

PREFACE

Four general concerns absorbed the attention of Indonesian Muslim thinkers, activists and legalists during the sixty years of the twentieth century: i.e., seeking Islamic accommodation with national and local cultures, installing standard Islamic belief and practice as the *modus operandi* in the Indonesian region, devising appropriate political structures that both reflect Islamic values and promote Islamic life, and adapting modern thought and technology consistent with Indonesian-Muslim culture. Like Muslims everywhere, Indonesian Muslims have responded in different ways to such concerns. One major grouping has identified itself closely with traditional Middle Eastern Islamic beliefs, ritual and jurisprudence and attempted to make local culture, intellectual thought, and political institutions conform to that religious system. This grouping is generally known as *santri* in Indonesian culture and in this book the term will translated as “purist Muslim.” A second grouping remained tied to indigenous Southeast Asian customs and values, have sometimes reshaped Islamic beliefs and ritual to mesh with some of the important features of these indigenous values, and have accepted technology and favored political solutions that seem to fit with this value system. This grouping, which has a wide number of different terms applied to it in Indonesian, is referred to as “nominal Muslim” here, largely to juxtapose it against the “purist Muslim.” A third group has responded to Western secular thinking about the nation-state, the importance of nationally-evolved civic values, and the uses of technology for the creation of an affluent national economy. This grouping is identified as “nationalist,” in this monograph. The interaction of these three attitudes has been a primary factor in the particular development of Indonesian social and political life over the past century. There are obvious problems with these generalities, but some such categorization is necessary to identify groupings in Indonesian life. Significantly these generalizations made here fit with the attempts of other writers on Indonesian Islam, even though terms and nomenclature differ slightly and the categorizations vary somewhat.¹

¹ See, in particular, Clifford Geertz, *Religion in Java* (Glencoe, Ill., 1960) and Koenjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore, 1985).

The purist Muslim group is the center of the following study. This group has been concerned with the application of Islamic values, standards and law and all have insisted that in the adoption of technological tools there must be an Islamic ethic governing their application, and that the state itself must be identified in some positive way with the sustenance, maintenance and further development of Islam in the nation. As the twentieth century closes it is apparent that purist groups are fairly united in their notions about most of these factors, but that was certainly not the case earlier in the century when even within the purist grouping there was no consensus regarding just what constituted proper religious practice, the application of Islamic standards to local culture, and the role of religion in the state. Here again we see another division that was once very sharp, but now is less apparent and certainly less divisive. Earlier, one faction, which will be termed “traditionalists” in this study, held that religious truth was contained in the writings of past Muslim scholars, particularly those of several noted jurists and theologians. The Nahdlatul Ulama was the primary representative of that faction. The other faction, which will be termed “modernist” in this study, held that new investigation and interpretation of religious fundamentals was necessary rather than relying on the tradition of past interpreters. The Muhammadiyah was the chief agent for that faction. The divide between these two factions was doctrinal and ideological in the first instance, was apparent in approaches to society and social problems, and had its ramifications in political alliances as well, as will be apparent later in this book.

In the modernist faction, an association called the Persatuan Islam (Muslim Union), arose in the 1920s and gave expression to a variation of the modernist Muslim approach, laying stress on the importance of Qur’ān and Sunnah of the Prophet as sources of religious values, belief, and behavior. Importantly, it centered on the promotion of purist Islam and, as such, it carried on a large number of activities—publishing, public debates, political action, intensification activities, and education—to attain its goals. It was ideological and highly controversial in its heyday, i.e., during the 1920s, 1930s and 1950s. This association during those years is the centerpiece of this particular study.

The value of the Persatuan Islam as a topic for scholarly research lies not in its organization, for it was small and loosely knit, nor did

it lie in its participation in Indonesian political life, for its activity was incidental and peripheral to the mainstream of political developments. Although its role in religious education made some impact on Indonesian Muslims, it was far less influential than several other organizations. In the same manner, its press was influential but never attained the stature and readership among Indonesians accorded the publications of several other Muslim organizations. Rather, the Persatuan Islam was important because it made an effort to define for Indonesian society just what it was that constituted Islam, what its basic principles were, and what the proper behavior of a Muslim really was. In this presentation of Islam the activists of the Persatuan Islam avoided vague concepts and generalizations—somewhat unusual in Indonesia—and dealt with the details and substance of religious behavior in Indonesia. Its members propounded very definite views concerning traditional Indonesian culture, regarding the institutions inspired by “Western” culture, and about traditional Muslim religious thought and practices.

What emerges from the study is a profile of a fundamentalist Muslim society, similar in outlook to that found in other parts of the Islamic world. Like other fundamentalists, the Persatuan Islam rejected the secular concept of the nation-state and called for establishment of a state and society structured to implement its concept of Islamic values. The insistence on Muslim unity in a single international community and on the necessity for an all-encompassing form of Islamic religious law was so dominant in the social and political viewpoint of the organization that it took the form of ideology. In Indonesia, a nation marked by a variety of political and social thought, this uncompromising political stance was not terribly popular, yet it attracted a significant number of followers and its message had an impact on the formulations of the Islamic political parties of the time. In general the Persatuan Islam was similar to other purist Indonesian Muslim movements in that it had similar concerns. At the same time, it was distinctive in that it had its own solutions for outstanding problems confronting Indonesian Muslims at the time. A study of the Persatuan Islam during this crucial period when Indonesia broke free of colonial rule and established itself as an independent nation-state, allows author and reader an opportunity to review the common problems confronting all Indonesian Muslims, to note how one group chose to resolve these problems,

and to compare the solutions of the Persatuan Islam with those of other organizations. The net result should be an understanding of the Indonesian Muslim community and its place in Indonesian national life.

This is a substantially revised second edition of a study originally published in 1970, which was actually a university dissertation submitted in 1966. On reflection many things needed changing to bring the writing into context for an audience at the turn of the century. First, the materials will be slightly recast so that the two major time periods have more definition in the study. Each major period—late colonial and liberal democracy—will consist of three chapters dealing with context, organization, and thought respectively. This change should sharpen the discussion and bring materials into clear focus. In the chapters providing context, discussion will be included to outline the political, religious and social environment of the periods under study from a general perspective of the colony/country, followed by a commentary on the major developments concerning the Islamic community in the East Indies/Indonesia of the time. These chapters should be useful in providing a fuller context than was available in the original study, and may prove useful in allowing greater perspective to emerge concerning the importance and significance of the Persatuan Islam's activities.

Second, evaluations of the Persatuan Islam will be made in each of the major sections outlining a period of history to ascertain whether the organization changed over time and whether its success was any greater in one period rather than another. Third, an attempt will be made to juxtapose the approach and realm of activities with three other groups—first, the formulators of modernism at the turn of the century, i.e. Jamāluddīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā; second with the fundamentalist activists A'lā Mawḍūdī and Hassan al-Bannā', and third with the Indonesian neo-Modernist intellectuals Nurcholish Madjied and Dawam Rahardjo. This comparison should provide insight as to the place of the Persatuan Islam in the overview Islamic scene in the twentieth century. Finally, new references will be added to bring later scholarship into play and provide the reader with a more contemporary view of the overall scholarly literature available on the study of Islam in Indonesia.

Indonesian language materials, largely pamphlets, books and periodicals written by members of the Persatuan Islam, were the chief source of material for this essay. These works can be found scattered among several Indonesian libraries, and partly in United States and Canadian libraries. Early in its existence, the Persatuan Islam established a publishing house and issued a large number of works by its own members outlining the beliefs and attitudes of the Persatuan Islam on a variety of subjects. These works in particular served as basic source material for this study. Libraries were consulted in Indonesia, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States. In addition there were interviews with a number of people in the Persatuan Islam or knowledgeable about it. All these sources are listed in the bibliographic sources at the conclusion of the book.

Spelling conventions follow the following rules:

1. Personal names use the spelling of the country in which they are native. Hence Indonesian names are rendered according to the spelling conventions there, while Arabic names are rendered according to the transliteration system common for converting Arabic to English.

2. Names of organizations and are rendered in their original language with an English translation in parenthesis at the first use and at other convenient points when that organization is being discussed. While English labels sometimes seem easier to handle, as with the Partai Nasional Indonesia as the Indonesian Nationalist Party, there are too many others that have no translation at all, as the Muhammadiyah, or make little sense, as the Nahdlatul Ulama (Renaissance of the Muslim Scholars).

3. Regarding Islamic terminology and nomenclature, an attempt has been made to render as much as possible in English equivalents, so that *Ṣalāt* is rendered as "prayer," for example. When specialized terms, such as "ijūhad" are described, the original term is given at the first offering and then an English description is used thereafter.

4. Titles of books, journals, magazines, articles, pamphlets, *fatāwā*, and other writings are rendered in English translation whenever possible. This is done for readability. Magazines are often known among scholars by their Indonesian or Arabic titles, so those original language titles are included in parentheses at the first usage and in other situations where context requires it. In footnotes the original

language information for all these titles is given, so that a coordination can be made. In the bibliography all works are listed under author, by the titles in which the text was published. Both *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* are considered books, but they have no real equivalents in English, so they are rendered in Arabic transliteration. *Fatāwā* (singular: *fatwā*) are called that since there is no good, accepted translation.

5. Whenever there is room for confusion the matter is either explained in the text, in a footnote or in the glossary.

The aim of the foregoing attempts to remove foreign words from the text as much as possible is meant to assist readability and understanding. Some reviewers will not like the arrangement, of course, as not providing foreign terms immediately in the text, but I know my readership consists of large numbers of people who are not much interested in the original terminology, but in the information and analysis provided by the study. However, for those who are interested in the terminology everything is here in the book, but in the footnotes, endnotes, bibliography and glossary. Finally, those wanting the scholarly format should use the original dissertation or the first edition of this work.²

This second edition was prepared at McGill University and Ohio State in the 1998–99 academic year. In addition to older materials that were collected over the years from various places, the libraries of McGill University, the Ohio State University, and the University of Leiden, and also the General Archives of the Netherlands were consulted specifically in connection with this particular edition. Research institutions consulted throughout the years in connection with both editions are included in the bibliography. Thanks is extended to the authorities of those institutions who made use of those facilities possible, and for all the assistance that was rendered by the staff members.

This volume is dedicated to the memory of John Seabury Thomson (1922 to 1998) my long-term friend and valued colleague, who was there with encouragement when I wrote the original study in the early morning hours at the U.S. Department of State from 1963 to 1966.

² Howard M. Federspiel, "The Persatuan Islam" (Islamic Union). Ph.D. dissertation presented to McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1966; Howard M. Federspiel, *Persatuan Islam: Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia*. (Ithaca, 1970).