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## Editorial

# The Changing Role of Islam In Indonesia

Muslims constitute the overwhelming majority of Indonesian population. In the 1980 census, Muslims accounted for more than 88% of the population. In the 1990 census, the proportion was about the same. Now, in year 2000, with the population of more than 200 million, it means that more than 175 million people of Indonesians are muslims. This number is, indeed, bigger than the number of Muslims in any single country in the world, or even bigger than the total number of the muslims of all countries in the Arabian Peninsula or even the Middle East.

There are several theories of the first arrival of muslims to the Indonesian archipelago. Some said that the first arrival was in the 13th century, others said it was as early as the 8th century. The early muslim migrants were basically mystical in character, while scripturilist muslims did not emerge until as late as the 17th or the 18th century.

The role of Islam in Indonesia has changed in character overtime. Prior to the 13th century, the role of Islam was basically to introduce monotheism to the local inhabitants. In the period of Islamic Kingdoms, from the 13th century to the 18th or the 19th century, the role of Islam was more political and structural. It made the basis of the Islamic kingdoms. In the colonial period, Islam provided Indonesians with the spirit of struggle for independence. In the 19th century, it was the banner of Islam that provided the inspiration for awakening the desire to struggle for freedom from foreign rule, as shown by the Padri Wars in the Minangkabau area (1821-1837), the Bone Wars in Sulawesi (1835), the war led by Prince Diponegoro in Central Java and Yogyakarta (1825-1830), and the 30- year long Aceh war in the nothern tip of Sumatra (1873-1904). In the first quarter of the 20th century, it was also the banner of Islam that provided the emergence of Indonesian national solidarity. It started with the establishment of the *Syarikat Islam* in 1911, just 3 years after the establishment of the *Budi Utomo* on May 20 th, 1908, which is now recognized as the official date of the Indonesian national awakening. Nevertheless, many criticized that the *Budi Utomo* movement was primarily Javanese in character, while the *Syarikat Islam*, unlike the *Budi Utomo*, was national in character and it had

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explicit principle of Indonesian nationalism and struggle for national independence. This was the political contribution of the Syarekat Islam movement to Indonesian nationalism. In the second quarter of the 20th century, the banner of Indonesian nationalism was taken over by the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) led by Sukarno. The Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) succeeded in the leadership of nationalist movements and insisted on the concept of the importance of love for fatherland above all party interests and all religious teachings. This seemingly secular concept of nationalism was, however, balanced in 1945 by the adoption of the Pancasila (Five Principles) as the basis of the independent state of Indonesia, the first principle of which is the belief in God Almighty.

With the adoption of the Pancasila (Five Principles), as the basis of the state, it has made Indonesia neither a secular state nor a theocratic one. Indonesia does not have any official religion, but at the same time it also rejects full secularism or atheism. This means that with regard to religion, Indonesia has taken side, i.e. that religion is functional to the well - being of society. Religion in Indonesia is not seen as the opium of the society. In fact, religion is expected to have at least two positive functions to society: Firstly, to guide its adherents to ethical actions in the society. It has been proven over and over that development projects carried out by religious leaders or religious institutions are more efficient, and encouraged greater social participation. It has also been proven that religious ethical values are instrumental to motivating community actions for educational enhancement and poverty reduction, as well as instrumental to refraining people from attitudes of corruption. The second expected function of religion is to promote harmony among adherents of different religious affiliations. At the theoretical level, the teachings of each of the five recognized religions in Indonesia: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, do encourage inter - religious harmony. In reality, indeed, these two expected functions of religion are sometimes more like goals than actual roles. But this is exactly the challenge to all Indonesians, including the Muslims.

With the above description, it seems clear now that the role of Islam in Indonesia has changed over time, from being structural as a source of political legitimation to being cultural as a source of ethics and values, and the articles published in the present Journal are partly a continuing effort to scrutinize the changing role of Islam in Indonesia, particularly both theoretical and academic levels. (*M. Atho Mudzhar*)