

EDITORIAL

Intellectual and Academic Freedom in Islam

Intellectual freedom is the prerogative of all citizens in a free modern state, while academic freedom is an intellectual freedom conferred upon professors and students in the universities. Both intellectual and academic freedom become very important means of producing an ideal and promising society, creating a better life for their future. In this context, it is important to reflect on the result of George Makdisi's research. Comparing the medieval university professor in Christendom to the professor in the Islamic lands, Makdisi concluded that "the professors [in medieval Christendom] did not achieve that complete autonomy enjoyed by their colleagues in Islam." This statement is a good start to see the phenomenon of both Islamic society (*al-ummah*) and Islamic university (*al-jāmi'ah al-islāmiyyah*) asking ourselves whether or not Makdisi's statement is still valid today.

Theoretically, Islam does not acknowledge the existence of the ecclesiastical hierarchy; the Prophet's successors are religious scholars (*'ulama'*, *fuqaha*), and it was absolutely open and free to any body and even unhindered by any outside force to become a scholar through the method of disputation (*tarīqāt al-naẓar* or *al-munāẓarah*) not through the lines of hierarchy. In addition, any layman was free to seek any religious opinion from any *faqīh* in order to answer the question on religious law. This is quite different from the tradition in both Judaism and Christianity. In Judaism the answer should be taken from the highest religious authority (the highest *rabbi*). Even no room to adhere to any opinion contrary to that of the Jewish authority. Likewise, Christian tradition established the ecclesiastical hierarchy in which the licence to teach had to be obtained from the chancellor of the cathedral church, and the Councils and Synods had the formal and final opinion on religious issues. This being the case, the Islamic society had a better opportunity to express both intellectual and academic exercises which were hardly seen in the societies that had an ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Thus, in Islam there was no certain authority which could force someone to submit his opinions for approval before professing them. Historically, this was a phenomenon in the classical and medieval Islam, and was then imported by medieval Christendom by means of knowledge and then became a common phenomenon in the Western universities. In the long run, it also exist in non-Western Universities which adopt the Western academic tradition, and are

commonly known as secular universities, as those in Indonesia.

That's all we had during the classical and medieval Islam as partly mentioned by Makdisi. The problem arises when we look at the Muslim societies in general and the Islamic universities in particular in the present time, including those in Indonesia. The situation differs from that in classical and medieval Islam. Both the Islamic societies and the Islamic universities tend to maintain the *status quo* avoiding any challenge to any opinion already established earlier. New ideas are tantamount to innovation (*bid'ah*) or even heresy (*kuff*). In a university, a professor (*mudarris*) is "everything" for his/her students and that any opinion contradicting that of the professor is considered unexpected or even forbidden. In brief, servile imitation (*taqlid*) spread out among the *ummah*. In addition, library (*maktabah*), which was so central in the classical and medieval Islam, has not yet occupied important position not only for the students but also for most of the professors; library has even understood as being the place for those who are not knowledgeable; librarians seems to be considered ignorant.

In the last few years, however, there is an increasing awareness among Muslims in general and Islamic universities in particular to cope with such problems and serious efforts, such as those constantly be undertaken by the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Sunan Kalijaga. The presence of our journal, *Al-Jāmi'ah*, is one of such efforts. To support this promising effort, *Al-Jāmi'ah* encourages intellectuals, most particularly the teaching staffs of the IAIN, to introduce his/her ideas not only to the local people but also to the International readers. In line with this, *Al-Jāmi'ah* gradually and increasingly promotes an objective review of articles for their inclusion in the journal based on the international standard. The articles published in this edition containing various subjects of Islamic studies, and are in the direction to achieve such purpose.

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