

# STUDIA ISLAMIKA

INDONESIAN JOURNAL FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Volume 19, Number 3, 2012



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GENDER AWARENESS IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION:  
THE PIONEERING CASE OF INDONESIA  
IN A COMPARISON WITH PAKISTAN

Ann Kull

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DENIAL, TRIVIALIZATION AND RELEGATION OF PLURALISM:  
THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING DIVERSITY  
IN MULTI-RELIGIOUS MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

Azhar Ibrahim

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INDONESIA'S DEMOCRATIC VENTURE:  
HISTORY, PRACTICE AND THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

Bahtiar Effendy & Mutiara Pertiwi

# **STUDIA ISLAMIKA**



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# Table of Contents

## Articles

- 397 *Ann Kull*  
Gender Awareness in Islamic Education: The Pioneering  
Case of Indonesia in a Comparison with Pakistan
- 437 *Azhar Ibrahim*  
Denial, Trivialization and Relegation of Pluralism:  
The Challenges of Managing Diversity  
in Multi-religious Malaysia and Indonesia
- 477 *Bahtiar Effendy & Mutiara Pertiwi*  
Indonesia's Democratic Venture:  
History, Practice and the Challenge Ahead
- 513 *Ismail Marzuki*  
Al-Siyāsah al-Qanūnīyah li Hizb al-'Adālah wa al-Rafāhīyah  
(Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS) fi al-Fatrah 1998-2004  
al-Milādī: Dirāsah li Qaḍiyat Qānūn Idārat al-Zakāh
- 555 *Suprpto*  
[*Kitab Rahasia Hari dan Bintang*]:  
'Ilm al-Nujūm 'inda al-Muslimīn min Qabīlah Sasak

## Book Review

- 597 *Oman Fathurahman*  
Memahami Pribumisasi Islam  
Melalui *Kitab Seribu Masalah*

## Document

- 611 *Ismatu Ropi*  
Regulating Religion in Southeast Asia and the Pacific



*Document*

## Regulating Religion in Southeast Asia and the Pacific

**Ismatu Ropi**

Southeast Asia is one of the most diverse regions, with hundreds of ethnic groups, various religious beliefs and denominations, and different spoken languages and dialects. These different backgrounds pose serious challenges for the governments in Southeast Asia, not only on how they should manage those diversities in building the nation but also in ensuring a harmonious life. Many believe that cultural and racial diversities have the potential to create tension and conflict in the community. Thus, government and public officials have the responsibility to ensure that societies with different backgrounds embrace a sense of unity so that everyone shares their pride and attachment to their community and the nation. In sum, this is one of the main arguments why regulation (including in terms of religious life) is important. Hence, regulating religion is the most visible manifestation of the state–religion relationship, particularly in a state where religion dominates the political domain and plays an important role in legal and social systems.

Indonesia is a case for this. As early as the 1930s, even before the birth of the Indonesian nation state in 1945, the relationship between state and religion had become one of the most heated debates among



the founding fathers of the Republic of Indonesia. In those debates, it was no surprise that religious and non-religious views were typically implicated in the arguments about whether religion should be the basis of the state or should be separated from the state's political affairs. Thus, from the beginning of modern Indonesian history, the most predominant source of contestation in Indonesian political activism — along with the emergence of the new sentiments of nationalism and anti-colonialism—was by far the extent to which religious values and symbols, which in this case concerned Islam in particular, encompassed the future direction of the nation state. It is suffice to conclude that after long and heated arguments in some assemblies, a 'compromise' was finally reached; all members of both assemblies agreed that while the state system should be secular, religion was, at the same time, to be considered an important aspect of Indonesian identity. Bearing in mind that religion is very important in the state system, as clearly outlined in Indonesian constitutions (the 1945 Constitution, the 1949 Federal Constitution and the 1950 Provisional Constitution), the state normatively defines its role on religious affairs. Therefore, any regulation on religion bears this normative constitutional legacy, as the state is charged with the responsibility for the material and spiritual welfare of the populace. Thus, regulating religion is part of the manifestation of Indonesian social, political and legal realisms.

Peter W. Edge (2006) outlined how a 'regulation' (or law) on 'religion' may function in society: to maintain social order; to solve disputes between individuals and/or groups; to respond to social problems; to control state power itself. However, in practice the state regulation of religion is inevitably very complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic in nature. To quote Gill, it is "the product of specific laws by specific people to respond to a specific time in history", and therefore is inseparable from various determining factors like culture, political regime and religious composition in any given country. Thus, various nation states may issue different models and types of regulation. Some of them may be superficial in nature, but many others are fundamental.

Nevertheless, it is important to underline that the issue of how the state regulates religious affairs is often neglected in academic discussion, even though it has major impacts on the whole institutional shape of a given polity in the region. It is timely, therefore, to examine how

each Southeast Asian state deals with religious affairs, and how one may learn from the experience of other nations in managing a better multicultural society and in resolving problems of ethnic, cultural and religious diversities so as not to create tension or conflict.

It is for the above reason that the Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat (Center for the Study of Islam and Society, PPIM) at the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN), Jakarta, joined the Center for Dialogue at La Trobe University, Australia, in hosting an international conference in Bogor on June 5–6, 2012. The objective of the conference was to create a forum for scholars, politicians, activists and academia to engage in a discussion on how to challenge the increasing diverse and complex development of society *vis a vis* the state in the Asia–Pacific region.

This conference presented an opportunity for comparative analysis of the present appeal of state–religion relations in Southeast Asia. The diversity of ethics, culture and religion, linkages with legalism, inclusivist or exclusivist coloration and orientation to political activism were explored through the comparison of cases from a wide range of contemporary societies. Such comparative analyses contributed to the ongoing theoretical understandings and helped provide a more nuanced understanding of contemporary relationships between the state and religion in Southeast Asia.

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The three–day conference featured several sessions with different topics ranging from the role of the state in religious affairs and challenges that could potentially harm the effort of preserving diversity. Other key topics of discussion focused on religions, ethnicities, gender, race and education in peace resolution. We invited scholars with knowledge on the issues to contribute to the discussion. We also had activists and politicians share their experiences related to the topics. This conference was expected to equip policymakers with valuable insights so that they could develop better policy in order to promote multiculturalism and preserve religious freedom. Likewise for social activists, the conference aimed to support them in applying these insights in their daily work.

The conference had five themes, as follows:

1. *Religious Freedom and Dialogue through the Understanding of Religious Sources and Literature*

The objective of this session was to scrutinize the various sources of religious texts and manuscripts used by followers of religions in promoting dialogues among religious groups. This session scrutinized whether religious sources and manuscripts had been used in contributing to various misunderstandings among religious groups. It aimed to explore whether religious texts and manuscripts offered information about how religious followers practiced dialogue among religious groups. The discussion determined clear guidelines on the role of religious institutions in promoting a more moderate understanding of religious texts and manuscripts.

2. *The Politics of Religious Freedom, State Legal Framework and Religious Identity: Indonesia and Australia as Case Studies*

This session discussed the issue of religious identity through the lens of the experiences in these two countries. The panel addressed issues of citizenship and identity by looking at conflicts over constitutional and legal frameworks in regards to the role of religious identity.

3. *In Search for Better Relations between the State and Religion in a Regional Context*

This session discussed the issues of interconnectedness in the process of globalization and the construction of a new model of relationship between states and religions. The panel addressed the problem of the relationship between the two domains through the lens of comparative experiences of developed countries and the developing world.

4. *Regulating Religion in Southeast Asia: Cases from Southeast Asia and the Pacific*

This session examined the role of government in administering and regulating religious life in each country of Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam) and the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand and Melanesia countries including Fiji and Samoa). Comprehensive information was provided on the issue of religious freedom and regulation of religious life in those countries. Presenters discussed the nature of government regulation of religious affairs, analyzing the socio-political contexts behind the issuance of those regulations and contents of regulations. From this, guidelines were proposed for the government to better manage religious affairs in each country.

### 5. *The Emergence of New Religious Movements in Southeast Asia*

This session provided analysis on the socio-religious and political backgrounds to the emergence of new religious denominations in Southeast Asia. The responses of governments and societies (including civil society and religious authority) to this development were examined. This enabled participants to see whether existing regulations and state policies were in line with the emergence of new religious movements.

Participants both from Australia and Indonesia were given 15 minutes each to present their papers. As the program emphasized dialogue, open discussion among the participants promoted wider theoretical, academic and empirical discussions on the issues. Participants from Australia were: Prof. Joseph Camilleri; Bishop Phillip Huggins; Prof. Samina Yasmeen; Dr. Paul Babie; Prof. Greg Barton; Dr. Melissa Crouch; Dr. Dirk Tomsa; Mr. Stewart Fenwick; Barney Zwartz; Dr. Nicholas Herriman; Dr. Sven Alexander Schottmann; Ms. Monika Winarnita. Participants from Indonesia were: Prof. Bahtiar Effendy; Romo Andang L. Binawan; Ismatu Ropi; Dr. Jamhari; Septemy E. Lakawa; Chaider S. Bamualim; Dr. Dina Afrianty; Dr. Ali Munhanif; Dr. Mujiburrahman; Dr. Fuad Jabali; Dr. Saiful Umam; Jajang Jahroni; Din Wahid. Participants from Southeast Asia were: Prof. Vineeta Sinha (Singapore); Prof. Imtiyaz Yusuf (Thailand); Sittie Jehanne U. Mutin-Mapupuno (Philippine).

Research findings and analyses from the conference will be made available to the public. Selected papers will be published in an edited volume. The English language volume will be translated into Indonesian and published in Indonesia, allowing access to a wider domestic audience. In addition, conference papers are also expected to be published as a book.

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Ismatu Ropi, *Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM), Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN), Jakarta.*



| *Indexes*

| **Studia Islamika: 2012**

**Volume 19, Number 1, 2012**

1. Mohammad Hasan Ansori, *Linking Identity to Collective Action: Islam, History and Ethnicity in the Aceh Conflict*.
2. Oman Fathurahman, *The Roots of the Writing Tradition of Ḥadīth Works in Nusantara: Hidāyāt al-Ḥabīb by Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānirī*.
3. Noorhaidi Hasan, *Education, Young Islamists and Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia*.
4. M. Dien Madjid, *Tun Sri Lanang fī Masār al-Tārīkh wa 'Alāqatuhu bi Intishār al-Islām fī Aceh*.
5. M. Adib Misbachul Islam, *Al-Shaykh Aḥmad al-Rifā'ī wa Siyāqiyat al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmīyah: Dirāsah 'alā Kitāb Takhyirah*.
6. Azyumardi Azra, *Intelektual Muslim Baru dan Kajian Islam*.
7. Muhammad Nida' Fadlan, *Digitalizing and Cataloging Islamic Manuscripts in Pesantren*.

## **Volume 19, Number 2, 2012**

1. Hiroko Kushimoto, *Islam and Modern School Education in Journal Pengasuh: Review of the Kaum Muda - Kaum Tua Dichotomy.*
2. Ali Munhanif, *'Ties that would Divide': Explaining the NU's Exit from Masyumi in 1952.*
3. Peter G. Riddell, *From Kitab Malay to Literary Indonesian: A Case Study in Semantic Change.*
4. Ismawati, *Ikhtilāf al-Ṭabī'ah al-ʿIlmiyah al-Islāmīyah bayna Manāṭiq al-Sāhil al-Shimālī wa al-Manāṭiq al-Dākhiliyah li Jāwah al-Wuṣṭā fi al-Qarn 15-17 al-Milādī.*
5. Agus Iswanto, *Makhṭūṭat Butuhaning Manুষya Mungguhing Sarak: Mi'yāriyat al-Islām fi al-Manāṭiq al-Dākhiliyah bi Jawa.*
6. Dick van der Meij, *The End of Innocence?*
7. Dina Afrianty, *Religion in Public Spaces in Contemporary Southeast Asia.*

## **Volume 19, Number 3, 2012**

1. Ann Kull, *Gender Awareness in Islamic Education: the Pioneering Case of Indonesia in a Comparison with Pakistan.*
2. Azhar Ibrahim, *Denial, Trivialization and Relegation of Pluralism: The Challenges of Managing Diversity in Multi-religious Malaysia and Indonesia.*
3. Bahtiar Effendy & Mutiara Pertiwi, *Indonesia's Democratic Venture: History, Practice and the Challenge Ahead.*
4. Ismail Marzuki, *Al-Siyāsah al-Qanūniyah li Hizb al-'Adālah wa al-Rafāhiyah (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera/PKS) fi al-Fatrah 1998-2004 al-Milādī: Dirāsah li Qaḍiyat Qānūn Idārat al-Zakāh.*
5. Suprpto, [Kitab Rahasia Hari dan Bintang]: *ʿIlm al-Nujūm 'inda al-Muslimīn min Qabīlah Sasak.*
6. Oman Fathurahman, *Memahami Pribumisasi Islam Melalui 'Kitab Seribu Masalah'.*
7. Ismatu Ropi, *Regulating Religion in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.*

| *Guidelines*

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Submission is open to both Indonesian and non-Indonesian writers. Articles will be assessed for publication by the journal's Board of Editors and will be peer-reviewed by a blind reviewer. Only previously unpublished work should be submitted. Articles should be between approximately 10,000-15,000 words. All submission must include a 150-word abstract and 5 keywords.

Submitted papers must conform to the following guidelines: citation of references and bibliography use Harvard referencing system; references with detail and additional information could use footnotes or endnotes using MLA style; transliteration system for Arabic has to refer to Library Congress (LC) guideline. All submission should be sent to [studia.islamika@uinjkt.ac.id](mailto:studia.islamika@uinjkt.ac.id).





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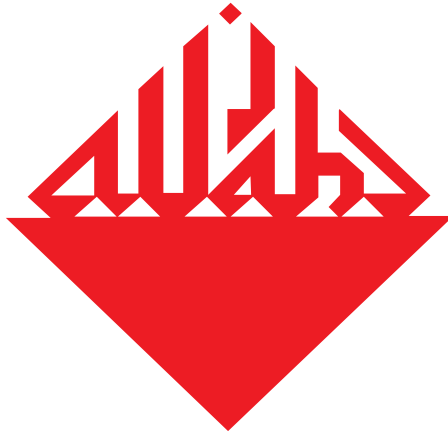


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# سثوديا اسراميا

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السنة التاسعة عشر، العءء ٣، ٢٠١٢



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السياسة القانونية لءزبء العءالة والرءاهية  
ففي القءرة ١٩٩٨-٢٠٠٤ الميلاءي:  
ءراسة لقضية قانءون إءارة الزكاة  
اسماعيل مرزوقي

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:*[Kitab Rahasia Hari dan Bintang]*  
علم النجوم عنء المسلمين من قبيلة الساساك  
سوبرابءو

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