BOOK REVIEWS

Muslim Cosmopolitanism: Southeast Asian Islam in Comparative Perspective.
By Khairudin Aljunied. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016. Pp. 240. ISBN 10: 1474408885; ISBN 13: 978-1474408882.

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For a long time, especially until the end of the twentieth century, there was a tendency for outside observers and Muslims themselves to describe Islam in Southeast Asia as tolerant, moderate, pluralistic, and progressive. However, in recent years, especially after September 11, 2001, alternative descriptions have gained popularity in media discourse and even among academic specialists. Generally speaking, "alarmist" discourse has warned of the rise of radical, militant strains of regional Islam, highlighting the threat of intolerant versions of political Islam (including Wahhabism) influenced by strict interpretations originating in the Middle East.

These arguments are not entirely baseless in my opinion, and raise some legitimate concerns in light of, for example, increasing animosity towards non-Muslims and Muslim minorities in Indonesia, and terror incidents by Muslim militants, including in metropolitan cities like Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur. Even Muslim minority countries such as Thailand and the Philippines have seen enduring tensions and violent armed conflict between the Muslim minority and the non-Muslim majority. These cases aside, one cannot ignore the rising influence of militant jihadism, such as that originating in the Middle East and propagated by ISIS/Da'esh.

Given these gloomy trends, it is tempting to conclude that the formerly "moderate" and "tolerant" Islam of Southeast Asia has been "hijacked" by more radical, militant versions of political Islam. However, Khairudin Aljunied, (henceforth "the author") argues strongly that this is too simplistic, offering as a vivid counter-example the potential and enduring resilience of Muslim cosmopolitanism, which can be characterized as tolerant, moderate, pluralistic in nature, both in terms of practice and in ideas regarding sites, places, and persons.

First, the author defines Muslim cosmopolitanism as a style of thought, a habit of seeing the world and a way of living that is rooted in the central tenet of Islam, which is that everyone is part of a common humanity accountable to God and that we are morally responsible towards one another. As a Muslim cosmopolitan himself, whose understanding of Islam has been shaped by the inclusiveness and openness of the people around him, the author aims to demonstrate that the ways in which the spaces and personalities to which he has been exposed and predisposed throughout his life have laid the conditions for dialogue and shared goals among Muslims and non-Muslims in the region. In this book, he tries to connect the histories of what has been called "Muslim Southeast Asia" (primarily Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia) to which the author was most exposed throughout his scholarly career.

The book is composed of three thematic parts. The first part (Part I) explores processes of cosmopolitanization across a range of sites and spaces in Muslim Southeast Asia. According to the author, Part I highlights the significance of the secular and sacred, virtual and physical places in producing varieties of everyday situated cosmopolitanism. More concretely, the author in Chapter 1 defines marketplaces in Muslim Southeast Asia as cosmopolitan places where societal actors from different backgrounds interact as they exchange all sorts of products and services. The author comprehensively overlays a kind of

commercial cosmopolitanism which has transformed markets into contact zones for people of many different backgrounds. Based on his own fieldwork in Kelantan, the author vividly describes how Muslims and non-Muslims coexist and interact amicably in marketplaces, and observes that political Islam does not necessarily influence the shape of Muslim cosmopolitanism in such spaces.

In Chapter 2, the author turns to mosques, also important sites for Muslim cosmopolitanism. Drawing on several interesting examples from across the region, the author explains how these mosques function as cosmopolitan social spaces not only for co-religionists, but also for the benefit of non-Muslims. The author illustrates how a form of Islamic "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" can also be found in the mosques' outward traditional designs, which often incorporate a syncretic style composed of different cultural elements, including even "non-Malay" and "non-Muslim" elements. He also points out the sharing of sacred spaces by Muslims and non-Muslims, and the existence of "gender cosmopolitanism" inside these mosques.

In Chapter 3, the author examines how Muslim cosmopolitanism is active in the virtual world or in cyberspace. Citing several famous Muslim bloggers and/or online activists including Zulkifli Hasan, Dr. Maza, and Abah Yasir (Yusri), he argues that "virtual cosmopolitanism" is quite active in the region, simultaneously struggling to counter Islamophobia and promoting tolerance and mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

In Part II, the author highlights personalities and groups promoting Muslim cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia. In Chapter 4, the author examines the agendas and ideological standpoints of several prominent regional Muslim public intellectuals such as Chandra Muzaffar, Azyumardi Azra, and Hussin Mutalib, as well as their impact on Muslim cosmopolitanism in general. For example, the author links Azyumardi Azra's concept of "Islam Nusantara", which emphasizes the cosmopolitan and dialogical nature of Islam, to its role in promoting regional dialogue between Muslims as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims.

In Chapter 5, the author explores hijab activists and other female Muslim intellectuals and their significance for Muslim cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia. By examining the life stories/discourses and hijab styles of Muslim women in Southeast Asia, he argues how they embody Muslim cosmopolitanism by adopting new hijab styles that appeal to Muslim and non-Muslims in contemporary contexts. According to the author, the hijab is a strong indicator of how future cosmopolitanism will look in Southeast Asian society.

In Chapter 6, the final part of the book, the author discusses the policies of post-colonial nation-states towards Muslim cosmopolitanism across Southeast Asia, and the implications. Examining in detail the policies of three such states within Muslim Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore), he argues that they have yet to fully realize the ideal of being "responsible cosmopolitan states". The author argues that while each state seeks to impose a sense of allegiance and loyalty that glues society together to achieve its own ends, the survival of Muslim cosmopolitanism in the region has been due to the will of Muslims and non-Muslims to rise above such state provincialism. The author summarizes the tension as follows: the spectres of secular fundamentalism, nationalist particularism, religious fundamentalism and state intolerance have each challenged Muslim cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia. Notwithstanding these challenges, Muslim cosmopolitanism has continued to thrive.

The arguments and logic in the book are generally clear and convincing, based on concrete case studies, sound field work, and rich personal experience as a Muslim cosmopolitan in three Southeast Asian countries. Aljunied addresses the omission of Brunei, the Philippines, and Thailand from the book, stating that it should not be taken to imply that Muslim cosmopolitanism is absent from these countries. Furthermore, I agree with the author that we should encourage future works on Muslim cosmopolitanism not just in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, but elsewhere in Southeast Asia as well. In any event, I would say that this book is a new "must read" not only for academic specialists and students in this field, but also for more general readers (including policy

makers) who want to understand what is really going on with Islam in Southeast Asia, without falling into the pitfall of orientalist or alarmist bias.

Sovereign Women in a Muslim Kingdom: The Sultanahs of Aceh, 1641–1699.
By Sher Banu A. L. Khan. Singapore: NUS Press, 2017. Pp. xvi + 318. ISBN 10: 1501713841; ISBN 13: 978-1501713842.
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Aceh Dar al-Salam was located in the north of Sumatra and has for a very long time been known as a staunchly Islamic kingdom. It was also known as the "Veranda of Mecca" because of this. In the second half of the seventeenth century when the Dutch VOC (United East India Company) and the English East India Company were gradually increasing their commercial hold in the region by interfering in the affairs of indigenous polities, Aceh was governed by four successive woman rulers. In an Islamic kingdom and a largely patriarchal state, why and how were these queens able to maintain their positions for fifty-nine years, and how did they deal with challenges from their own local male elite and the European foreign envoys? These are the main questions in this book.

In previous studies, Aceh's expansion through conquest by Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607–1636) in the early seventeenth century was deemed as a "golden age" in Acehnese history and, in contrast, his female successors were seen as weaklings. It is widely accepted that Aceh's power dipped in the latter half of the seventeenth century under the four queens' rule. But did Aceh really decline, and if so, was it because of female rule? This is another main question in this book.

Most of the earlier writings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries agree on the unfavorable impact of these female rulers on Acehnese history. One of the most popular perceptions was that they were indeed weaklings, mere ceremonial rulers propped up by the male elite and responsible for the decline of the monarchy and royal power by the end of the seventeenth century. On the other hand, some studies with reference to contemporary accounts and archival records tend to adopt a slightly more favorable view of these female rulers. The variety of interpretations and debates and the shifts in view about these enigmatic women are the inspiration for this book. By transliterating, translating, and mining the Dutch VOC treaties, diplomatic correspondence between Aceh and the governors general in Batavia, and the daily registers from Dutch envoys stationed for months in Aceh, this study is able to reconstruct and provide a vivid picture of key turning points in the Acehnese court.

The book consists of seven chapters:

Chapter 1, "The Succession of the First Female Ruler of Aceh", describes the succession of Sultanah Safiatuddin Syah (r. 1641–1675), a daughter of Sultan Iskandar Muda and a wife of Sultan Iskandar Thani (r. 1636–1641). The author argues that there were no fixed laws of succession in Aceh. However, one necessary condition to ensure the accession and acceptance of a ruler was the consensus of the orang kaya (rich nobles/state officials). The elites agreed to accept a woman on the throne because of Safiatuddin's impeccable lineage and the dearth of royal males in 1641. A candidate with a chance of election had to be neutral, uninvolved with any orang kaya faction, and be of royal blood, which conferred legitimacy. By a process of elimination, Safiatuddin emerged as the most suitable