Book Review:

Islam and Citizenship in Indonesia: Democracy and the Quest for an Inclusive Public Ethics (Robert W. Hefner)

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The book *Islam and Citizenship in Indonesia: Democracy and the Quest for an Inclusive Public Ethics* written by Robert W. Hefner is the product of research carried out over a long period from 1999 to 2020. This book traces the causes and consequences of exclusivist currents in politics and society. The argument in this book is that religious culture and politics in Indonesia are best characterized not in terms of single trends or grand schemes, but rather as unfinished and contentious projects. Hefner seeks to explore which interactions are conducive to an inclusive understanding and practice of Islam, national belonging, and citizenship, and which are not. In addition, the chapters explore citizen ownership from the perspective of the disputes that occur in various currents of Muslim politics and ethics in Indonesia today.

Hefner outlines the basis for the book by placing the struggle for cultural citizenship in the *Reformasi* (post-Soeharto) era, especially regarding the global context and Indonesian history. In this case, the global context includes the crisis of citizenship in the contemporary Arab-Muslim world, the rise of right-wing populism and Christian nationalism in Western liberal democracies, and the rise of ethnic, racial, and religious majoritarianism throughout the world.

The book discusses the characteristics of state-society-religious relations in Indonesia that have similarities with other parts of the world and are important for understanding the diversity of non-religious, liberal but democratic freedom, which is recognized in Indonesia today. Chapter 3 also explains how, in Indonesia, modern developments have reshaped state-society-religious relations in equally differentiated and hierarchical ways. They have informed elite and popular understandings of religion and determined which religious sects in society are considered an integral part of the tradition of 'divine nationalism' in Indonesia.

This book is provides a new perspective on Islam and citizenship in Indonesia, especially regarding the changing definitions of Muslim politics and identity. Hefner explores the political constellations and the contentious politics which explain much of these changing definitions. Debates about democracy and the quest for inclusive public ethics is the focus of this book. But it also takes a different approach to that of *Indonesian Pluralities: Islam, Citizenship, and Democracy, which was co-authored* by Hefner and Zainal Abidin Bagir (2021) and which focuses on the compatibility of Islam and democracy in 1990s, as some analysts argue that growing religious intolerance has marred the country's political transition. This book shows that when assessing democracy and citizenship in Indonesia today, we must examine not only elections and official politics but also the less formal yet more pervasive processes of social recognition. The contributors to Hefner and Bagi's book demonstrate that in fact, citizen ethics are not static discourses but living traditions that co-evolve with broader patterns of politics, gender, religious resurgence, and ethnicity in society. In contrast, Hefner's more recent work focuses on how the Indonesian government has managed the relationship between Islam and citizenship, especially within the democratic context since 1998. Hefner examines the darkest developments in religious politics, which had a major impact at the beginning of the Reformasi period, namely the emergence of radical Islamic militias that promoted conservative Muslim values and exclusive, anti-democratic interpretations of Islamic law. Chapter 4 also reviews the evidence cited to illustrate this 'conservative turn'. The book explores the political and ideological constraints that each radical movement brought

to bear in its mobilization and how these efforts were linked to different ways of knowing, promoting, and practicing Islam and civic belonging. This chapter also examines how each movement was not only ideologically-driven but also influenced by their ties to powerful patrons and coalitions. Despite these movements' claims that Islamic law is based on scripture and is immutable, the model of Islamic law and the citizen ownership of each militia are heavily influenced by coalitions, alliances and the diverse political-economic interests these embody. Some of these collaborations also provide a striking illustration of the phenomenon described by Bourchier and Hadiz: "the convergence of religious and nationalist conservatism to produce a new brand of religious nationalism" (Bourchier 2019; Hadiz 2018).

In Chapter 5, Hefner explores the diversity of Islamic schools in Indonesia and their role in shaping society's understanding of democracy and citizenship. Mainstream Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama still play a dominant role in the day-to-day operations of the 16,000 Islamic boarding schools and 50,000 Islamic boarding schools (*madrasah*) across Indonesia. Although schools associated with mainstream organizations show some variation in terms of civic ethics and civic belonging, most schools are committed to civic pluralist ideals of Indonesian nationhood, democracy, and multireligious citizenship. However, over the last thirty years, exclusivist Islamic groups have succeeded in establishing a foothold in the Islamic education sector. A more worrying trend for Muslim democrats is that these exclusivist views are also taking root among mainstream educators who teach Islamic subjects that are mandatory for Muslim students in the country's public schools.

In Chapter 6, Hefner discusses Muslim women and women's rights in Indonesia. This chapter explores the possibilities and ambivalence in Muslim public ethics, related to women's belonging and citizenship. This chapter also explores how gender in Indonesian Muslim communities has long been shaped not only by norms based on scripture, but also by values

and practices derived from Indonesian traditions of kinship, sexuality, work, and popular culture.

Hefner also examines competing understandings and practices of Islamic ethics and law in Indonesia today. He begins by examining the circumstances in the early 2000s that facilitated the development of what became known as "sharia regional regulations" (*perda syariah*). Many of these regional bylaws regulate matters on which most Indonesians agree, even across religious communities – such as the need to curb prostitution, limit alcohol consumption, and encourage children to study religion in school. Despite this interfaith agreement, these regulations have proven controversial because they have a major impact on women and the poor, and ignore larger problems, including those related to political cronyism and corruption, which are key concerns of the broader Indonesian public. These regulations also strengthen the belief among exclusivist Islamists that citizenship in Indonesia should be differentiated based on religion in a way that preferences Muslims over non-Muslims.

Overall, this book effectively explores the Islam-citizenship nexus in Indonesia, particularly during the democratic era. Hefner also elaborates on Charles Taylor's concept of recognition (Taylor, 1994), which emphasizes that the quality of democracy, plurality, and citizenship in Indonesia today does not only depend on elections and state-centered politics but also on broader social factors.

References

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