

Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Islam, Humanity, and the Indonesian Identity: Reflections on History*. Leiden: Leiden University Press [with a foreword by Jan Michiel Otto, translated by George A. Fowler], 2018, 287 pp. ISBN: 9789087283018, price: EUR 35.50 (paperback).

As captured in its title, this book examines the interplay between Indonesia's unified national identity, its Muslim population, humanity, and compassion. In five chapters, it reflects Maarif's long journey of seeking knowledge and interpreting Islam in relation to his Indonesianness. The topics covered are comprehensive, from "Islam and Nusantara" to "Islam and Democracy", "Indonesian Islam", and the "Future of Religion". A final chapter entitled "Islam, Humanity, and the Indonesian Identity" gives the book a meaningful wrap up.

From the beginning of the book, it is clearly indicated that different faiths, including Islam, cannot exist in a vacuum. Rather, they live with and within cultures. This becomes the basis of Chapter 1, "Islam and Nusantara". Islam's victory in attracting most of the Indonesian population is equated firstly with the role of Islam and the consolidation of *Bahasa Indonesia* from *Bahasa Melayu*, and secondly with Islam and the growth of the Arabic language in the Middle East and North Africa. Egalitarianism is one of the Islamic principles addressed in this chapter, particularly through language. It is also notable how Maarif openly acknowledges that the spread of Islam in Indonesia has never been flawless, nor always peaceful. As Maarif puts it, "The Muslim *umat* should not feel so pure that it closes its eyes to deviant behavior, particularly that of rulers with theological approval or *fiqh*—legal pronouncements—by the scholars, who claim to be the heirs of the prophets" (p. 44).

Chapter 2 covers "Islam and Democracy". One of the most interesting topics covered in this chapter is the status of women in Indonesia (pp. 128–134). Maarif, who had not included this topic in the first publication of this book, rightfully acknowledges that he was reminded by K.H. Husein Muhammad of the Fahmina Institute Foundation about the importance of this theme. Maarif argues that "one of the major reasons that women are sidelined in public life is that discourse on Islam is controlled by men" (p. 129). One of the Quranic verses quoted in this section of the book is Verse 97 of the *Surah An-Nahl*, which suggests that there is no discrimination between men and women, hence such discrimination is, in Maarif's words, "no different from opposing the commands of the Quran" (p. 129). It is comforting to see such an open statement and elaboration on the sensitive topic of how women are situated within the religion, particularly through the lens of a prominent male scholar and Islamic leader in Indonesia.

BIJDRAGEN TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

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Chapter 3, “Indonesian Islam”, encompasses a range of issues, from the quality of education to the Unity of Knowledge Concept, examines cultural expression through the lens of the Quran, explores Muhammadiyah’s educational philosophy, describes education in the Nahdlatul Ulama environment, mentions the form and content of several conflicts, and speculates on the future of Islam and Indonesia. An emphasis on how democracy in Indonesia must be very carefully approached and practiced is put forward in the final section of this chapter. As Maarif argues, most of the population, hence most Indonesian Muslims, are exhorted to follow the doctrine: “Even though we are the many, we will not trample you; and even though we are the larger, we will use our size to shelter and shade” (p. 178). It is interesting how the discussion on the future of the nation’s economy in this chapter involves a re-emphasis of the importance of women, particularly in their roles as entrepreneurs in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The point put forward is that this is not because women outnumber male entrepreneurs. Rather, it is because of women’s ability to approach economic development in a more balanced manner. This is followed by a bold statement later in the chapter, objecting to the traditional view of women being destined to not do activities outside their homes. As Maarif puts it, this conventional thinking is “long outmoded and thus needs to be buried” (p. 183).

The “Future of Religion” is covered in Chapter 4. Focusing on the pluralistic aspects of Islam, which is discussed in the opening section of this chapter, the author strongly suggests that the contribution of Islamic teaching in the current lives of human beings can only be achieved if Muslims are “brave enough to critically assess all the unquestionably rich Islamic thinking of the past eras” (p. 187). Critical thinking through *ijtihad*, that is, through “interpretation, through reasoning and judgement, of the Quranic code” (p. 144), is emphasized as a key point in Islamic teaching. Another interesting aspect of this chapter is the symbolism adopted from Hatta’s teachings of Indonesian Muslims, where he encouraged Indonesian Muslims to adopt the science of salt—“tasted but not seen” (p. 200). Maarif has used this symbolism to guide his cultural strategy in the Indonesian political landscape. He metaphorically expresses that while salt in food may not be visible and has no trace, “its effect in the taste [sic] is certainly decisive” (p. 200).

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, Maarif strongly argues that Islam, Indonesianness, and compassion must complement each other for the advancement of the nation. It is only through “noble and civilized ways” (p. 214) that Islam can achieve its success. He also acknowledges the importance of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama in working together to strive for “the integrity of the Indonesian nation” (p. 217). This is very strong collaboration indeed, consid-

ering the fractious historical relationships between the two organizations. The discussion in this chapter continues with highly nationalistic views and hopes that are put in the hands of young Indonesians to work for the nation's integrity and success in the future.

Clearly the book presents a very progressive view of how Islam and the implementation of Islamic teaching can and should contribute to the development of Indonesia and the national identity of its people. As such, it is suitable for a wide range of readers—both the academic community and the public, both Muslims and people of other faiths. The discussed topics are very relevant to the Indonesian context in the past, present, and especially the future. If anything, one improvement would have been a discussion and reflection on how young Indonesian Muslims could implement Islamic teachings and use them in contributing to the success of Indonesia.

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