

## EDITORIAL

Needless to say that Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country even compared to those of all Arab countries. At the same time, Indonesia is geographically quite far from Mecca and Medinah, the so called centres of Islam. This fact has certainly positive and negative effects. On the one hand, Indonesian Muslims can interpret the Islamic teaching in such a way that their religious interpretations are not very much influenced by the traditions (*al-ʿādāt*) of the Arab countries which are, to some extent, quite different from those of Indonesia. On the other hand, however, the geographical position of Indonesia provokes certain problems, meaning that Islam in Indonesia has often been said to be strongly colored by "non-Islamic" traditions. This being the case, Indonesian Islam is seen as some sort of backwater, contaminated by non-Islamic values.

Such an opinion has a far reaching consequence. Most earlier scholars in the field of Islamic studies, including those from Indonesia, have not been interested in writing on Islam in Indonesia. They have even been more proud of writing on Islam in Arab countries. Islam in Indonesia is then wellknown only in terms of its population. This is exacerbated by the fact that the Indonesian scholars are mostly poor in foreign language, and that their scholarly works are known in a very limited circle. In fact, Islam in Indonesia shares similar concerns and problems with other Muslim countries. As is the case with their counterparts elsewhere, Muslims in Indonesia are faced by the following questions: How does God speak? who speak for God? how God's will is to be known? and how are Muslims trying to adapt to a modern lifestyle while at the same time still retaining Islamic values?

In recent years, however, new trend has already emerged. Influenced partly by the study of Islam outside of the Middle East, Indonesia nowadays receives more attention from certain scholars, mostly Western. At the same time, Indonesian scholars graduated mostly from Western Universities are willingly exposing Islamic thought in Indonesia through their writings, and more importantly their initiative to publish international journals.

Certainly, the articles that are published regularly in this journal are part of the efforts to introduce Indonesian Islam to a wider audience.

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