Fikrul Hanif Sufyan, *Menuju Lentera Merah: Gerakan Propagandis Komunis di Serambi Mekah, 1923–1949* [‘Towards the Red Lantern: Communist Propaganda Movement in the Veranda of Mecca, 1923–1949’], Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press 2017, 162 pp, ISBN: 9786023861125, price: IDR 60,000 (paperback).

A communist rebellion in West Sumatra (Minangkabau) disrupted the Dutch colonial government in 1927. Organized by communists, this rebellion was an explosion of dissatisfaction among the native population against various suppressive government policies on taxes and land ownership. The rebellion ended tragically, as it was easily crushed by government forces.

Although short-lived and failed, this rebellion has received the attention of historians because of its characteristics. Audrey Kahin (1996: 17) calls it “bloody and traumatic,” but weak in facing the Dutch. Mestika Zed (2004), conversely, sees its organization as that of a modern social movement, carried out rationally and strategically. Other scholars discussing the event include B.J.O. Schrieke (1955), Ruth T. McVey (1965), William R. Roff (1970), Taufik Abdullah (1971), and Shelton Stromquist (1967). Most studies have focused on the causes and the course of this rebellion. The theme of communist propaganda has not been discussed in similar detail. Nevertheless, awareness among native communities of colonial oppression was born out of communist propaganda through various media. Understanding communist propaganda techniques is therefore important to comprehend how parts of a Muslim society accepted not only the presence of communists in their region, but also their role as anti-colonial spokespersons.

In its discussion of the importance of communist propaganda in Minangkabau, the book presently under review constitutes an important contribution by the young West Sumatran historian Fikrul Hanif Sufyan. He researched ideology, the propagandists, media, and propaganda techniques carried out by Minangkabau communists in the 1920s. The basic concept propagated by local communists, according to Sufyan, was a combination of two ideas which, if judged from present Indonesia, seem incompatible: Islam and communism. Sufyan explains this ideology through the story of a leading communist propagandist in Minangkabau, Haji Datuk Batuah, a name that indicates Muslim pioussness. Instead of promoting the purification or modernization of Islam (as many pilgrims did upon returning to the Indies), he convinced the public to accept ‘Islamic-communism.’ Rather than treating religion as an enemy of communism, he emphasized their similarities in terms of social justice, equality, as well as anti-capitalist, anti-slavery and anti-oppression attitudes.

BIJDRAGEN TOT DE TAAL-, LAND- EN VOLKENKUNDE

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To explain the rise and fall of Islamic-communist propaganda in Minangkabau, Sufyan divides his book into six chapters. The first two chapters focus on the political landscape in the city where Islamic-communism was born, Padang Panjang, locally known as the 'Veranda of Mecca' because of its vibrant Islamic life. Chapters 3 and 4 explore how local Muslims became interested in communism, which criticizes religion as the opium of the masses. In Chapter 4, Sufyan examines communist propaganda techniques, most importantly the localization of communist notions. Batuah not only combined communism with Islam, but also ensured its indigenous evolution. He often spelled communism according to its native pronunciation, *kuminih*. In addition, he recruited followers from religious student groups. They quoted numerous verses from Quran, using Malay-style poetry, and exploited ethnic sentiments in their propaganda against the Dutch infidels who had suppressed the natives for centuries. Their main propaganda outlet was a newspaper called *Djago! Djago!* ("Wake up! Wake up!"). Despite gaining followers, especially among local intellectuals, supporters of Islamic-communism failed to achieve a deeply rooted basis in society, let alone overthrow Dutch colonialism. Communist propagandists managed to persuade their followers to rebel against the Dutch in January 1927, but failed to make communism a popular mass movement. These failures and their subsequent tragic consequences are discussed in Chapter 5 and 6.

Communist propaganda managed to garner many followers, but also sparked anticommunist propaganda from opponents. Many senior and charismatic religious teachers incessantly warned their students and the general public about the purported communist mission to destroy religion. The customary (*adat*) leaders also saw communism as a threat. Many *adat* leaders feared communist ideas of rejecting exploitation of native coolies because such leaders extracted income from these low-wage laborers. It was the colonial government who eventually put an end to West Sumatra's Islamic-communism movement. It banned the communist press on the grounds of igniting resistance and causing disturbance, and arrested Batuah and his colleague, Natar Zainuddin, for their radical tendencies. They were exiled. This disappearance of the communist leaders and their mass media, and more importantly, the government's severe punishment towards any opposition, extinguished the Islamic-communism movement throughout the Indies.

In this book, Sufyan examines the rise and fall of Islamic-communism from the eyes of the Minangkabau people, using numerous sources which can only be obtained locally. These include unpublished documents, locally published manuscripts, personal letters, and interviews, in addition to primary sources such as Dutch archives and print media published in the Indies. Sufyan takes

us on a tour of history, illustrating the fate of Islamic-communism, the birth of Islamic modernism in Minangkabau, the influence of communism in Java, and prisoners lives in exile in Kalabahi (Alor Island), Boven Digoel (Papua), and in Australia just before the Japanese army arrived in Papua. Dozens of photographs are added, some of which irrelevant to the story, giving readers a visual sense of the time period.

Sufyan reminds us that once upon a time, in the colonial age, Dutch colonialism as the people's common enemy paved the way for the fusion of seemingly contradictory ideologies, something that came about through communist propaganda efforts in the region. Yet, this amalgamation could not exist for long, given its contradictions, the fragile basis of cooperation, resistance within the society, the preference among the public for religion over secular ideology, as well as the harsh response from the colonial authorities.

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