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In a rich and detailed historical overview of modern Muslim legal thought in Indonesia, Michael Feener presents the various ways in which from the end of the nineteenth century onwards Indonesian Muslim legal thinkers have justified the abandonment of blind adherence (taqlid buta) to the Syafi'ite school of Islamic jurisprudence. *Ijtihad*, the individual reasoning based on reinterpretations of the Qur’an and Sunnah, is the keyword in these modernization efforts of modernist Muslim thinkers. The historical process is generally referred to as ‘the opening of the gate of *ijtihad*’ enabling a renewal or rejuvenation of Islamic doctrine (see Chapter 2).

In Chapter 1 Feener explains that the various modernist movements in Indonesia were inspired by developments in the Arab world, but that the
unmatched pace of distribution of those modernist ideas were made possible by technical developments such as the steam ship and the wide availability of print, as well as new educational forms applied in religious schools. In 1912 kyai Ahmad Dahlan, inspired by Egypt-based Muslim modernists like Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Rida, established the modernist Muslim Organization Muhammadiyah. The Muhammadiyah established the Majlis Tarjih, an ulama council to perform collective *ijtihad*.

Surprisingly, in Chapter 2, which focuses on the opening of the gate of *ijtihad*, Feener does not take the ideas and methods developed by the Muhammadiyah as the starting point, but rather the more radical writings of Ahmad Hassan of the much smaller and more literalist Islamic movement Persatuan Islam (Persis, established in 1927). Michael Feener does not elucidate much on the reasons for his choice, but they seem to be twofold. First, Ahmad Hassan’s *ijtihad* is a product of individual reasoning, going beyond the consensus and canon of the contemporary Syafi’ite ulama. Second, Ahmad Hassan lacked an ulama-background and as a former tire-vulcanizer he personifies the break-up of the monopoly of traditionally trained Syafi’ite ulama over Islamic legal discourse (p. 222). As such, he paved the way for individual Muslim thinkers who were neither necessarily ulama, nor Syafi’ite in orientation.

Going through the many Muslim thinkers that decorate Feener’s work, it becomes apparent that the influence of the non-ulama (many of whom had nevertheless received substantial religious education) on modern Muslim legal thought has been almost as important as the influence of ulama. For example, Hazairin, who had a position in the Ministry of Justice and had been trained by the Dutch as an adat law specialist, would become one of the main propagators of an Indonesian Islamic school of jurisprudence (see Chapter 3). Syadzali, the former Minister of Religious Affairs, would propagate a contextual reading of the sources of Islam of which the underlying principles could be updated (a process he called *reaktualisasi*) to fit modern times (Chapter 5). Both Hazairin and Syadzali would propose a gender-equal Muslim inheritance law, albeit based on different methods of *ijtihad*. On the other side of the spectrum, Muhammad Natsir, Islamist, founder of the missionary Dewan Dakwah Indonesia, Masyumi politician and former Minister under Soekarno’s presidency, based on textual interpretations of Qur’an and Sunnah, would strive for an Islamic state (see Chapter 4). At the same time, the Indonesian state, with the involvement of some influential ulama, would become a major player in the raging normative debates in its effort to define a unified Islamic law and in its attempts to establish its authority in Islamic matters (see Chapters 6).

The sources on which Indonesian Muslim thinkers based (and base) their Islamic reasoning varied as widely as did their opinions, and included *fiqh* works of all Muslim schools of jurisprudence, ideas of Western Orientalists, Western sociology and – in the case of the Islamist Muhammad Natsir – even
the ideas of the Roman Catholic philosopher Thomas Aquinas (Chapter 4).

As a consequence of this diversity on the Islamic normative plain, debates are inevitable and ongoing, as both new Islamic liberal and orthodox's move-
mements gain ground in the reformasi era (Chapter 7).

After reading Feener's work one can only feel that, although national Islamic laws have been promulgated and a nationalized Islamic discourse has been promoted by the Indonesian government, we should be careful in
drawing conclusions that an Indonesian maddhab or Indonesian syariah has actually been established. There always has been (and there still is) considerable debate about the extent to which individual reasoning may abrogate the established legal opinions of the Muslim jurists of the past, and, furthermore, who is qualified to perform the act of ijtihad. The contemporary Muslim thinker Masdar Farid Mas'udi, quoted by Feener, has expressed this concern: 'Opening the gate of ijtihad is one thing, entering into it is something else' (p. 176). Moreover, debates on major issues like inheritance, polygamy, and the role of women remain unresolved, both in Indonesian Muslim thought and in national legislation. Therefore, the modernist Islamic method of ijtihad should not be confused with a 'modern' or 'liberal' positioning (p. 203). Whilst a more or less Indonesian method of ijtihad is now widely accepted in Indonesia and even applied by ulama of the former traditionalist Muslim movement of the Nahdlatul Ulama, a general consensus on the outcomes of the combined ijtihad efforts is still miles away.

Michael Feener's book will without doubt become a standard work for acad-
emicians in the field of Indonesian Islamic law. Furthermore, although I can im-
agine that unfamiliarity with Islamic legal terms requires some extra effort from
the lay reader, the richness of the presented material certainly compensates for
this. In my opinion, Michael Feener's work is compulsory reading material for
historians or other people with an interest in Indonesia or Islam.