
The scholarship on Indonesian Islam has witnessed a dramatic resurgence over the past two decades. Research on diverse topics, ranging from eighteenth-century ulama networks to anti-colonial Islamic nationalism, from Muslim parties under Sukarno to the growing public piety of the Suharto era, from sharia law to charismatic television preachers, have all served to bring Islam to the fore of Indonesian Studies. Yet, the role of religion remains curiously muted in the foundational event of the Indonesian nation-state: the Indonesian Revolution of 1945 to 1949. In *Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution*, the historian Kevin Fogg seeks to revisit this four-year struggle for independence through the perspective of ‘the pious Muslims who fought against the Dutch’ and who ‘understood this as an Islamic struggle toward Islamic ends’ (p. 2). Drawing from archival records, published materials, and oral histories, this book makes a noteworthy contribution to the social and political history of the globe’s most populated Muslim nation.

While this work will be of great interest to students of Indonesian, South-east Asian, and Islamic history, one of its most powerful insights stems from an engagement with the scholarship on “revolutions.” Noting the distinction between ‘revolutionary ideas as action and discourse,’ Fogg argues that people should ‘look for ideology not just in what people said about their revolutions but also in how they conducted their revolutions’ (p. 5). Thus, one cannot study Islam as a revolutionary ideology by focusing exclusively on Muslim political leaders, on the one hand, or by trying to understand the ‘masses’ on the other. Instead, these levels should be systematically compared. Fogg proceeds to posit that ‘Islam as a revolutionary ideology is divergent—even contradictory—between the grassroots and the elite’ (p. 5).

With this foundational social distinction established, Fogg organizes his book into two overarching parts: Part I examines Islam in Indonesia’s War of Independence mostly at the “grassroots” of society, while Part II analyzes Muslim leaders in the political revolution mainly at the elite levels of the nascent Republic of Indonesia. Part I includes chapters on Islamic calls to action such as *fatwas* (Islamic juridical decrees), Islamic organizations and militias, Islamic magic, the broader Indonesian social revolution, and Darul Islam. Part II encompasses the Jakarta Charter Controversy, the Muslim political party Masjumi, the establishment of the Ministry of Religion, the Rise of Islamic Socialists, Islamic Diplomacy, and the eventual fracture of Islamic political unity. Together, these chapters present the most comprehensive narrative overview of Muslims and the Indonesian Revolution to date.
Among the greatest achievements of Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution is its finely wrought rendering of the experiences of grassroots Muslims. While Fogg mines the Indonesian archives to great effect, including collections from both Jakarta and provincial branches, he also manages to unearth the hitherto unheard voices of everyday Indonesians who rarely make it into elite writings or correspondences, the result of a painstaking effort to collect over eighty oral interviews. Especially effective is Fogg’s strategy of introducing several chapters with a memorable vignette. For example, Chapter 3 starts with a story of a seventeen-year-old woman who volunteered in the Sabilillah Muslmaaat female Islamic militia, served in a community kitchen, and contributed to military operations by mixing sand and chili powder mixtures to throw into the eyes of Dutch soldiers. Chapter 4 recounts a story of a Sufi sheik who had a vision and forewarned people to leave a local market just two hours before the Dutch conducted an aerial assault. Other interviews interspersed throughout the chapters relate varied stories of students who recalled reading certain texts, of narrow escape from arrest warrants, and of Muslim activists who served on new city councils.

Fogg’s in-depth oral and archival research also yields a meticulous level of historical detail. Those familiar with Indonesia will be unsurprised to read that Muslim ulama issued fatwa rulings supporting the revolution, that some Muslim soldiers had trained in the silat martial arts and carried amulets into battle, or that several Islamic politicians embraced socialism. However, Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution goes beyond such basic facts. In Chapter Two, the author shows the pervasiveness of the perang fi sabillah (war in the way of God) outlook, as the holy war rubric animated editorialists even in left-leaning newspapers and a “flood of fatwas” issued forth both from national organizations and from local ulama, as recounted by oral interviewees. Fogg dissects works that have received scant scholarly attention, like M. Arsjad Thalid Lubis’ Guidelines for Holy War, which ‘reads half as a spur to action and half as a field manual for perang fi sabillah’ (p. 59). In Chapter 4 on magic, the author recounts how fighters embraced talismans, placing white cloth pennons with Quranic verses on weapons and wearing headbands as a form of personal invulnerability. Similarly, in Chapter 10 Fogg provides key context for a cohort of Islamic socialists, explaining that most had received a Western education, had little connection with mass Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah, and had only risen to cabinet positions due to the machinations of the non-Islamic Socialist Party.

Another strength of Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution is its incisive reinterpretation of the extant historiography. In Chapter 6, Fogg illustrates that the characteristics of the well-known Darul Islam, with its ‘calls to action based on religion, militias, ulama leadership, Islamic practices of magic or mysticism,
and attacks on fellow Indonesians,’ fit much more into the Islamic mainstream than narratives of the group’s putative ‘separatism’ usually allows (pp. 121–22). Instead, it was the unusual prominence and obstinacy of its leader, S.M. Kartosuwiryo, that prompted him to break from other Muslims and proclaim an “Islamic State of Indonesia.” Similarly, Chapters 7 and 8 reframe the deletion of the Jakarta Charter and its statement of Muslim obligation to follow sharia from the Constitution, casting it less as a sign of Islamic political weakness than as an idiosyncratic accident of political negotiations. Indeed, Fogg demonstrates that this setback spurred Muslim leaders to call a general congress and organize Masjumi, a Muslim political party that brought together diverse groups under a unified umbrella and gave ‘Islamic interests … [a] voice in the governance of the archipelago’ (p. 154).

Fogg’s analysis also goes beyond reinterpretation to break new ground. Chapter 11 demonstrates that even in a secular republic, the creation of a Ministry of Religion established a bureaucratic beachhead for ulama and Muslim organizations. By providing ‘government patronage,’ organizations like Nahdlatul Islam and Muhammadiyah ‘guaranteed salaries for their members by getting them appointed as local religious officials or religious teachers in state schools or by subsidizing their Islamic schools’ (p. 168). Chapter 13 illustrates how the absence of a formal diplomatic corps allowed Indonesian Muslim students in Cairo and Mecca to play a crucial role in promoting the Revolution and earning the Arab League’s recognition.

The most sweeping insight of *Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution*, however, stems from the disjuncture between the Muslim politics of the grassroots and elite. Despite linkages between these two milieus, according to Fogg, Muslims at the grassroots ‘believed that fighting for independence was a holy war, that any victims in this fight would be Islamic martyrs, and that Islamic forms of Magic would protect them and help ensure victory.’ By contrast, political elites operating in Masjumi and the central government sought to prove ‘that Islam was a rational religion that could form the basis of a leading state in the modern world’ (p. 6). Therefore, they generally rejected amulets as superstition, dabbled in Western thought, and proved more willing to negotiate with the Dutch. Understanding this divergence between pious Muslims at the grassroots and elites provides a more complete view of Indonesia’s revolution.

Overall, *Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution* represents a major contribution to the study of Indonesia, Southeast Asia, Islam, and comparative revolutions. There are, inevitably, small shortcomings. Fogg’s decision to focus on the four-year period of Indonesia’s Revolution, for example, raises questions about the implications of his study for later periods. His conclusion highlights several ‘impacts of the Revolution,’ including greater polarization between pious
Muslims and other Indonesians, an increased emphasis on textual orthodoxy, and the ascent of Muslim laypeople over those with theological training in politics. Nevertheless, the conclusion sidesteps how Islamic engagements with the Revolution informed future historical turning points such as the events of 1965–1966, the rise of Suharto’s New Order Regime, and the purge of Communism from Indonesian society. Such minor quibbles aside, however, *Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution* represents a major achievement that deserves to be read for many years to come.

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