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Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java

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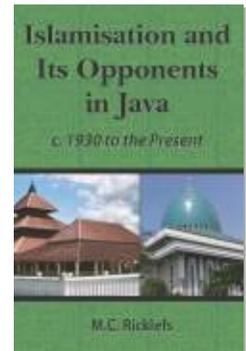
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CHAPTER 3

War and Revolution, 1942–9: The hardening of boundaries

Sandwiched between the 1930s and 1950s lies the chaos of the Japanese occupation and the Indonesian Revolution. This was a time of intense upheaval and hardship, of political and social conflict that was immensely influential in shaping the future social, cultural, political and religious experiences of the Javanese. Oppression, violence, suffering, disease, malnutrition, starvation and death became common. This was the only time in the period covered by this book when the population of Java appears hardly to have grown at all and may even have declined. While this period has been intensely studied, the socio-religious aspects that are of primary interest to us in this book are, unfortunately, poorly documented.

The Japanese occupation¹

The earliest serious study of Islamic aspects of the occupation period was Harry Benda's doctoral dissertation, published as *The crescent and the rising*

¹ There are many works covering the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, most of which give emphasis to Java. A particularly important study is Shigeru Sato, *War, nationalism and peasants: Java under the Japanese occupation, 1942–1945* (St. Leonards, NSW: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1994). On the hardships of the period, see also Sato's article "Economic soldiers" in Java: Indonesian laborers mobilized for agricultural projects' in Paul H. Kratoska (ed.), *Asian labor in the wartime Japanese empire* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), esp. pp. 131, 373 n7.

*sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese occupation 1942–1945.*² The sources available to Benda enabled him to write about national-level political issues but gave little insight into grass-roots developments during this period. The overriding question of interest to Benda in 1955, when he completed his dissertation at Cornell, was which side of Indonesian politics was strengthened or weakened by Japanese divide-and-rule policies. The main players in his analysis were defined largely by the emerging tripartite analysis of Clifford Geertz, who saw Javanese society as consisting of the elite (and rather ‘secular’) *priyayi*, the pious *santri* and the nominally Muslim peasant *abangan*. Indonesian politics of the mid-1950s — as we will see in the next chapter — indeed suggested that these were important distinctions. Benda’s attempt to make sense of the multiple directions and redirections, of the wartime exigencies and chaos that inevitably attended the Japanese occupation, however, produced a rather confusing picture. His analysis was disputed persuasively by, among others, L. Sluimers,³ who argued that the primary distinction to be observed in Japanese policy was not between *santri* politicians and secular nationalists, but rather between conservative and non-conservative elites of all socio-religious orientations. Islam in itself was not, he argued, a central category in Japanese policy. The Japanese did not think that there was just one sort of Islam in Java. The dreaded Japanese military police (Kenpeitai) observed that ‘there were considerable regional differences in degrees of faith among the Javanese Muslims’.⁴ Kurasawa, too, rejected Benda’s analytical scheme on the basis of her analysis of Japanese sources for the occupation period.⁵ Our primary interest here, however, is less in what Japanese policies were intended to do than in the actual impact of the occupation upon the varieties of Islam lived in Java.

One of the most important departures traceable to the Japanese period was the political education and involvement of Traditionalist NU *kyais*. Prior to the Japanese occupation, it was urban-based Modernists who were most

² Harry J. Benda, *The crescent and the rising sun: Indonesian Islam under the Japanese occupation 1942–1945* (The Hague and Bandung: W. van Hoeve Ltd, 1958).

³ L. Sluimers, “‘Nieuwe orde’ op Java: De Japanse bezettingspolitiek en de Indonessische elites 1942–1943’, *BKI* vol. 124 (1968), no. 3, pp. 336–67.

⁴ Barbara Gifford Shimer and Guy Hobbs (transl.), *The Kenpeitai in Java and Sumatra (Selections from Nihon Kenpei Seishi)* (intro. Theodore Friend. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Translation Series Publication no. 65, 1986), p. 41.

⁵ Aiko Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan kontrol: Studi tentang perubahan sosial di pedesaan Jawa 1942–1945* (Jakarta: Yayasan Karti Sarana and Penerbit PT Gramedia Widiasarana Indonesia, 1993), especially p. 329.

likely to be politically active, although Muhammadiyah itself studiously avoided anti-colonial politics and continued to cooperate with the colonial regime in its educational and welfare work. In the countryside, Traditionalist *kyais* were mainly involved in their *pesantren* schools. They were regarded with considerable respect by their surrounding societies, even (it seems) by many of the nominally Muslim *abangan* majority. As noted in the previous chapter, NU was pressing the colonial government with regard to certain policy matters, but this was not a matter of anti-colonial agitation, no matter how much the *kyais* may have wished privately for a non-*kafir* government.

With the Japanese in charge, the *kyais* still faced a *kafir* government, but one that took a very different view of them. As the Japanese took over from the Dutch in Java, their first priority was to control the population, restrict all political activity, put down disorder and get the society under control. When they felt that had been achieved, their priority turned towards the mobilisation of the Javanese population, so as to bolster Japan's defences against a possible Allied counterattack (which did not, in the end, materialise). At each stage of this policy evolution, the *kyais* were of importance to the Japanese: the *kyais* did not have radical political demands of their own (unlike some of the urban Modernist politicians) and they did have extensive social networks and high prestige among the rural majority (again, unlike the Modernists). Moreover, the Japanese expected them to be rather naïve and manipulable, unlike the Modernists who were better educated in the ways of the modern world. Suddenly the Traditionalist *kyais* — usually regarded as social curiosities or poorly educated religious atavisms by both the Dutch colonial regime and the Modernist Muslims — thus found themselves at the centre of government attention. There began a politicisation that would eventually turn NU into a potent political party. All analysts agree on the significance of this development. As Benda put it, 'The politicization of the *ulama* was the most important aspect of Japanese Islamic policy in 1943'.⁶

The Japanese sought to unite Modernist and Traditionalist Islam under moderate leaders from mid-1942 onwards.⁷ The occupiers decreed 'Principles governing the military administration of Java' in February 1943, which included the following two provisions, the first of which was a continuation of Dutch policy and the second a significant departure.

[1] Special care must be taken to respect local customs and practices in the execution of government. ... Therefore, of the various items to

⁶ Benda, *Crescent and the rising sun*, p. 135.

⁷ See M.A. Aziz, *Japan's colonialism and Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1955), pp. 204–5.

which attention has been called, the most important is the respect for local customs. ... Further, every effort is being made to respect practices based upon religion and thereby contribute to reassuring and holding the hearts of the people.

[2] Secondly, there is the matter of the treatment accorded Islamic religious leaders who hold positions of social, religious, and, in some places, political importance. Special care has been taken in their treatment, and acts such as casting scorn on them with pretentious exhibitions of Japanese superiority, or interfering in their private lives, are being avoided.⁸

The Japanese desire to see the contending wings of Islam brought together culminated in the formation of Masyumi (Majlis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims) in late 1943. Masyumi contained both Modernists and Traditionalists. Its leadership reflected the Japanese wish to avoid religious activists with established political agendas: rather than being given to the urban Modernist politicians whom the Japanese distrusted, it went to leading figures of Muhammadiyah and NU. The nominal head was Ky. H. Hasyim Asy'ari, one of the most senior *kyais* of East Java and — along with Ky. H. Wahab Chasbullah — a founding father of NU. The Japanese had foolishly arrested Hasyim Asy'ari early in their occupation but now turned to him for leadership; in fact he remained in Jombang in charge of his *pesantren* Tebuireng, probably the foremost Traditionalist school in Java for much of the 20th century. Actual leadership in Masyumi was exercised by his son Ky. H. Wachid Hasyim, then just 30 years old, who later occupied cabinet positions during the Revolution and eventually became Minister of Religion (1949–52).⁹ Masyumi branches were set up in every residency across Java. In August 1944 Hoesein Djajadiningrat — one of the most distinguished *priyais* of West Java — was replaced as head of the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama, Shūmubu) by Hasyim Asy'ari, but again he rarely in fact acted in this role. As deputy head of the Office a Muhammadiyah figure, H. Abdul Kahar Muzakir, was appointed and it was he who in practice led the organisation. Hasyim Asy'ari's son Wachid Hasyim was appointed as advisor (*Sanyo*) to the Office.¹⁰

⁸ Harry J. Benda, James K. Irikura and Kōichi Kishi (eds), *Japanese military administration in Indonesia: Selected documents* ([New Haven, CT:] Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Translation Series no. 6, 1965), p. 73.

⁹ For a biography of Wachid Hasyim, see Azyumardi Azra and Saiful Umam, *Menteri-menteri Agama RI*, pp. 81–113.

¹⁰ Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan kontrol*, pp. 282–4.



Illustration 8 Tebuireng *pesantren*, Jombang, in 1987:
the oldest building, a dormitory for *santris*

To their lives centring on piety and *pesantren*, Java's *kyais* now increasingly added politics. Following in the footsteps of earlier Modernist activists, from the time of the Japanese occupation onwards many among Java's Traditionalist leaders embraced political leadership roles. The changes brought by the Japanese also gave the *kyais* final and irreversible victory over their main competitors for control of rural Islam, the formerly Dutch-appointed *pangulus*. The Japanese recognised how little influence these government appointees had among Muslims and therefore how little use they were to the occupation forces. The *kyais* were henceforth unchallenged by any other religious leadership group in the Javanese countryside for many decades.

From mid-1943 to mid-1945, the Japanese ran political indoctrination courses for *kyais* in Jakarta (as Batavia was now renamed); over a thousand attended the 17 one-month courses that were held.¹¹ This of course represented a tiny percentage — perhaps some 5 per cent — of Java's *kyais*

¹¹ The most authoritative account of Japanese indoctrination of village *kyais* is in Aiko Kurasawa's 1987 PhD thesis (Cornell University), published as *Mobilisasi dan kontrol*; see especially pp. 273–340. The account here relies upon Kurasawa's work, unless otherwise noted.

but this group was significant for the future. Kurasawa's analysis shows that not all of the attendees were in fact *kyais*, although they represented the largest single group. Religious officials such as *pangulus* and subordinate officers also attended, as did some secular school teachers and others. Most were under the age of 40. Kurasawa speculates that this may have reflected Japanese policy, but that it is also possible that senior *kyais* who were ordered to attend these courses sent younger representatives in their places. The courses for *kyais* were offered in the Indonesian language rather than Javanese — the latter being a demanding language that few (if any) Japanese mastered. This undoubtedly contributed to the spread of Indonesian and of the roman script among Traditionalist leaders, which was crucial to their expanding political horizons; it may also explain the preponderance of younger attendees, for both the Western alphabet and the Indonesian language would have presented difficulties for many older *kyais*. Nearly 40 per cent of attendees were affiliated with NU, while some 12 per cent were of Muhammadiyah background. Some had studied in Mecca or Cairo but only very few had studied in Dutch schools. There were also some three-month courses held from April 1944 for teachers of Modernist *madrasahs*, but little is known about their content. The training courses for *kyais* covered Japanese history and politics, including justifications for the war against the Western colonial powers. Indonesian and Japanese interests were depicted as being consistent. To this were added practical means of assisting the occupation, including ways of improving peasant agriculture, and physical exercises.

The courses changed as they developed and became more Java- (or Indonesia-)centric. In September 1944 the Japanese Prime Minister General Koiso Kuniaki promised that independence would be granted — at a future date not yet declared — to what he still called the 'East Indies' (*To-Indo*, the term the Japanese employed officially until April 1945). In Java, the Japanese now gave emphasis to encouraging nationalist forces. Consequently, from November 1944 the training courses for *kyais* dropped the lessons about the Greater East Asian War and replaced them with indoctrination about defence of the Indonesian motherland. Japanese history was dropped at some point and more time was given to the history of Java, which seems to have been particularly popular. It was taught by Dr Prijono, who later served as independent Indonesia's Minister of Education and Culture. Other prominent Indonesian intellectuals were reportedly also involved in teaching these courses, including the Modernist leaders Haji Rasul and H. Agus Salim,¹² but Japanese instructors taught about half of the subjects.

¹² Benda, *Crescent and the rising sun*, p. 248 n10.

The politicisation of Islamic leaders was also visible in other ways. In January 1944 the colonial ban on political matters being raised in religious teachings was abolished. Now any teacher who wanted to explain the purpose of the Greater East Asia War or to encourage the masses to support the Japanese military as a part of religious teaching was free to do so. At the same time, the Jawa Hokokai (Java Service Association) was established for everyone over the age of 14. Prominent among its leaders were the foremost 'secular' nationalist leaders Sukarno and Hatta, along with Ky. H. Hasyim Asy'ari of NU and Ky. H. Mas Mansur, a pre-war chairman of Muhammadiyah.

Thus it was that the Islamic leadership groups thought by the Japanese to be the least political — NU and Muhammadiyah — were becoming involved in political leadership. We should not, however, assume that this development was without risks for Islamic leaders. Kurasawa suggests that *kyais* who were pro-Japanese were suspected of being Japanese spies by the rural populace. For example, Ky. Abas, the senior *kyai* of *pesantren* Buntet in Cirebon and elder brother of the Ky. Anas mentioned in the previous chapter, appears to have lost much (or all) of his social influence through his support of the Japanese; this is discussed further below. In Kurasawa's view, even if rural *santris* continued to hold *kyais* in high regard, the *abangan* majority are unlikely to have done so.¹³ Thus, the politicisation of the *kyais* may have contributed to greater *santri-abangan* animosities.

We should note a significant difference between Modernist and Traditionalist leadership, which persists to the present day. The largely urban Modernists, seeking to change society and its observation of Islam, thought religious, social, cultural and political activism to be natural and proper. Muhammadiyah avoided overt political stances as a tactic to survive in the changing political contexts of Indonesia, but never declared political action itself to be improper for Muslim leaders. Many Modernist figures were politically active from the early 20th century into the 21st and — whether individuals agreed or disagreed with their particular programmes and activities — there was no significant questioning of their right to be so. The Traditionalist *kyais* of the countryside, however, faced a different social calculation. Popular respect for them rested then — as now — in large measure on a view of them as pious, other-worldly men, mostly gifted with extraordinary spiritual capacities, who stood above the grubby economic and political competitions of the day. The more obviously they entered the world of politics, the more ordinary they seemed, the less other-worldly, the less

¹³ Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan kontrol*, pp. 326–8.

immune to the complexities of daily life. And, thus, the less worthy of respect they seemed. The Japanese occupation's political empowerment of the *kyais* thus commenced a dilemmatic relationship between their socio-religious standing and their political activism. And, in the desperately difficult circumstances of the occupation, their collaboration with the Japanese probably heightened *abangan* animosity towards *kyais* and the overtly pious *santris* in general. As for the purpose of Japanese policy, Kurasawa argues persuasively that the Japanese intended to use *kyais* to mobilise the rural population, but never trusted Islamic leaders enough to contemplate actually freeing them from the control of the Japanese-directed state bureaucracy.¹⁴

We need also to understand the mode of thought and inherited political traditions of Traditionalists. Whereas Modernists denied that the four Sunni Schools of Islam were authoritative guides to faith and practice and invoked the powers of human reason, Traditionalists accepted the authority of those Schools and of the centuries of legal traditions that arose from them. In the political realm, the dominant Traditionalist idea was that any form of government was better than no government; that even imperfect authority was preferable to anarchy, and merited loyalty. Their principal point of reference was *Qur'an* 4:59, which admonished believers to 'obey God and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority over you'.¹⁵ So long as the Japanese administration did not actually oppress Islam or prevent Muslims from worshipping — and it sought not to do such things — then the Traditionalist *kyais* were inclined to accept its authority, just as they had accepted that of the Dutch colonial regime. Traditionalist thought thus gave *kyais* a means of justifying an approach that served the welfare of their schools, their students and themselves. Over the coming decades of independent Indonesia, NU would often be accused of political opportunism, of not taking a stand on principle. Readers therefore need to bear in mind the ironic truth that — so long as the observation of Islam was not actually threatened — in political matters it was a principle of Traditionalist scholarship not to stand on principle.

The general hardship and chaos of the occupation period tended to radicalise and politicise the entire population and religious leaders were not immune to this effect. This did not always lead them in directions supportive of the Japanese. In Tasikmalaya — in West Java, outside the Javanese-

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 329–31.

¹⁵ An overview of this issue is to be found in Gregory John Fealy, 'Ulama and politics in Indonesia: A history of the Nahdlatul Ulama, 1952–1967' (PhD thesis, Monash University, 1998), pp. 50 et seqq.

speaking heartland — an anti-Japanese rebellion broke out at a *pesantren*, led by its *kyai*. The uprising was, of course, crushed by the Japanese and the head of the *pesantren*, Ky. Zainal Mustafa, was executed with 22 others.¹⁶ The Japanese authorities were shocked by this episode. The Kenpeitai called this ‘the greatest purely civilian rebellion in the history of the military government of Java’, which ‘clearly brought home to us the fearsome nature of religious rebellion’.¹⁷

In Indramayu — on the boundaries of the Javanese and Sundanese cultural areas — several similar episodes of resistance occurred that almost totally disrupted local government from April to August 1944.¹⁸ This was an area noted for high levels of Islamic observance, many *pesantrens* and large numbers of locals who had accumulated sufficient wealth to undertake the *hajj*. Here, as in many parts of Java, peasant farmers hated the Japanese administration’s increasingly heavy rice requisitioning. Low-level resistance was no doubt common throughout Java, but in Indramayu it became overt village-level rebellion. The farmers were in most cases led by *hajjis* who were usually also the foremost land-owners and patrons. Several local officials were murdered by the insurgents and Chinese shops were attacked. In some cases *kyais* offered support in the form of sanctified water that was thought to convey invulnerability. But *kyais* were also employed by the Japanese to attempt to calm the uprisings; when this failed, the Japanese used force to arrest protesters, execute many and send others into flight and hiding. The Japanese sent Ky. Abas (mentioned above) to invite rebels at the village of Kaplongan to a meeting in Cirebon, with guarantees of their personal safety. A dozen came, were arrested and were never seen again. Ky. Abas was reputedly so enthusiastic in his support of the Japanese that locals said of him, ‘Kyai Abas is finished (*abis*), a *kyai* of Japanese stamp’.

Despite the terrible hardships of the occupation, the Japanese *bushido* style, with its emphasis on martial and spiritual values, honour and loyalty, struck a responsive chord in many young rural Javanese men, whose *pesantren* milieu also emphasised spiritual disciplines, obedience to the *kyai* and martial arts.¹⁹ The Japanese veneration of violence and creation of indigenous armed forces encouraged such ideas further. Peta (Pembela Tanah Air, Protectors of

¹⁶ Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan kontrol*, pp. 457–71.

¹⁷ Shimer and Hobbs, *Kenpeitai in Java and Sumatra*, p. 41.

¹⁸ The account here is based on Kurasawa, *Mobilisasi dan kontrol*, pp. 471–88.

¹⁹ Similar observations are made in Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution: Occupation and resistance, 1944–1946* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), pp. 31–4.

the Fatherland) was established in 1943. Its officer corps included officials, teachers, *kyais* and Indonesian soldiers of the former Dutch colonial army. By the end of the war it had some 37,000 men in Java. Jawa Hokokai had a youth organisation called Barisan Pelopor (Vanguard Column), which began guerilla training in May 1945. By the end of the war it reportedly had 80,000 members. In December 1944 Masyumi acquired its own armed group called Barisan Hizbullah (God's Forces) which was said to have 50,000 members at the end of the war. An important element in Hizbullah was NU's paramilitary arm, later known as Banser (Barisan Ansor Serba Guna, Ansor All-Purpose Forces).²⁰

By mid-1945, *kyais* as well as urban Modernists were accustomed to political leadership roles. In some circumstances this enhanced these figures' social leadership; in others it undermined it. In either case, all of Javanese society was thoroughly churned up by the occupation experience and religious leaders were as affected as anyone else. With religious leadership available, with the masses of Java mobilised and politicised both by Japanese propaganda and by the extreme hardship of the occupation, with indoctrinated armed groups trained to resist an Allied reconquest, Java was ripe for a revolution in which Islam would play a major role; it should not surprise readers by this stage to learn that this role was not always a unifying one.

The Revolution

The Indonesian Revolution has been intensively studied and is covered in many fine works of scholarship; we need not review its general history here.²¹ This was a time of confusion in which — in common with many another revolution — violence was often among Indonesians themselves as much as between Indonesians and the colonial forces that sought to reconquer the archipelago. As the nationalist elite and the national armed forces struggled to win independence — and eventually succeeded in doing so — in the countryside of Java the pent-up animosities of the Japanese occupation era, the competition for resources and influence inspired by the Revolution, the by-now deeply rooted social differences between *santri* and

²⁰ On the history of Banser, see Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, 'Religion, politics and violence in Indonesia: Learning from Banser's experience', *SI* vol. 15 (2008), no. 3, pp. 417–42.

²¹ The best overview is to be found in Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian national revolution, 1945–1950* (Hawthorn, Vic: Longman, 1974). A briefer overview is in Ricklefs, *History of modern Indonesia*, Chapter 18.

abangan and the rapid re-politicisation of those differences produced social violence that affected Javanese life for several decades to come. This was the start of a time of overt violence and bloodshed that would build to a horrific climax in the mid-1960s.

Sukarno and Hatta read the declaration of independence on 17 August 1945 but political parties were only formed after Sutan Sjahrir and Amir Sjarifuddin (both Sumatrans, the former from Minangkabau, the latter a Batak Christian, and neither of whom had collaborated with the Japanese) carried out a peaceful takeover within the Revolutionary government that created responsible cabinet government in October 1945. Five political parties are of particular interest to us here. The first is Masyumi, which still included both Modernist and Traditionalist Muslims. In November 1945, the Muhammadiyah and NU leaders whom the Japanese had favoured as leaders of Masyumi lost out to urban Modernist politicians, among whom the most prominent were the Javanese Sukiman Wirjosandjojo and the Minangkabau intellectual Mohammad Natsir, a leading figure in the quite puritanical Modernist organisation Persatuan Islam. On the left of Indonesian politics, reflecting secularist and socialist leanings, were found Amir Sjarifuddin and his Pesindo (Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia, Indonesian Socialist Youth). Sjahrir formed the Socialist Party (Partai Sosialis), which Amir's group joined for a time. On the far left was a revived Communist Party (PKI). In January 1946 the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) was revived. As President of the new nation, Sukarno was supposed to be above politics so PNI was now in principle detached from his influence, but of course it continued to carry the air of being the Sukarnoist political vehicle, with many pre-war PNI figures still among its leaders.

For our purposes, it is important to understand the socio-religious categories in Java to which these political parties related, and which they further politicised. Their constituencies may be understood roughly as given below:

- Masyumi: Both Modernist and Traditionalist *santri*, the former mainly in urban areas and the latter mainly in the countryside. Given the predominantly rural character of Java's population, our principal interest here is in the rural Traditionalist *santri* followers of NU within Masyumi. This included fighters in Hizbullah.
- Pesindo: Leftist *abangan* youth militia, soon to be connected with the People's Democratic Front (FDR, Front Demokrasi Rakyat) coalition and then PKI.
- Partai Sosialis: Leftist and *abangan*, but not PKI-affiliated and in fact with little following in the countryside.

- PKI: *abangan* villagers and urban proletariat.
- PNI: *priyayi* bureaucrats with an *abangan* following as well.

There was a history of animosity between PKI and Islamic organisations going back to the 1920s and it was about to get worse. According to Saifuddin Zuhri, Hizbullah fighters (among whom he was a leader) — and no doubt many other Traditionalists — interpreted the political spectrum that now emerged in the light of *Qur'an* 56: 27–56.²² This passage distinguishes between ‘those on the right’ and ‘those on the left’. On the Day of Judgement, those on the right are promised the pleasures of paradise: gold and jeweled couches under shade trees, with virgins as companions. Those on the left, however, will find only scorching winds, thick black smoke and boiling water. Thus, for Traditionalists who relied on Qur’anic sources, the leftists of the emerging Indonesian political scene represented not just a contending political ideology and competing faction, but people in rebellion against God who were destined for hell.

Islamic organisations gave full support to the Revolution. In October and November 1945 conflicts between British-commanded — mostly Indian — South East Asia Command (SEAC) forces and the Revolutionaries grew, particularly in Surabaya. *Kyais* and their *pesantren* students flooded into the city to fight. NU held a massive meeting there on 21–2 October at which it declared that defence of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia and simultaneously of Islam had the character of *Sabilullah* (Holy War). Resistance against renewed colonial conquest was a personal obligation for all Muslims.²³ The Surabaya violence culminated in a bloody sweep in November in which SEAC regained control of the city at a cost of at least 6,000 Indonesian lives. On the eve of the SEAC advance, the fiery Sutomo (‘Bung Tomo’) used his revolutionary radio broadcasts to encourage resistance:

Our slogan remains the same: Independence or death! And we know, brothers, that victory will be ours, because God is on the side of the righteous. You can believe that, brothers: God will protect us all. *Allahu akbar* [God is great]! *Allahu akbar! Allahu akbar!*²⁴

The Indonesian fighters’ sacrificial heroism provided a rallying-cry for the Revolutionaries thereafter. This was also one of the episodes that persuaded

²² Saifuddin Zuhri, *Berangkat dari pesantren*, p. 322.

²³ Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution*, p. 157; Fealy, ‘Ulama and politics’, p. 42.

²⁴ Quoted in William H. Frederick, *Visions and heat: The making of the Indonesian Revolution* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1989), p. 266.

the British to remain neutral in the Indonesian conflict and leave it to the Dutch to try to reconquer their colony for themselves.

A characteristic phenomenon of the early revolutionary period, from late 1945 into 1946, was a series of ‘social revolutions’ in the name of the ‘people’s sovereignty’. In these episodes, local people took action against officials and others who had collaborated with the Japanese, engaged in black marketeering to the detriment of their fellows, or in other ways were regarded as enemies. Such figures were humiliated, deposed, beaten, imprisoned and/or killed. In some cases *abangan* or *santri* villagers overthrew headmen who were from the other faction. In Pare — the East Java research site later studied by Clifford Geertz and his colleagues — evidently it was mostly *santri* village headmen (*lurabs*) who were overthrown and replaced by *abangan* figures.²⁵ In the Javanese-speaking enclave of Banten in West Java, *santris* (many of them enlisted in Hizbullah) led by *kyais* effectively overthrew ‘the entire ruling class of Banten ... in a matter of weeks’.²⁶ At this early stage, however, there were still episodes in which PKI activists and *santri* activists cooperated.²⁷

Abangan-santri violence

The year 1948 was crucial in entrenching leftist vs Islamic — which is to say also *abangan* vs *santri* — tensions and taking them to a higher, bloody level. This ended episodes of cooperation across these lines, of the kind seen in some circumstances early in the Revolution. In general, that year was crucial in a more general sense in the Indonesian Revolution’s history. It saw the return of Musso, the PKI leader of the 1920s who had not been in Indonesia since the failed Communist uprising of 1926–7, except for a clandestine visit in 1935. He was an orthodox Stalinist in outlook and had little understanding of how much Indonesian dynamics had changed in his absence — in which he was like the Dutch who were then attempting to

²⁵ Robert R. Jay, *Religion and politics in rural Central Java* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Cultural Report Series no. 12, 1963), p. 68.

²⁶ Anderson, *Java in a time of revolution*, pp. 336–7.

²⁷ See, for example, Michael C. Williams, ‘Banten: “Rice debts will be repaid with rice, blood debts with blood”’, pp. 55–81 in Audrey R. Kahin (ed.), *Regional dynamics of the Indonesian Revolution: Unity from diversity* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985); Anton Lucas, *One soul, one struggle: Region and revolution in Indonesia* (Sydney: Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with Allen & Unwin, 1991).

reconquer the archipelago. He believed that there should be only one party of the proletariat, so ordered other leftists to unite under the leadership of the PKI. The leftists had formed themselves into a coalition called the People's Democratic Front (Front Demokrasi Rakyat) led by Amir Sjarifuddin, who announced that he had been a secret Communist since 1935; his followers now came under the Communist umbrella.

In September 1948, PKI activists seized power in Madiun, announced the creation of a new 'National Front' government and began killing their opponents, including PNI and Masyumi people. Sukarno called upon Indonesians to reject Musso's Soviet-style rebel government and to unite behind himself and Hatta. The army followed his orders and in a series of bloody encounters drove the Communists out of Madiun, killing Musso in the process. Amir Sjarifuddin was captured and later executed. Some 35,000 supporters of the Madiun uprising were imprisoned. The death toll is not known with confidence, but was probably of the order of 8,000. The army carried out anti-PKI actions widely throughout Java in the wake of Madiun, entrenching a tradition of army-Communist hostility. It was this armed destruction of a Communist *putsch* that finally impelled the United States — by then convinced that the world was caught in a struggle between a 'Soviet bloc' and a 'free world' — into fully fledged support of the manifestly anti-Communist Indonesian revolutionaries. This galvanised international support and, along with the resistance of the Indonesians themselves, ultimately brought the Revolution to a successful conclusion in 1949. Here, however, we need to delve below the level of these grand politics to see what we can of socio-religious dynamics on the ground in Java.

In the months before the Madiun uprising, tensions were rising in Central Java.²⁸ A strike led by PKI's workers' union SOBSI (Sentral

²⁸ The general account of the Madiun affair here rests upon Ann Swift, *The road to Madiun: The Indonesian Communist uprising of 1948* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Monograph Series, 1989); A.H. Nasution, *Sekitar perang kemerdekaan Indonesia* (11 vols; Bandung: Penerbit Angkasa, 1977–9), vol. 8; Himawan Soetanto, *Madiun dari republik ke republik: Aspek militer pemberontakan PKI di Madiun 1948* (Jakarta: Penerbit Kata, 2006); and George McTurnan Kahin, *Nationalism and revolution in Indonesia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952), Chapters 9–10. On Surakarta specifically, see Julianto Ibrahim, *Bandit dan pejuang di simpang Bengawan: Kriminalitas dan kekerasan masa revolusi di Surakarta* (Wonogiri: Penerbit Bina Citra Pustaka, 2004), esp. pp. 172–7. See also Kuntowidjojo (ed.), *Sejarah perjuangan Hizbullah Sabillillah Divisi Sunan Bonang* (Surakarta: Yayasan Bhakti Utama and Masyarakat Sejarawan Indonesia Cabang Yogyakarta, 1997), pp. 132–6.

Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, All-Indonesia Workers' Organisation Central) and its peasant union BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia, Indonesian Peasants' Front) broke out in June 1948 at Delanggu. This involved workers at seven cotton plantations and over 15,500 laborers at a gunny-sack factory. They initially demanded better conditions, such as clothing and rice to be supplied to workers, but the strike soon acquired the shape of political action against the Republican government based in Yogyakarta. The Communist constituency was from the *abangan* peasantry, while *santri* peasants were in Masyumi's Sarekat Tani Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Peasants' Union).²⁹ The latter continued working in the cotton fields, and were attacked by SOBSI activists. Houses were burned and people were kidnapped. On 10 July opponents of the strikers who said that they were Hizbullah fired on demonstrating strikers. The conflict lasted 1.5 hours and left two strikers and seven Hizbullah wounded. The leftist coalition FDR issued a statement in support of the strikers, signed by (among others) Amir Sjarifuddin for the Socialist Party, the PKI's D.N. Aidit (just 25 years old, one of the new leadership group emerging in the Party) and the Pesindo leader Sudisman (another of the new PKI Politburo members, only three years older than Aidit). The army sent troops into Surakarta to quell the violence. The strike itself was settled on 18 July with the assistance of Vice-President Hatta, largely on terms demanded by BTI and SOBSI. The army commander Sudirman ordered the military units on the two sides — the pro-government Siliwangi Division and the leftist, FDR-sympathising and heavily Pesindo-derived Panembahan Senopati Division — to cease fire. Indonesian navy troops were also on the Communist side.

Radicalism and conflict continued in Surakarta, creating what A.H. Nasution (both a senior military commander and, later, a writer of the history of the Revolution) and others called a 'Wild West atmosphere'³⁰ on the eve of the Madiun uprising. On 15 September Sukarno declared martial law in Surakarta. Heavy fighting erupted thereafter but within two days the Siliwangi Division had expelled the leftist fighters from Surakarta. Pro-PKI forces thus lost this battle in the streets of Surakarta so that, as Henri Alers observed, 'the Communist uprising was in fact militarily defeated

²⁹ See Soejatno, 'Revolution and social tensions in Surakarta, 1945–1950' (transl. Benedict Anderson), *Indonesia* no. 17 (Apr. 1974), p. 106. Masyumi established Sarekat Tani Islam Indonesia in 1946 initially for the purpose of collecting *zakat*; Kahin, *Nationalism and Revolution*, pp. 307–8.

³⁰ Nasution, *Sekitar perang kemerdekaan*, vol. 8, p. 222.

before it began'.³¹ Driven from Surakarta, the leftist forces led by Pesindo fighters retreated to Madiun. Tensions had also been rising there. Already in March 1948 the influential 'national Communist' (i.e., non-PKI) Tan Malaka observed tensions between Hizbullah fighters and Pesindo forces surrounding the town.³²

Another prologue to the Madiun uprising occurred in the area of Ngawi. There Communist-led peasants unilaterally seized formerly Dutch-owned lands that were now government plantations. The lands of rich peasants and the holdings of *pesantrens* and prominent Muslims were also targeted. Hizbullah's leaders in the region — including Munawir Syadzali, later Minister of Religion³³ — ordered 50 Hizbullah fighters to intervene to protect *santris* and the *pesantrens*. On 17 September 1948, the day before the Madiun uprising, the Communist side attacked *pesantrens* at Tempureja and Walikukun in large numbers and forced the Hizbullah fighters to withdraw. While they held the area, the Communists — that is, FDR activists, Pesindo fighters and pro-PKI military — reportedly carried out widespread slaughter of 'kyais, members of the [*santri*] Muslim community, nationalists [i.e., PNI members] and anti-Communist civil servants'. Among the victims were Ky. H. Dimiyati, the head of Masyumi and Sabilillah³⁴ there, and Suwandi, the local head of Muhammadiyah.³⁵

Then, on 18 September 1948, the Communists in Madiun declared their rebellion against the government of the Republic. Musso and other PKI leaders hastened to Madiun to try to gain control of this uprising. The pro-government forces that marched on Madiun were mostly regular *Tentara Republik Indonesia* (Indonesian Republican Army) troops of the Siliwangi Division, but also included some Hizbullah and other irregular units.³⁶

³¹ Henri J.H. Alers, *Om een rode of groene merdeka: 10 jaren binnenlandse politiek Indonesië, 1943–1953* (Eindhoven: Vulkaan, 1956), p. 187.

³² Tan Malaka, *Dari penjara ke penjara* (3 vols; Jakarta: TePLOK Press, 2000), vol. 3, pp. 319–21.

³³ Munawir was a graduate of the first modern Islamic school in Java, Manba' al-'Ulum in Surakarta. For a biography, see Azyumardi Azra and Saiful Umam, *Menteri-menteri Agama RI*, pp. 369–412.

³⁴ Anderson, *Java in a time of Revolution*, p. 222 n40, observes that Sabilillah 'had no formal antecedents in the Japanese period, had no formal military training, and was not organised in regular formations. It seems never to have become an integral organization, but was rather a generic name for the myriad rural *kyai*-led armed bands that sprang up during the period of the takeovers from the Japanese.'

³⁵ Kuntowidjojo, *Hizbullah*, pp. 133–6.

³⁶ Nasution, *Sekitar perang kemerdekaan*, vol. 8, pp. 260, 319, 339.

The Communists killed many PNI and Masyumi figures, including several notable *kyais*. Saifuddin Zuhri recalled that

The PKI rebellion at Madiun began with lootings, burnings and kidnappings targeted mainly at the *kyais*, Islamic proselytisers (*para mubaligh*), Masyumi leaders, and government officials, particularly civil servants who were mostly PNI members.³⁷

Eye-witness accounts collected much later emphasised the killing of religious leaders in Madiun and elsewhere. According to such memories, the Communists took over Madiun, Magetan, Ponorogo, Pacitan, Trenggalek, Ngawi, Purwantoro, Sukoharjo, Wonogiri, Blora, Pati, Cepu, Kudus and other towns. They carried out widespread attacks on *pesantrens* where their main enemies were found, and killed many militant young Muslims and *kyais*. They also attacked local officials, police and military. The 28-year-old Ky. Imam Mursyid Muttaqien, who was a leader of the Shattariyya *tarekat*, was among their victims but his body, like others', was never found. His *pesantren*, Takeran, was burned down. In Magetan one of Ky. H. Sulaiman Zuhdi Effendi's own *pesantren* students was a PKI follower and ordered the *kyai's* capture. There the Communists burned 72 houses in the *Kauman* and took away all the men; before they could be killed, however, they were rescued by the Siliwangi Division.³⁸ Not surprisingly, given the mystical and supernatural traditions of rural Javanese Islam, magical legends arose from these bloody events. According to one informant, who was in his mid-20s at the time of the events and was interviewed 40 years later, near Magetan one Ky. H. Imam Sofwan and his two sons, who were also *kyais*, were murdered and their bodies thrown into a well (a common motif in these memoirs). From within the well resonated the voice of Ky. H. Imam Sofwan singing the call to prayer, 'which was heard by the Muslims'.³⁹

Recollections from the East Java village of Madukoro collected over 40 years after the events are similar. There political parties were introduced in 1947. People living in the low areas of the village were 'fanatical' NU and Masyumi supporters, while those on higher ground supported PKI and PNI, which reflected conflict between *santri* and *abangan* respectively. In September 1948, violence across these lines occurred for the first time.

³⁷ Saifuddin Zuhri, *Berangkat dari pesantren*, p. 360.

³⁸ Agus Sunyoto Maksum and A. Zainuddin, *Lubang lubang pembantaian: Petualangan PKI di Madiun* (Jakarta: Grafiti untuk Jawa Pos, 1990), pp. 15–20, 31–4, 40–3. See also Kuntowidjojo, *Hizbullah*, pp. 134–6.

³⁹ Maksum and Zainuddin, *Lubang lubang pembantaian*, pp. 55–9.

Santri armed themselves against the Communists not only with firearms and grenades but also with 'spiritual weapons' such as sharpened bamboo lances (*bamboo runcing*) that had been blessed by *kyais*. For the older generation of Madukoro's inhabitants, the Madiun affair was an unforgettable demonstration of Communist brutality. For the younger generation, it would prove to be a precedent for their own offensive against the PKI two decades later.⁴⁰ Similarly, memories of the Madiun killings of 1948 were also revived in the minds of *santri* anti-PKI activists in the Semarang and Salatiga areas at the time of the 1965–6 violence, according to later oral evidence.⁴¹

We would be wrong to think that the Communist side had a monopoly of aggression. Militant Muslim activists who joined Hizbullah, Sabilillah and other 'struggle groups' to resist the Dutch reconquest were not reluctant to take up arms against their Communist opponents. Five years after the Madiun uprising, it was claimed (but hardly believable) that in Ponorogo about half of the male population died in the fighting. The leftists slaughtered *kyais* and *santris*, then became the target of *santri* counter-attacks themselves. In Pare, later accounts said that Hizbullah units were prepared to move against Pesindo forces but the police intervened and prevented violence.⁴² The rebels also held Kudus for a time and killed some *santri* there, but the foremost religious leaders managed to escape the town, to return with Hizbullah forces for its recapture, whereupon PKI activists were murdered.⁴³

By the time many of the memoirs of Madiun were being collected decades after the events, Java's social environment had changed in a more Islamised direction, which no doubt influenced depictions of the past, portraying the *santri* side as the main victims of the violence. Furthermore, during the Soeharto era it would have been difficult to find a surviving Communist at all — or at least anyone who would admit to having been a Communist — to tell that side of the story. After the fall of Soeharto in 1998, things changed. Then it became possible to publish the self-justificatory recollections of Soemarsono, PKI's military governor of Madiun

⁴⁰ Imam Tholikhah, *Anatomi konflik politik di Indonesia: Belajar dari ketegangan politik varian di Madukoro* (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 2001), pp. 119–29.

⁴¹ Singgih Nugroho, *Menyintas dan menyeberang: Perpindahan massal keagamaan pasca 1965 di pedesaan Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Syarikat, 2008), pp. 78–9.

⁴² Jay, *Religion and politics*, pp. 28–9, 74–5.

⁴³ Lance Castles, *Religion, politics and economic behavior in Java: The Kudus cigarette industry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies Cultural Report Series no. 15, 1967), p. 67.

at the time of the uprising. By the time his memories were assembled, he was an Australian resident in his late 80s. In his book *Revolusi Agustus*, published in 2008, he essentially retails the PKI line of the 1950s that the Party was the victim of Hatta's counter-revolutionary plotting with the Americans, whereas Sukarno was an innocent dupe. Even the documents cited by Soemarsono himself undermine his version of events. He observes — rather bizarrely — that anti-Communists sought to kill Communists but rejects the claim that 'thousands of *kyais*' were killed at Madiun, 'because there was no point in Communists killing anti-Communists'.⁴⁴ Soemarsono's book is most significant not for what it says about Madiun but for the angry reaction it inspired after publication, which is covered in Chapter 7 below.

On the Islamic side, the concept of *jihad* (Holy War) would certainly have been in the minds of many activists. Saifuddin Zuhri recalled that the great *pesantrens* of Central and East Java became centres of military training during the Revolution — schools such as Tebuireng, Tambakberas, Denanyar and Peterongan near Jombang; Lirboyo, Jampes and Bendo in Kediri; and Jamsaren, Jenengan, Krapyak, Tegalreja and others in Central Java. Surrounded by PKI forces, he wrote, 'the *pesantrens* Gontor and Tremas ... were forced to set out on the path of Holy War (*berjihad*)'.⁴⁵ The Minister of Religion at the time of the Madiun uprising, the NU leader Ky. H. Masykur, gave a speech in Yogyakarta in which he denounced the uprising as being against religion.⁴⁶ Masyumi as an organisation shared this view and called for Holy War. Ann Swift observes,

While the PKI 'terror' was well reported in the press, Masyumi counter-terror was not, although the existence of this 'terror and counter-terror' as he termed it, was admitted by Hatta in a radio broadcast on November 17. ... It appears that some indiscriminate anti-*abangan* killing may have taken place, although most seems to have taken the form of rounding up PKI leaders, giving them a summary trial, and executing them. ... Most PKI members, however, were simply imprisoned. Killings on the scale of 1965 [to be discussed later in this book] do not seem to have

⁴⁴ Soemarsono, *Revolusi Agustus: Kesaksian seorang pelaku sejarah* (ed. and translit. Komisi Tulisan Soemarsono di Eropa; intro. Wilson. [Jakarta:] Hasta Mitra, 2008); quotation from p. 263. See also Hersri Setiawan, *Negara Madiun? Kesaksian Soemarsono pelaku perjuangan* ([Jakarta?] Forum Studi Perubahan dan Peradaban, 2002).

⁴⁵ Saifuddin Zuhri, *Berangkat dari pesantren*, p. 358.

⁴⁶ Nasution, *Sekitar perang kemerdekaan*, vol. 8, p. 258.

taken place on either side, perhaps because Madiun did, on the whole, remain a confrontation between opposing troops rather than the civilian population.⁴⁷

Madiun left a legacy of enhanced *santri-abangan* antipathy that was now reified and intensified by political party competition. The Islamic Communism seen in Java in the 1920s was inconceivable after the Revolution. Communism and Islam were now seen as utterly incompatible. In the political competition of the coming years, parties inspired by Islam and representing a *santri* constituency were implacably opposed to PKI and its *abangan* constituency. As a legacy of Madiun, the army was also now utterly opposed to PKI, which it saw as having attempted to stab the Revolution in the back just when it was most at risk of being reconquered by the Dutch. PNI was left in an ambiguous position in this contest. Its leaders and *abangan* constituents found little that was attractive in Masyumi's presumably Islamising agendas but they had also been targets of PKI violence. The following years would find PNI tacking in changing winds, as did the other parties, but with less clarity in terms of either ideology or ultimate objectives.

Madiun did not, however, bring the army and Masyumi closer together, even though both were enemies of PKI. For 1948 also saw the outbreak of the West Java-based rebellion known as *Darul Islam*, led by the Javanese mystic and Hizbullah leader S.M. Kartosoewirjo. He was angry at the withdrawal of the Republican Siliwangi Division from West Java in February 1948 as a consequence of the *Renville* agreement with the Dutch of the previous month, so in May 1948 Kartosoewirjo declared the foundation of the *Negara Islam Indonesia* (the Indonesian Islamic State), commonly referred to as the *Darul Islam* rebellion (from Arabic *dar al-Islam*, territory or house of Islam). *Darul Islam* continued in West Java — and later won support elsewhere in the archipelago as well — until Kartosoewirjo's capture and execution in 1962, by which time it had become an exercise as much in brigandage as Islamist piety. To the military and other leaders of the Republic, this was the Islamist equivalent to PKI's uprising at Madiun. As Ruth McVey has pointed out, *Darul Islam* and other conflicts between Islamic irregular forces and the Indonesian army 'encouraged a tradition of army distrust of militant Islam'⁴⁸ — a distrust that was to remain powerful

⁴⁷ Swift, *Road to Madiun*, p. 76 n130.

⁴⁸ McVey, Ruth. 'The post-revolutionary transformation of the Indonesian army', *Indonesia*, no. 11 (Apr. 1971), pp. 138–9.

for nearly half-a-century until, as we will see in Chapter 6, elements in the military and Islamist militants found that they had some shared interests. At the point of independence, the army stood as a player in its own right, opposed both to Islamists and Communists, shorn of most of its Islamist elements after *Darul Islam* and of its leftist elements after Madiun, distrustful of civilian politicians in general and above all committed to itself as the embodiment and sole guarantor of the Republic of Indonesia.

The Revolution came to a successful end in 1949 with the independence of Indonesia, accepted by the Dutch and recognised internationally. For ethnic Javanese as for all Indonesians, this was a great triumph. The social consequences of the war and Revolution period, however, were pregnant with risks for the future. For all its gaps and inadequacies, the surviving evidence suggests strongly that Javanese society was more polarised than ever in 1949. *Santri* and *abangan* were more divided from each other than before and this division was again politicised as it had been earlier in the century. Now, however, that polarisation and politicisation had an even greater impact for having been inscribed in blood. The Japanese occupation and the Revolution left bitter memories of social conflicts, which would soon be further enhanced by the increasingly polarised and volatile politics of the early years of independence.