

Book Review; Alternative Islam: Ritual, Society, and Leadership

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In *Islam Alternatif: Ceramah-ceramah di Kampus* (Alternative Islam: Lectures in Campus), Jalaluddin Rakhmat (29 August 1949-15 Februari 2021) concerns himself with a question: how does he offer an alternative Islam which strengthens not only the ritual aspects of Islam, but also its social and intellectual elements? The author answers this by positioning himself as a Shi`ite neo modernist Muslim. Here, he combines not only between the Sunnite scholarship and modern western thought (modernism), but also between the Shi`ite intellectualism and modernism.

This book consists of five chapters in which Jalaluddin argues that Islam does not separate its ritual worships from its social and intellectual aspects. In tandem with this argument, Muhammad `Imaduddin `Abdulrahim (21 April 1931 – 2 August 2008) gives his introductory words saying that this separation is due to the colonial Dutch that reinforced this division through Islamic education system in Indonesia. This system focuses on the ritual aspects (*ubudiyah*) of Islam.

According to Imaduddin, Indonesian history of Islam says that Dutch orientalist, such as Snouck Hurgronje and Van der Plas, studied Islam to control it for the colonial advantage. They learned Arabic to manipulate the direction of learning of classical Islamic books (yellow books/*kitab kuning*) for their colonial interests by categorizing Islam into ritual and political Islam. These orientalist led the religious teachers (*kiyais*) or *kiyai* candidates in Islamic boarding schools to be engaged only in ritual Islam. This happened to Imaduddin's father who was arrested by Dutch for his trial to explain about the political aspect of the Qur'anic verse saying that Muslim should not take their leaders from both Jewish and Christian people. The Dutch regulation to Indonesian learned men (*ulama*) for not dealing with the political Islam has a wide impact up to the present time.

In the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, there were only two choices for the Indonesian *ulama* to take: either to break this regulation or to isolate themselves by being ritual extremists. To choose the first choice is to be scientific, brave, intellectual, and integrated. This happened rarely in the Indonesian colonial time. Most of the Indonesian *ulama* in that time chose the second option by allowing themselves to be the ritual extremists. In this second choice, Islamic mysticism (*tasawwuf*) took an important role. At this second choice, the *tasawwuf* also focuses on ritual and disregarded its militant and dynamic nature. So *tasawwuf* became an escape mechanism for the Indonesian religious teachers who chose the second choice. It was ritual and mystical in its nature.

In line with Jalaluddin's argument of alternative Islam and Imaduddin's criticism, Haidar Bagir edits and arranges five chapters of this book inclusively. These chapters are as follows: ritual and social worship (pp. 23-54), Islam and its freedom from oppression (pp. 55-110), Islam and society development (pp. 111-144), Islam and science (pp. 145-226), and Islam and Shi'ism (pp. 11-12, 229-270). This book is a "record" (*rekaman*) of Jalaluddin's papers, lectures, and panel discussions that he delivered from 1932 to 1986 in campuses in Indonesia (pp. 9, 271-274). Haidar was the one who asked Jalaluddin to collect this record and publish it through his (Haidar) Mizan Publisher in Bandung.

Imaduddin criticizes the fourth chapter of this book, Shi'ism, in which Jalaluddin explains about the concept of leadership (*imamat*) by referring only to the Shi'ite resources. He does not engage at all the concept of leadership in terms of Sunnism: participation and collection (*shura*). Imaduddin asserts that this critique might help Jalaluddin from the accusation of his readers that he (Jalaluddin) is Shi'ite "except he is indeed Shi'ite" (p. 20). Imaduddin does not agree either with Jalaluddin's concept of infallible [12] imams (leaders) in Shi'ism. Imaduddin avows that only the Prophet Muhammad is infallible. Yet, his infallibility remains in the way that he addresses divine message, not in his daily life, let alone the imams. Therefore, Imaduddin argues that the issue of the imams' infallibility is difficult for human ration to accept (pp. 20-21).

Imaduddin also appreciates Jalaluddin who includes a comparative school of jurisprudence (*perbandingan mazhab*) between Shi'ism and Sunnism as they have the same root. Imaduddin says that to study this comparative jurisprudence is not sinful. This idea indicates that Shi'ism seemed to be suspicious in Indonesia in that time (in the 1980s). Imaduddin expects that this inclusion could solve a bitter reality that Sunnism and Shi'ism are two separate schools of jurisprudence in terms of history. Nevertheless, Imaduddin criticizes that Jalaluddin does not analyse that this separation is due to the

interaction of this same source with their people who are inclined to be subjective. However, Imaduddin admits that this Jalaluddin's book contributes to the resurgence of Islam in the Twentieth Century.

What attracts Imaduddin to give his preface to this book is the split among the congregation of the Salman Mosque at the Institute of Technology of Bandung (ITB). Imaduddin. This happened in the 1980s when some of his Salman Mosque's activists said that the young members of this mosque had broken into two groups: the followers of Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) and those of Jalaluddin Rakhmat. Bang Imad felt confident that both Cak Nur and Kang Jalal (Jalaluddin Rakhmat) did not intend to recruit this mosque's young members to be their own loyal disciples. Imaduddin understood this phenomenon that both Cak Nur and Jalaluddin were different in thoughts. This condition attracted Imaduddin to give his introductory words to Jalaluddin Islam Alternatif by saying that this difference in thought is not something that they had to be worried about.

Imaduddin says that the freedom of expression is better than the peace (*ketentraman*) arrested (*dipasung*) since this freedom offers three comprehensive elements: thesis, anti thesis, and synthesis. In turn the arrested peace humiliates human beings. To come into this freedom, there might be some condition in which one feels not well-arranged freedom, unrefined (*mentah*), worried, and confused. However, these conditions are natural; people should not be worried about (15). In other words, Imaduddin supports the way Jalaluddin expresses his Shi'ite ideas that are in contrast to the Sunnite majority in Indonesia.

This point might be the reason of why Jalaluddin says that Imaduddin "becomes my [Jalaluddin's] model in loving the conviction and knowledge" (p. 10) In addition, both Imaduddin and Jalaluddin graduated from the same Iowa State University, Ames in the United States. Imaduddin obtained his Bachelor Degree in Electro Technique from ITB, Master of Science and Ph.D. in the same field of study from Iowa State University. Jalaluddin obtained his Bachelor Degree in Communication Science from Padjadjaran University (UNPAD) in Bandung, and Master of Science in the field of Communication Research from Iowa State University [1980-1982]. Imaduddin was a President of Muslim Student Union at Iowa State University and Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago (1981-1982). Jalaluddin and Imaduddin met each other at this university. Imaduddin introduced to Jalaluddin Darul Argum Mosque in Ames, Iowa, where Jalaluddin used to deliver his sermons.

In conclusion, the 1980s imply the condition in which Muslims in Indonesia in general, and participants of ITB's Salman Mosque in particular were suspicious to Jalaluddin. In addition, in the 1980s, this mosque's members split to two parties two neo

modernist Muslims: who were pro Sunnite Cak Nur, and who were in favour of Shi'ite Jalaluddin.

Reference

Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Islam Alternatif: Ceramah-ceramah di Kampus (Alternative Islam: Lectures in Campus)*, preface by Muhammad 'Imaduddin 'Abdulrahim, (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, November 1986/Rabi' al-Awwal 1407), pp. 1-296.