

Editorial:
POLITICS, ULAMA, AND THE SOCIETY

Unlike Catholicism, Islamic tradition has no a single centralized religious authority. Despite the popular claim that, in Islam, religion and state (*dīn wa daulah*) is inseparable, history has witnessed how religious and political authorities fall in different hands of politicians and religious scholars (ulama). As many have argued, religious scholars have no power to govern the Muslim community (*ummah*) and the Muslim political life is not characterized by the marriage of religion and politics. However, it should be admitted that ulama always play an important role in the Muslim society. Furthermore, they are believed to be the heirs of the prophets (*warrathat al-anbiyā'*), due to which they feel obligated to give guidance to the *ummah*. Their voices are therefore always of important to consider. Most of articles in this edition of *al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* are concerned with the roles of ulama in both cultural and political domains.

Leni Winarni in her “The Political Identity of Ulama in the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election” gives a close attention to the 2014 general election in Indonesia and compares it to previous elections to understand the relationship between the political identities of ulama and their political views. She in this vein argues that their political endorsement of presidential candidates is not based on interest but on their always changing political identity. By using constructivist ideas about identity, ulama’s political identities are constantly changing and influenced by other factors beyond their identity. This paper also emphasizes that identity is created and subjective.

In addition to ‘real’ politics of election and political party, ulama play yet another critical role in other public interest. Asfa Widiyanto discusses the role and authority of Salahuddin Wahid, a prominent muslim scholar in his paper “Salahuddin Wahid and the Defence of Minority Rights in Contemporary Indonesia”. He argues that Wahid, the

younger brother of prominent Muslim scholar Abdurrahman Wahid, has resourcefully uses his traditional authority as *'ālim* through social media to promote minority rights. Through his Twitter profile, he spread his ideas, answers public questions, and educates his followers to embrace a more pluralistic view of Indonesia and to respect differences. The most important themes of his ideas include issues of ethnic minorities, women's rights, religious minorities, diminishing the violence against the Ahmadiyya community, and inter-religious marriage.

Another role that Muslim scholar can take in politics is Wahid's contribution in interpreting religious norms in a way that it helped average Muslims to adopt new challenging ideas. Such a challenge can be found in the emergence of the secular nation-states among Muslim countries at the end of the World War II. Wahid further argues that Indonesia as a nation-state is a new political entity for Muslims to adequately comprehend. According to Saefur Rochmat in "The Fiqh Paradigm for the Pancasila State: Abdurrahman Wahid's Thoughts on Islam and the Republic of Indonesia", Abdurrahman Wahid has contributed the idea of Fiqh Paradigm in helping Indonesian Muslim accepting the nation state, locally called the *Pancasila* State. In doing so, Abdurrahman Wahid inserts some modern theories into the framework of *Fiqh*. At the end, his efforts successfully harmonized the secular aspiration of nation state and religious belief in Indonesian ideological interpretation of the Pancasila state.

In 1960's, Clifford Geertz famously designates Javanese *kyai* (ulama) as a "cultural broker". Eric Wolf defines the "broker" as those who "stand guard over the crucial junctures of synapses of relationship which connect the local system to the larger whole." Geertz argues that in the Javanese culture, *kyais* are strong candidate to be included in the such category. It is in this context that we can appreciate Akmaliah's article. In his "When Ulama Support A Pop Singer: Fatin Sidqiah and Islamic Pop Culture in Post-Suharto Indonesia", Akmaliah argues that Islam is not only compatible with democracy but also is so to global culture expressed in fashion, movie, and popular TV's music show. In the case of Fatin Sidqiah, the winner of Indonesian X Factor session 2013, the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) seem to play the role of cultural broker as the council publicly supported her in the popular TV show.

While the above mentioned papers focused on Indonesia, readers of this *al-Jami'ab's* edition will also benefit from Nigerian cases. Two different articles focus on two different pictures of ulama and politics in Nigeria. The first one is "The Apprehensions of Traditional Ulama towards Women's Participation in Politics in Nigeria" by Adebayo Rafiu Ibrahim, and the second one is "The New Role of Ulama in Nigeria: Focus on the Post 1999 Democratic Dispensation" by Mukhtar Umar Bunza.

Ibrahim argues that there is an irony of women's role in Nigerian politics. Historically speaking, women did play important roles in Islamic history; but not in Nigeria. Nigerian women, according to Ibrahim, are skeptical about their involvement in politics, which is seen as an exclusively male domain. He believes that, in part, it is because the Nigerian ulama have a negative voice about women in politics. The paper seeks to answer questions of why ulama resist women's involvement in politics and how they feel about minimum women's participation in politics. Bunza's , article, on the other hand, focuses on the post 1999 democratic dispensation, when muslim scholars have played new roles in the administration of states, serving as commissioners for newly established Ministry of Religious Affairs, as special advisers, or directors of commissions like Hisbah, Hajj, Masjid, Moon Sighting, and other related government bodies, with full salaries and other benefits unlike ever before in the Nigerian system. His paper seeks to understand this new role of ulama and its impacts on the governance of the contemporary Nigeria.

In addition to articles discussing the roles of ulama, this edition of *al-Jami'ah* contains three more articles. A piece by Savannah Danielle Dodd attracts our attention to the shifting perceptions of bodily ritual in Shiite community in Lebanon. Using Cartesian and Weberian theories of 'rationalization', she interestingly found the process of rationalization of Karbala Paradigm in political activism in the practices of blood donation. Based on Lesie Sharp's concept of bodily commodification, she argues that the shift in ritual practice occurred in three levels: (i) from body/self-unity to body/self-dualism; (ii) from salvation in the next world to salvation in this world; and (iii) from personal salvation to societal salvation.

Moh. Pribadi's "Ibn Khaldūn's Social Thought on Bedouin and Ḥaḍar" is a study on Ibn Khaldun's work *ʿIlm al-ʿUmūrān*. Two key concepts of the book, the *bedouin* and *ḥaḍar*, are analyzed with a historical and sociological interpretation of the text. Pribadi argues that Ibn Khaldun has contributed significantly to the study of society, particularly in theorizing two different social structures of the nomad (the Bedouin) and the city-bound society (the *ḥaḍar*).

This edition is also a tribute to the late M. Agus Nuryatno, one of our editors, who passed away in Japan during his research fellowship. In his piece Nuryatno compares the religious education in Indonesia and Japan. Nuryatno compares the two in terms of context, theory, history, policy, practice, and impact. He argues that the practice of religious education in the two countries is significantly different. Indonesia has a very strong support to religious education, while Japan has a weak support to the practice of religious education. The sources of differences, Nuryatno argues, are important for their national ideology and the role of family in religious education.