Article

Citizen Ethics as Living Traditions

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A book about Indonesia as a model for multicultural citizenship

It is both an age-old and glaringly contemporary question: How to live peacefully within a diverse society? With the crisis of multiculturalism in the West and the failure of the Arab uprisings in the Middle East, the problem of coexistence remains at the forefront of global discussion. Against this backdrop, Indonesia has taken on particular importance as it is both the largest Muslim-majority country in the world and the third-largest democracy with a population of 265 million people (87.7 percent of whom are Muslim). In light of its return to electoral democracy from the authoritarianism of the former New Order regime, some analysts have argued that Indonesia offers clear proof of the compatibility of Islam and democracy. Skeptics argue, however, that the growing religious intolerance that has marred the country's political transition discredits any claim of the country to democratic exemplarity. The book *Indonesian Pluralities: Islam, Citizenship, and Democracy* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), based on a twenty-month project carried out in several regions in Indonesia, shows that, in assessing the quality and dynamics of 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 at work in this deeply plural society. The contributors demonstrate that citizen ethics are not, in fact, static

discourses but living traditions that coevolve in relation to broader patterns of politics, gender, religious resurgence, and ethnicity in society.

In 2021 the editors Zainal Abidin Bagir and Robert W. Hefner as well as contributors Erica M. Larson and Alimatul Qibtiyah were in discussion with the codirectors of the Contending Modernities initiative, R. Scott Appleby, the Marilyn Keough Dean of the Keough School of Global Affairs, and Atalia Omer, Professor of religion, conflict, and peace studies at the Kroc Institute. They showcased the possibility of positioning Indonesia as a potential model for multicultural citizenship and discussed reconciliation after conflict, youth and religious differences, and religion and changing gender norms.

Click here to listen to the podcast

Indonesian Pluralities: Islam, Citizenship, and Democracy offers important insights on the state of Indonesian politics and society more than twenty years after its return to democracy.

Read an excerpt of the book below:

Read more about Indonesian Pluralities