

Editorial:

ISLAM IS NEVER MONOLITHIC

Islam never stands alone. The word does not mean anything without other dynamic factors along the history of Muslim cultures. Nor can the faith can be analyzed without its relation to modern Muslim cultures and traditions which have shaped and will reshape what Islam is. Although Islam is as old as what history can provide us accounts about the development of the religion, Islam has always been, and will be, renewed in various forms and fields. Islam is both old and new product. Shariah, for instance, is an old product which can be found in numerous genres of Muslim literature from two centuries after the birth of Islam in the seventh century to the current more globalised world. However, what Shariah now means for nowadays Muslim society is different from that of the same word found in older Muslim literature. Shariah does not necessarily mean rituals, norms, or things related to Muslim religiosity and piety. The term now is a product of a globalising market. Scholars have to consider so many factors in society when examining the way in which Shariah has been practised by Muslims in different contexts.

Part of the complexity of Islam is politics. Faced with the current world democratic politics, Muslims from different countries show various responses. What is more, Indonesian Muslims have harmonised Islamic values and principles and the country volatile politics. Given different contexts along the history of Indonesia, Indonesian Muslims are pragmatics; and their attitude towards the state and politics changes from time to time. Indonesia is a state which adopts neither secularism nor religious state. This is among unique characteristics of Islam in the archipelagic country. The people are religious, and piety is often shown in public, but parties with an affiliation of Islamic religious sentiment are always defeated in general elections. Interestingly, this volume presents the way in which Islamist political party Masyumi responded to pluralism.

Islam is never monolithic. The religion offers many faces which depend on local contexts. The latter shows complexity and diversity. Indonesian archipelago with Muslim majority population is diverse and plural with various local customs and traditions. The practices of marriage prove this and imagine that each island of two thousand is a place of unique cultures. Diversity is a strength, not weakness. In the island of Lombok bride pays their marriage. This tradition, of course, is different from those of other places in the archipelago, in which groom mostly finances wedding party. On the other hand, an Islamist movement in the country uses the relation of man and woman, such as an effort to look for husband or wife, to expand their membership. The campaign offers a facilitating media for meeting them. Still, in the theme of marriage, this volume also presents a critical insight into the practices of polygamy, which remain interesting topics for many scholars in Islamic studies.

This edition shows that Islam is not as simple as conservatives and radicals claim. Religion is no the only truth. We can consequently question which version of Islam, which field, which branch, which particular period of history, which context; and simply put, time and space play a vital role in defining what Islam is. The religion can be understood if it is placed together with various complex factors.