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Colofon

Kernredactie:
Jip Barreveld
Annemarie Bouwman
Jan Debets
Claartje van der Ham
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Ivar Wiegerinck

Redactie:
Dr. Kim Beerden
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Lay-out en kaftontwerp:
Redactie

Secretariaat:
Doelensteeg 16
2311 VL Leiden
071-5277205
redactie@leidschrift.nl
www.leidschrift.nl

Zet- en drukwerk:
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Decolonization and Religion. Islamic Arguments for Indonesian Independence

Kevin W. Fogg

Clifford Geertz, the great anthropologist of Indonesia, wrote that 'Of all the dimensions of the uncertain revolution now underway in the new states of Asia and Africa, surely the most difficult to grasp is the religious'.[1] This is true not just for the broad sweep of the decolonizing world in the mid-twentieth century, but especially for the country that Geertz knew best: Indonesia. It is obvious that there was a religious dimension to Indonesia's decolonization process (the Indonesian Revolution, 1945-49), but so far this has gone severely understudied.

Before the Revolution, Indonesian nationalism, like many of its Asian and African counterparts, had a strong strand of religious nationalism. The greatest manifestations of this religious nationalism were Islamic ideas, schools, and organizations that brought together believers across ethnicities to oppose colonial excesses or even Dutch rule in general. Islamic nationalism gave birth to the Sarekat Islam, Muhammadiyah, Sumatera Thawalib, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and many other regional movements aimed at promoting Indonesian solidarity and self-rule.[2] In this way, the Indonesian Islamic movement was similar to religious movements elsewhere in Southeast Asia in the early twentieth century. In Burma,[3]

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[1] C. Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Developments in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven, CT 1968) 1.

[2] See, among others: Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Singapore 1973); M.F. Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia. The Umma below the Winds* (New York, NY 2003); H. Aboebakar, *Sejarah hidup K.H. A. Wahid Hasjim* [The Biography of K.H. A. Wahid Hasjim] (Bandung 2011); M. Nakamura, *The Crescent Arises over the Banyan Tree* (Singapore 2012); H.M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State. The Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), 1923 to 1957* (Leiden 2001); Mustari Bosra, *Tuang guru, anrong guru dan daeng guru. Gerakan Islam di Sulawesi Selatan 1914-1942* [Tuang guru, anrong guru, and daeng guru. The Islamic Movement in South Sulawesi 1914-1942] (Makassar 2008).

[3] A. Turner, *Saving Buddhism. The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma* (Honolulu, HI 2014); U Maung Maung, *From Sangha to Laity. Nationalist Movements of Burma, 1920-1940* (New Delhi 1980).

Cambodia,[4] Vietnam,[5] or even (later on) Timor Leste,[6] religious fora or organizations gave individuals a space to come together and an ideology through which to mobilize change, often in a national direction, but sometimes seeking to accommodate other aspects of the modern world. If religion had such a prominent place in the nationalism that led up to decolonization, it is only natural that religion would have an important role in the decolonization moment itself.

After independence, there has been plenty of attention to Islam in the building of the new Indonesian nation. Scholars have studied the struggle for an Islamic state,[7] the place of Islamic law,[8] the role of communitarian identities in politics,[9] accommodation of authoritarianism[10] and the contribution of Islamic movements to democratization,[11] to name just a few. The place of religion in nation-building was even a favorite topic of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion for a time.[12] In the contemporary moment, which is obsessed with the place of Islam in politics and the shifting world order, it is unsurprising that the role of Islam in Asian and

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[4] A.R. Hansen, *How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia, 1860-1930* (Honolulu, HI 2007).

[5] C. Keith, *Catholic Vietnam: A Church from Empire to Nation* (Berkeley, CA 2012); S. McHale, *Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam* (Honolulu, HI 2004).

[6] P. Carey, 'The Catholic Church, Religious Revival, and the Nationalist Movement in East Timor, 1975-98', *Indonesia and the Malay World* 27 (1999) 77-95.

[7] B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague 1971); C. Formichi, *Islam and the Making of the Nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in Twentieth-Century Indonesia* (Leiden 2012); K.W. Fogg, 'The Fate of Muslim Nationalism in Independent Indonesia' (PhD. dissertation, Yale University 2012).

[8] R.M. Feener and M.E. Cammack, *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia* (Cambridge, MA 2007).

[9] G.J. Fealy, 'Ulama and Politics in Indonesia: A History of Nahdlatul Ulama, 1952-1967' (PhD. dissertation, Monash University 1998). I thank Dr. Fealy for making this dissertation available to me.

[10] M. Kamal Hassan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to 'New Order' Modernization in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur 1980).

[11] R.W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton, NJ 2000).

[12] As evidenced by the rhetoric in *Peranan Departemen Agama dalam Revolusi dan Pembangunan Bangsa* [The Role of the Department of Religion in the Revolution and Nation-Building] (Jakarta 1965); this interest reflected the rhetorical direction of Soekarno at the time.

African post-colonial states would be a major focus of attention, and this has been true across the Muslim world. Studies of Nigeria,[13] Turkey,[14] Afghanistan,[15] and other countries have questioned how Islam impacts Muslim-majority national identity; scholarship on Pakistan has been particularly fertile in this area.[16] Thus, since 1950 religion has been a crucial area of contestation for defining what the postcolonial nation would look like.

The place of religion in Indonesian nationalism of the colonial era has been fairly clear, and the place of religion in postcolonial state-building in Indonesia continues to receive attention, but the place of religion in Indonesia's decolonization has been overlooked. This decolonization process, running (in the most conservative reckoning) from the proclamation of independence in August 1945 to the transfer of sovereignty in 1949, was a multifaceted struggle by the Indonesians to gain control of their own territory and gain recognition for their country. In such a complex process, surely religion was a key element in decolonization, just as it has been demonstrated to be both before and after decolonization.

Instead of focusing on religion, the historiography of decolonization in Indonesia has been dominated by the secular, nationalist narrative, what one might call the New Order narrative, calcified under the long regime of General-cum-President Suharto. This narrative foregrounds the position of the Indonesian Armed Forces (and within that, especially the army) in delivering Indonesia through a hard-fought war to a victory on the battlefield and on the world stage to become an independent nation.[17] A national documentation project in the 1970s published a book for each province to drive the narrative forward, and military-dominated history has

[13] E.g., O. Kane, *Muslim Modernity in Postcolonial Nigeria: A study of the Society for the Removal of Innovation and Reinstatement of Tradition* (Boston, MA 2003); Roman Loimeier, 'Islamic Reform and Political Change: The Example of Abubakar Gumi and the Yan Izala Movement in Northern Nigeria' in: E.E. Rosander and D. Westerlund ed., *African Islam and Islam in Africa* (London 1997) 286-307.
[14] E.g., H. Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent: Turkish Nationalism and the Turkish Republic* (London 1997).
[15] A. Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (Richmond 1995).
[16] See, for example: S.V.R. Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York, NY 1996); C. Jaffrelot *The Pakistan Paradox* (London 2014); F. Devji, *Muslim Zion: Pakistan as a Political Idea* (London 2013).
[17] K.E. McGregor, *History in Uniform: Military Ideology and the Construction of Indonesia's Past* (Honolulu, HI 2007).

also had the most prominent place in state educational curriculum and public commemorations.[18] Mary Margaret Steedly has even shown how a kind of staid, military-dominated narrative became internalized among Indonesians seeking to earn a veteran's pension.[19]

The English-language historiography of Indonesian decolonization has been much less army-driven, but it has overlooked religion nonetheless. Robert Cribb has described the Indonesian Revolution as 'a long, fractious ceasefire punctuated by brief bouts of heavy fighting'.[20] This led to many foreign accounts, including the earliest, emphasizing the place of diplomacy in the decolonization process.[21] As I have argued elsewhere, Islam played a key part in the diplomatic efforts for Indonesia's decolonization.[22] However, high-level negotiations are not the key way that Indonesians remember the decolonization process, and thus diplomacy has not been the focus of most research. Rather, the most common approach to the Revolution in Indonesian society and in foreign scholarship seeks the experiences of everyday Indonesians.

Even those Anglophone authors looking at ordinary Indonesians' experience of the Revolution have largely overlooked the place of religion. Instead, they have laudably brought other social groups outside the military into focus. Much attention has gone to youth,[23] but also thugs and local

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[18] E.g., Pasifikus Ahok, Slamet Ismail, and Wijoso Tjitrodarjono, *Sejarah Revolusi Kemerdekaan (1945-1949) Daerah Kalimantan Barat* [The History of the Independence Revolution (1945-1949) in the Region of West Kalimantan] (Pontianak 1993). This was a part of a national project, resulting in a book for almost every province in Indonesia at the time. The books are sterile and military-focused, for example listing exactly when and where the battles where, and exactly who died in each one.
[19] M.M. Steedly, *Rifle Reports: A Story of Indonesian Independence* (Berkeley, CA 2013) 56.
[20] R. Cribb, 'Legacies of the "Revolution"' in: D. Bourchier and J. Legge ed., *Democracy in Indonesia: 1950s and 1990s* (Clayton, VI 1994) 74-78: 75.
[21] G. McT. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY 1952); S.E. Crowl, 'Indonesia's Diplomatic Revolution: Lining Up for Non-Alignment, 1945-1955' in: C.E. Goscha and C.F. Ostermann ed., *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia, 1945-1962* (Stanford, CA 2009) 238-257; R.J. McMahon, *Colonialism and Cold War: The United States and the Struggle for Indonesian Independence* (Ithaca, NY 1981).
[22] K.W. Fogg, 'Islam in Indonesia's Foreign Policy, 1945-49', *Al-Jami'ah Journal of Islamic Studies* 53.2 (2015): 303-335.
[23] B.R. O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-46* (Singapore 2009).

militias,[24] women,[25] railway workers,[26] even foreign sympathizers.[27] There have also been excellent regional studies, which look at specific local dynamics in politics and social life.[28]

In the spirit of those studies on focused segments of society, Indonesia's pious Muslims, often called by the Javanese term *santri*, form another key social group that had a distinct experience of the Revolution. Their unique position in society and approach to the issue of decolonization meant that they were able to make a special contribution to the Revolution as well. Pious Muslims believed that the Indonesian Revolution was a struggle to establish an Islamic state, and thus they understood the struggle in an Islamic manner, organized for the struggle in an Islamic way, and expected Islamic outcomes.

This argument does not discount or disprove the previous studies of other sectors of Indonesian society. Rather, it adds another group – and a particularly large group – that had a different experience and understanding of the Indonesian Revolution. Scholars should acknowledge this experience and understanding as representative for a significant portion of the populace. That acknowledgement would help to make sense of Muslim actions in the wake of independence, and to bridge the historical line from Islamic nationalism in the early twentieth century to efforts at Islamic nation-building after 1950. Thus, religion did have a distinct place in Indonesia's decolonization.

[24] R. Cribb, *Gangsters and Revolutionaries: The Jakarta People's Militia and the Indonesian Revolution 1945-1949* (Jakarta 2009).
[25] Steedly, *Rifle Reports*.
[26] Jafar Suryomenggolo, *Organising under the Revolution: Unions and the State in Java, 1945-48* (Singapore 2013).
[27] J. Coast, *Recruit to Revolution: Adventure and Politics during the Indonesian Struggle for Independence*, ed. by L. Noszlopy (Copenhagen 2015).
[28] A. Reid, *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (Kuala Lumpur 1979); A.R. Kahin ed., *Regional Dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution: Unity from Diversity* (Honolulu, HI 1985); R. Peters, *Surabaya, 1945-2010: Neighbourhood, State and Economy in Indonesia's City of Struggle* (Copenhagen 2013).

Islamic understandings of the Revolution

Before looking at the ways in which pious Muslims mobilized for the Revolution using Islam, it is important to unpack Islamic understandings of the Revolution, as the motivation for their particular engagements with the struggle. Many *santri* participated in this war of decolonization because they believed the war was an Islamic struggle. There was wide variation across the country in the understanding of the goals of this Islamic struggle, i.e., what would characterize an appropriately Islamic outcome, ranging from a state led by a Muslim to a state that recognized Islam as its foundation and mandated Islamic law for all inhabitants. However, despite the spectrum of understandings about the goals, and furthermore the frustration of all of these goals in national politics, the shared basic framework of an Islamic struggle continued to orient many devout communities as they joined the Revolution.

Evidence from published books, printed media, oral history accounts, and even government decrees all demonstrate that Muslims articulated the Revolution as an Islamic struggle. The most common phrase to capture 'Islamic struggle', *jihad fi sabilillah* in Arabic or *perang fi sabilillah* in an admixture of Malay and Arabic, was quick to emerge after the Revolution started and continued to come up throughout the four years of fighting. It was used both to motivate participation in the conflict and to frame expectations about that participation.

Most frequently, the invocation of *jihad fi sabilillah* to describe the Indonesian Revolution came in the form of *fatwa*s, or juridical decrees, issued by Muslim clerics in support of joining the fight. Echoes of these can be heard in the documents from the early weeks of the Revolution, as news of independence spread.[29] By October 1945 there were several major *fatwa*s in circulation and by November 1945 regional decrees to this effect were being issued on an almost daily basis.

The most prominent *fatwa*s that have survived from this period emphasize both theological and political motivations for picking up arms. The *fatwa* issued collectively by *ulama* (Islamic religious scholars) in Banda Aceh on 15 October 1945 said 'It is mandatory for us to join in the fighting of the enemies of God and enemies of the Prophet' and called the fighters

[29] Amiq, 'Two Fatwas on Jihad against the Dutch Colonization in Indonesia; A Prosopographical Approach to the Sutyd of Fatwa', *Studia Islamika* 5.3 (1998) 77-124: 95-96.

'the Army of Mujahidin that enjoys the Blessing of the Religion of God'.[30] The famous NU *fatwa* on 22 October, as East Java inched toward the Battle of Surabaya, instructed

> The Islamic community, especially followers of Nahdlatul Ulama, is required to raise arms to oppose the Dutch and their accomplices who wish to re-colonize Indonesia. This requirement is a "*jihad*" that becomes mandatory for every Muslim (*fardlu `ain*) who is within a radius of 94 km.[31]

The use of the religious language of obligation, blessing, and a community of people following in the way of God demonstrate how the clerics who issued these *fatwa*s believed that the Revolution had sacral as well as secular consequences.

Although these two *fatwa*s have survived in written form and have become emblematic of Islamic enthusiasm for the independence movement, they were far from the only juridical decrees that proclaimed the Revolution as an Islamic fight. The conference to found the new Masjumi political party in November 1945 began with a *fatwa* on *jihad fi sabilillah*.[32] At the end of that month, all mosques in Jakarta preached a sermon including a *fatwa* for Indonesian independence as a religious requirement. A similar resolution was passed by a major Islamic Congress in Bukittinggi, Sumatra, in December 1945. Another major text making participation in the Revolution incumbent on every Muslim in the archipelago came out in Purwokerto in March 1946.[33] An Indonesian who was in Cairo at the time even reported a *fatwa* in favor of the Indonesian Revolution as an Islamic struggle being issued in Tunis![34] More decrees came in 1947 with the First

[30] Arsip Provinsi Aceh [Aceh Provincial Archives], Koleksi Karesidenan Aceh 1945-49 dan 1951-52 [Collection of the Aceh Residency, 1945-49 and 1951-52], file #217.

[31] Tim Penyusun Buku PWNU Jatim, *Peranan Ulama dalam Perjuangan Kemerdekaan* [The Role of Ulama in the Independence Struggle] (Surabaya 1995) 59.

[32] R. Madinier, *L'Indonésie, entre démocratie musulmane et Islam intégral: Histoire du parti Masjumi (1945-1960)* (Paris 2012) 84.

[33] These last three cases from Amiq, 'Two Fatwas on Jihad', 91-95; see also: M. Arsjad Th. Loebis, *Toentoenan Perang Sabil* [Guidelines for Holy War] (Medan 1946) 23-25.

[34] M.Z. Hassan, *Diplomasi Revolusi Indonesia di Luar Negeri* [Diplomacy of the Indonesian Revolution outside of the Country] (Jakarta 1980) 37.

Dutch Aggression/Police Action, in 1948 with the Madiun uprising, and as local battles spread throughout the provinces.[35]

In fact, the infant Indonesian government was quite concerned about being overwhelmed by Islamic proclamations about the Revolution, which certainly would color the state's international reputation if not necessarily challenge the government's position on the nature of the fight. Thus, Vice-President Hatta tried to nip this trend in the bud with a Government Declaration on October 17 1945, that prohibited any individual or non-state group from 'declaring a Holy War'.[36] All evidence suggests that this instruction was unsuccessful, but *fatwa*s declaring and renewing *jihad* continued throughout the Revolution.

Sometimes these *fatwas* were issued orally, rather than in writing. (It is worth remembering that 93% of Indonesians were still illiterate as of 1945, so oral transmission would have been the most effective means to spread the message, anyhow.[37]) This was certainly the case for Saifulkan Angai, a young Muslim man in South Kalimantan at the time, who joined his local Muhammadiyah militia. His fighting unit was addressed by the leading local cleric, H. Mahyuni, who promised them that this was a *jihad fi sabilillah*, that their participation was fulfilment of a religious obligation, and that anyone who died in the fighting counted as an Islamic martyr.[38] Oral history suggests that this kind of local preaching was common in many corners of the archipelago, and thus Islamic understandings of the Revolution would have been circulating even more thickly than the documentary record can testify.[39]

Although *fatwa*s show a broad consensus that the Indonesian Revolution was taken as an Islamic struggle, evidence suggests a variety of

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[35] Fogg, 'The Fate of Islamic Nationalism', 166-169.
[36] Koesnodiprodjo, *Himpunan undang2, peraturan2, penetapan2 pemerintah Republik Indonesia 1945* [Compendium of laws, regulations, and instructions of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945] (Jakarta 1951) 60.
[37] Supomo, 'Education in Indonesia: Address given by His Excellency the Indonesian Ambassador at a meeting organised by the Oxford Committee of the World University Service at All Souls College on March 4th, 1955', typescript held in the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford.
[38] Author's interview with H. Saifulkan Angai, Marabahan, South Kalimantan, September 26, 2010.
[39] Author's interviews with T.G.K.H. Drs. M. Thoulun Abd. Rauf, Palembang, June 7, 2010; Buya Mozhar, Padang, June 14, 2010; Ahmad J.D., Mataram, 28 August, 2010.

understandings of what an Islamic decolonized Indonesia might look like. These four years were a crucial window, though, for formulating in more concrete proposals for an Islamic state in Indonesia. The leading Sumatran Islamic leader and polemicist Hamka published a short book in 1946 on the nature of an Islamic State, and another on Islamic Revolution.[40] Sjafruddin Prawiranegara while serving as the President of the Emergency Government of the Republic of Indonesia (the acting head of state while the rest of the Indonesian leadership was in Dutch detention after the Second Aggression/Police Action) wrote a slim volume envisioning Islam as the key pole around which all social life would be organized in the future.[41] Earlier in the Revolution, he had also penned a popular book expounding on the idea of religious socialism, which he believed would be the driving force of decolonization.[42] The Revolution is also the moment when the author and Islamic politician Zainal Abidin Ahmad wrote the core of what would later become his major tome *Creating an Islamic State*, with various key sections published separately in freestanding volumes.[43] The Revolution was a very vibrant time for leaders of the *santri* community to articulate ideas of an Islamic state as the fulfillment of the Islamic struggle for decolonization.

Of course, the most famous effort during the Revolution to implement Islamic principles in the governance of Indonesia, the attempt to include a clause about Islamic law in the Indonesian constitution of 1945, failed.[44] Because of that early failure, the day after Indonesia's proclamation of independence, it has become easy to look back at events with the idea

[40] Hamka, *Negara Islam* [Islamic state] (Padang Panjang 1946); Hamka, *Revolusi agama* [Religious revolution] (Djakarta 1949).

[41] Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, *Islam dalam pergolakan dunia* [Islam in the global upheaval] (Bandung 1950).

[42] Sjafruddin Prawiranegara, *Politik dan revolusi kita* [Our politics and revolution] (Medan 1948).

[43] Zainal Abidin Ahmad, *Membentuk negara Islam* [Creating an Islamic state] (Jakarta 1956), see especially 431-33 on 'Asal usul buku ini' [The origins of this book].

[44] Much ink has been spilled, both inside and outside Indonesia on the long-term consequences of the so-called Jakarta Charter, which would have inserted seven words in the preface to the Constitution of 1945 to oblige Muslims to follow Islamic law. See especially: R. E. Elson, 'Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945', *Indonesia* 88 (2009) 105-130 and Saifuddin Anshari, *The Jakarta Charter of June 1945: The Struggle for an Islamic Constitution in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur 1979).

that an Islamic future for Indonesia was a dead letter from the beginning. This view is anachronistic and incorrect however. Islamic ideas about Indonesia's decolonization process and its future continued to flourish throughout the Revolution and beyond, and the fierce debates in the Constitutional Assembly of 1956-59 demonstrate how Islamic understandings were still flourishing on both an individual and a community level. [45] A significant sector of Indonesian society understood the decolonization process as an Islamic struggle for Islamic ends.

Islamic mobilization reflecting religious understandings

In light of the religious motivations for the fight, it is unsurprising that Muslims organized their participation in the revolution in distinctively Islamic ways. Delving into two examples briefly will demonstrate this point. First, Islamic religious leaders, *ulama*, led their communities through this time of war and played outsized roles in the Revolution. Second, Islamic militias were key participants in the actual fighting and in the mobilization of society for many communities.

The Revolution, like the Japanese occupation that preceded it, was a time of broken communication across the archipelago. This means that experiences of the Revolution were fundamentally local, less influenced by voices and leaders who were not actually present in the community.[46] In this context, religious leaders – as often the most well-educated, well-respected authorities in their towns or villages – became especially prominent.

It has already been noted above how *ulama* issued *fatwa*s in support of the Revolution as an Islamic cause, but they also became prominent revolutionary leaders in many communities. The most concrete means by which they might step up their community leadership was by taking charge of the local government. In the first two years of the Revolution, village headmen and district officers rolled over in huge numbers; the closest study of one region has found that an area near Surakarta had a 45% turnover rate

[45] See: Ahmad Syafii Maarif, 'Islam as the Basis of State: A Study of the Islamic Political Ideals as Reflected in the Constituent Assembly Debates in Indonesia' (PhD. dissertation, University of Chicago 1983).
[46] Abu Hanifah, *Tales of a Revolution* (Sydney 1972) 190.

(80 of 180 officers were fresh faces).[47] The newly selected individuals were disproportionately likely to be *ulama* or religiously-credentialed individuals. For example, after universal suffrage elections for village headmen in West Sumatra in 1946, 90% of the new headmen were aligned with the Islamic party Masjumi – the major party that called for an Islamic state.[48] Many of these headmen were likely *ulama*, but even those who were not would have been close to religious elites. Although the data from across the country was not well-preserved due to wartime conditions, it is clear that many *ulama* took on formal positions in the new state, on the lowest level.

This new role for *ulama* had several important consequences for their communities. As one would expect, it allowed *ulama* to shape their local communities to bring them in line with the Islamic visions that they had for independence. Oral history evidence suggests that this was practiced insofar as it was practicable. One woman living in West Sumatra during the Revolution reported: 'The regulations here were all *sharia* (Islamic law), and the leaders were in line with *sharia* from the village head to the district leaders; everyone followed *sharia*'.[49]

Another consequence was that *ulama* could become the image or manifestation of the new Indonesian state, as seen by other Muslims on the local level. Having a religious scholar as the embodiment of the independent state would have confirmed for many the Islamic understanding of the motivations for decolonization. Seeing a cleric leading the local government would have calcified the idea that the Islamic struggle of the Revolution would result in a religious state after decolonization was finalized.

Ulama were not just more likely to become local heads of government, though. Many *ulama* played prominent roles in actively leading fighting forces to bring about decolonization, taking up arms in support of the Revolution. They did this through the vehicle of the newly formed

[47] Soejatno, 'Revolusi dan ketegangan2 sosial di Surakarta, 1945-1950' [Revolution and social tension in Surakarta, 1945-1950], paper presented to the A.N.U. colloquium on the Indonesian revolution, Canberra, August 1973, p. 19, cited in: A. Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution, 1945-1950* (Westport, CT 1986), 76 n. 7.

[48] A. Kahin, *Rebellion to Integration: West Sumatra and the Indonesian Polity, 1926-1998* (Amsterdam 1999) 123; compare with Sukabumi in Abu Hanifah, *Tales of a Revolution*, 190.

[49] Author's interview with Lela Rosma, Guguak, 50 Koto, West Sumatra, 21 March 2008.

Islamic militias that were springing up everywhere across Indonesia. Islamic militias seem to be the most prominent fighting force after the Indonesian national army.[50] Indeed, in many regions, they were *more* prominent than the national army – better equipped, better funded, and more successful on the battlefield.[51]

Islamic militias also functioned rather differently from the Indonesian armed forces. One difference that elicited awe and wonder in other fighters was their willingness to die and unwillingness to retreat or surrender.[52] These attitudes actually stem from religious injunctions that apply during conditions of holy war, and they were drawn into Islamic militias through sermons, but also through handbooks such as M. Arsjad Lubis's *Guidelines for Holy War*. Lubis warned Muslim soldiers that 'To retreat or to run away from the battle (…) is among the greatest sins'.[53] The theological propensity to put their lives at risk was escalated by the frequent use of amulets by Islamic militias. Although perceived as heterodox today, these were a common feature of Islamic fighting in the Revolution, and could range in form from a small slip of paper issued by a local cleric,[54] to a strip of fabric worn across the forehead into battle,[55] to an heirloom dagger, blessed by an Islamic leader and supposedly imbued with power to render the bearer invulnerable.[56] Belief in such amulets led many Islamic militias to brazen acts of recklessness when facing the enemy, giving them fierce

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[50] Smail, *Bandung in the Early Revolution*, 91-92.
[51] A. Kahin, 'Struggle for Independence: West Sumatra in the Indonesian National Revolution, 1945-1950' (PhD. dissertation, Cornell University 1979) 195-199; A. Reid, *Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in North Sumatra* (Singapore 2014) 210-212.
[52] Cf. Tim Penyusun Buku, *Peranan ulama*, 79.
[53] Loebis, *Toentoenan Perang Sabil*, 29.
[54] Ali Anwar, *K.H. Noer Alie: Kemandirian Ulama Pejuang* [K.H. Noer Alie: The Independence of a Fighting Cleric] (Bekasi 2006) 35.
[55] Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia [National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia], Koleksi RB7 Marzuki Arifin, 1945-1984 [Collection RB7, from Marzuki Arifin, 1945-1984], file #366. Cf. J.R.W. Smail, *Bandung in the Early Revolution, 1945-1946: A Study in the Social History of the Indonesian Revolution* (Ithaca, NY 1964) 104.
[56] M.C. Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java: A Political, Social, Cultural and Religious History, c. 1930 to the Present* (Singapore 2012) 426-428; Formichi, *Islam and the Making of the Nation*, 35-36.

reputations, but also resulting in very high casualty numbers, especially early in the war.[57]

In addition to the more heterodox use of amulets, Islamic militias kept up orthodox practices, as well. Many were known to pray together, to integrate religious sermons and military motivation speeches, and to redouble their religious commitments during the fight. Handbooks like the one written by Lubis gave guidance for special prayers and devotional practices while engaged in a holy war.[58]

Islamic militias might be formed of a local community, organized by a *kyai* (Islamic teacher),[59] or a village community that chose to organize itself with a pious orientation,[60] but most often they were recruited from Islamic schools. On the island of Lombok, for example, the Nahdlatul Wathan school mustered a large militia under the leadership of teachers Tuan Guru Haji Ahmad Rifai and Tuan Guru Haji Faisal.[61] In Solo, Central Java, a local newspaper reported that an entire Islamic school shut down to simply become a fighting unit. The story of 30 November 1945 describes the transformation of *ulama* and *santri* into soldiers: 'The prayer beads that they usually hold are being exchanged for weapons'.[62] These units were natural, not only because the schools were already coherent groups of young men but also because religious teachers often also gave instruction in martial arts or self-defense to their students.[63] Creating a fighting unit out of an Islamic school, though, would drive home to participants once again the religious nature of their struggle.

The new role for *ulama* and the new vehicle of Islamic militias both characterized the Indonesian Revolution in many communities. This was more than Muslim participation in a greater, neutral, nationalist decolonization struggle. Instead, by putting religious leaders in charge of

57 Smail, *Bandung in the Early Revolution*, 104; Reid, *Indonesian National Revolution*, 55.
58 Loebis, *Tuntunan perang sabil*, 39-57.
59 E.g., Peters, *Surabaya*, 27.
60 Abu Hanifah, *Tales of a Revolution*, 190.
61 Author's interview with Jamiluddin Azhar, Mataram, Lombok, 27 July 2010.
62 'Doenia Islam' [The world of Islam], *Merdeka*, 30 November 1945.
63 U.U. Pätzold, 'Self-Defense and Music in Muslim Contexts in West Java' in: D.D. Harnish and A.K. Rasmussen ed., *Divine Inspirations: Music and Islam in Indonesia* (New York, NY 2011) 161-193: 165; Abu Hanifah, *Tales of a Revolution*, 186; Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam di pentas nasional 1945-1965* [Islamic parties on the national stage, 1945-1965] (Jakarta 1987) 28.

their communities and entering battle in Islamic groupings, deploying Islamic practices, and inspired by Islamic messages, one can see how Islamic communities chose to participate in Islamic ways, suggesting that they understood the struggle to be a religious one, too.

Darul Islam

The one religious movement within the Revolution that has received some scholarly attention was a group based in West Java that formally broke with the Indonesian Republic and declared a fully Islamic state. From that declaration, this became a long-lasting, low-level armed uprising, lasting from the 1940s through the 1960s as an effort to enact a more religious state by force. This movement, under S.M. Kartosuwirjo, has been popularly called the 'Darul Islam rebellion', and even some of the historical approaches to it have been skeptical of real religious motivations.[64] More recent scholarship, thankfully, takes the Islamic frame of the uprising more seriously.[65]

Many of the religious hallmarks that have already been described in other parts of the archipelago were also characteristic of the Darul Islam movement. Kartosuwirjo and his lieutenants called Muslims in West Java to join their fight against the Dutch because it was mandated by Islam.[66] In fact, their initial break with the Republic of Indonesia came because the Darul Islam units were unwilling to retreat to the ceasefire line set by the Indonesians and the Dutch in 1947 – an unwillingness to retreat that was also found in manuals for holy war in other parts of the country.[67] *Ulama* took on leadership roles in the Darul Islam.[68] The core units fighting under

[64] For example, the most exhaustive study of the Darul Islam from the 1940s into the 1950s is: C. van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague 1981), which both in the title and in the text suggests that Islam was merely a superficial slogan used by the movement instead of a real motivation.
[65] Formichi, *Islam and the Making of the Nation*.
[66] ANRI, Koleksi RA 3 Djogja Documenten, #243, 'Keterangan ringkas tentang "Perang Sabil" ' [Brief summary regarding 'Holy War'].
[67] H.H. Dengel, *Darul Islam – NII dan Kartosuwirjo* [Darul Islam – NII and Kartosuwirjo] (Jakarta 2011) 61; G. Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, 234; cf. Lubis, *Tuntunan perang sabil*, 28.
[68] Dengel, *Darul Islam – NII dan Kartosuwirjo*, 75.

Kartosuwirjo came from an Islamic school that he had established in his wife's hometown.[69]

Darul Islam should be seen within the broader context of the religious movement for Indonesia's independence. It sits on a spectrum of religious understandings of the decolonization process, unique not because of its desire for an Islamic state or its understanding that the Indonesian Revolution was in fact a holy war, but rather because it was extreme in its non-cooperation with the Republic of Indonesia. The radically different understanding of the ends of decolonization held by the Darul Islam was just one of many interpretations that circulated on the grassroots level during the 1940s, alongside leftist, nativist, and more military understandings.

Conclusions

How, then, should we think about the role of religion in Indonesia's decolonization process? Certainly religious ideas and ideals motivated many Muslims at the grassroots level to participate in the struggle for an independent Indonesia, and it also structured the ways that Muslims participated in the conflict. This was another segment of the population with an experience of the Revolution that differed from the mainstream, nationalist narrative, and a particularly large segment, so it is important to account for their understanding.

The religious experience of the Indonesian Revolution remained relevant in pious communities for many years afterward. Representatives in the Constitutional Assembly cited their communities' sacrifices during the Revolution to justify demands for an Islamic foundation to the Indonesian constitution.[70] More recently, scholarship has pointed to communities who experienced the fight for decolonization as a holy war as the originating communities of modern religious extremist groups.[71]

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[69] Ibidem, 25, 43.

[70] See, for example: the speech of K.H. Abdul Wahab Chasbullah, in Wilopo ed., *Tentang dasar negara Republik Indonesia dalam Konstituante* [Regarding the foundation of the country for the Republic of Indonesia, in the Constitutional Assembly] 3 (Bandung 1958) 330-347: 337.

[71] Q. Temby, 'Imagining an Islamic State in Indonesia: From Darul Islam to Jemaah Islamiyah', *Indonesia* 89 (April 2010) 1-36.

In the twenty-first century, it is also important to think beyond Indonesia's borders about the ways in which Islamic militias, participating in a broader political struggle, may interpret the struggle differently and have different aims coming out of the military phase. This has implications for recent and current crises in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. The idea could also be extended to other religious groups outside Islam. For example, the understanding that armed Buddhist nationalist groups have of the recent civil war in Sri Lanka or of the political reform process in Myanmar has been deeply colored by their religious approach, in ways that must be taken into account.

Within Indonesia, the alternative, religious understanding of the war of decolonization in Indonesia cannot be ignored, because it is crucial to understand the broader sweep of Islamic social life ever since. It is time to write religion back into Indonesia's decolonization process.