in interpreting law as their male colleagues do and that they have to some extent better gender sensitivity, they did not use these legal skills for the benefits of female litigants.

Meghan Downes pays attention to women literature in the reform era (*sastra wangi*), with close textual readings, media discourse analysis and ethnographic audience research to examine the relationship the new trends of works of young female generation, which were adapted into screen. Hariyadi explores the new trend of Islamic films which have been consciously produced to propagate Islamic lessons to the Muslim youths.

Naoki Yamamoto on the other hand studies the mystical philosophy of a Syrian scholar, Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1741), who lived in the the 18th century Ottoman Damascus and who contributed to the field of Sufism particularly based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (oneness of being) and *insān kāmil* (the perfect man).

Leonard Chrysostomos Epafra explores a Jewish group during the era of diaspora and exile, particularly with regards to Jewish minority status under Muslim rulers. He focuses on the analysis of a Jewish Ṣūfī’s tractate *al-Maqālat al-Ḥawḍīyya* (*The Treatise of the Pool*) by ‘Abd Allāh ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Maymūn (1228-1263/65), the grandson of Jewish philosopher and community leader (*ra’īs al-yahūd*), Mūsā ibn Maymūn (Moses Maimonides, 1135-1204).