Islam and Politics in Indonesia

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Author’s Note

Since the 1970s, the term “Islamist” has taken on a pejorative connotation, as it has come to encompass all radicals, including those who are ready to use violence to impose their vision of Islam’s role in society. This was not, however, the original acceptation of this term, which merely referred to Muslims who wished to see their religion play a role in public life, thus meaning that it could quite readily be applied in relation to Masyumi’s leaders.

I have used, for convenience’ sake, the term “modernist” and “reformist” interchangeably with relation to Islam, except in cases where it might lead to confusion. The two movements are very similar, although reformism, unlike its modernist counterpart, includes the proponents of Wahhabi fundamentalism.

I have often referred to the secular nationalists simply as “nationalists”, in contrast to the representatives of political Islam. It should not be forgotten however that the latter were also nationalists insofar as they also supported the struggle for national independence.

Since independence, Indonesian spelling has undergone two reforms. The first one, in 1947, replaced “oe” by “u”, while the second, in 1972, changed “dj” into “j”, “tj” into “c”, “sj” into “sy” and “ch” into “kh”. I have respected these new rules when using terms in Indonesian, except for quotations. For proper nouns, I have used the most common spelling; there is no general rule concerning people’s names: certain Indonesians have adapted their names, others have not (Sukarno, for example, is still often written Soekarno). Arabic terms are written here according to their Indonesian transcription, which is sometimes slightly different to that used in English.

All quotations from the Koran come from the Saheeh International version published in 1997 by Abul-Qasim Publishing House.

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Lyon, 2015
Map 0.1 The Ten Provinces of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, August 1950.¹

¹The maps used in this book were drawn up by Frederic Durand, to whom I am most grateful.