

## Book Review: Islam In Malaysia: An Entwined History by Khairudin Aljunied

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**Aljunied, Khairudin, *Islam In Malaysia: An Entwined History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. Xvii +326 pages. Hardcover, \$99.00.**

*Islam in Malaysia: An Entwined History*, by Professor Khairudin Aljunied, chronicles the growth and development of Islam in Malaysia beginning in the eleventh through to the twenty-first century. It focuses upon the contacts, connections, relations and exchanges between cultures in Malaysia. The author offers a new approach to studying Malaysia's entwined history. It is an approach that narrates how states, societies, scholars, and non-Muslims interact with the embedding of Islam in everyday lives of Muslims in Malaysia.

The book is shaped by four forces: 1) Non-Muslims contacts that linked the region to Islam; 2) Non-Muslims lay the statecraft of politics and interacted with Muslims in important day-to-day sectors such as education; 3) Non-Muslim scholars contributed scholarly works to Islam in Malaysia; and 4) the skirmishes between Muslim and non-Muslims encouraged Muslims to embark on intensive conversions of the natives in the post-colonial era.

Aljunied examines various transformations and adaptations that Muslims in Malaysia undergo in meeting the demands of colonization, modernity, and globalization. What makes this study special is that it is not entirely Muslim-centered. It is a fuller historical narrative as it covers the history of non-Muslims as well. The work rejects one of the outstanding problematic currents in Islamic historiography: a lack of attentiveness to non-Muslim voices in overarching historical narratives. Early writers on Islamization in the Arab world de-emphasize the crucial involvement of non-Muslims in shaping the course of Muslim history. When they are mentioned at all, they are posing serious problem and challenges to the proliferation of Islam.

The author provides readers with a corrected concept of the role of non-Muslim in the history of Islam in Malaysia. What non-Muslims bring, according to Aljunied, is growth and vitality. The reasons are that non-Muslims were active in fostering trade and commerce which

consequently still link Malaysia with outside world. Islam came to the region alongside trade and commerce.

What can be said about the book is that it is empirically rich and theoretically informative. The book is written simply and directly with an in-depth intellectual approach. It is an insightful narrative; an exploration of Islamization of Malaysia. The author illustrates power relationships between the local natives and the British colonialists, and how this ascends to full-blown uprisings under British rule. Politically, the book invites readers to post-independence politics.

In terms of pedagogy and value, *Islam in Malaysia: An Entwined History* should be read by graduate and undergraduate students, considering that it covers areas of politics, gender, history, and religion in Malaysia. The book is intellectually stimulating, fresh, and meticulously well-researched with eighty pages devoted to bibliography. In addition, the author, in his narrative, includes the impact of politics and organizations, covering the process by which legislation is produced in Malaysia and the influence of the Chief Executives. Significantly, the author points out how a complex society learned to co-exist, despite their differences. *Islam in Malaysia: An Entwined History* is an excellent addition to scholarship dedicated to understanding Islam. It is a case study that demonstrates that Islam can peacefully co-exist with other religions.

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