

Chapter 1 Islam and Nusantara

The natural world of Nusantara, the Indonesian archipelago, is stunningly beautiful. Gaze at the verdant mountain ranges, valleys, and gorges (even though much has now been ruined). Catch sight of the lakes that spread over the islands – Danau Singkarak in the Minangkabau lands, or Danau Matano in Sorowako, South Sulawesi – with their clear, pure waters. Centuries ago many peoples came to this beautiful archipelago bringing religions and civilizations that flourished here. One of these religions was Islam, the youngest of the three that originated with the Prophet Abraham, after the Jewish and Christian religions.

The march of Islam in Nusantara lasted many long years until a *quantitative* victory was successfully consolidated. But what has not yet been realized is a *qualitative* victory. The quest for such a victory calls for a serious struggle in the future.

Nusantara: Where Faiths and Cultures Interact

In the ancient world, there were ongoing trade relations between the regions of Southwest Asia and Nusantara long before Islam appeared. In fact, the arrival of Islam stimulated these trading activities even more, because trade is a permissible calling in Islam. Over the course of time – in the third decade of the twentieth century – in this region a nation appeared on the map of the world, composed of a group of diverse and pluralistic ethnicities and subcultures, the largest of which were Muslim. Islam became one of the important components of the nationalism of Indonesians, along with language and historical experience. The historical roots of this new nation penetrated deeply into the past in the form of kingdoms, various religions and diverse cultures, and hundreds of languages.

In addition to Islam, the religion embraced by the majority of the inhabitants, other religions were tolerated and flourished as well. In population, Indonesia is the largest Muslim nation on earth. There is still no final answer as to why Islam “won” the theological and commercial contests centuries ago in a region so culturally complex. This victory can only be equated with the victory of the Indonesian language – Bahasa Indonesia – which grew out of the Malay culture of the Riau Archipelago, which itself has ancient roots in the early Buddhist Sriwijaya

period. In Islamic hands, Bahasa Melayu (the Malay language) developed all the more dynamically in line with the egalitarian nature of this religion.

Perhaps, too, it may be compared with the victory of Islam and the spread of the Arabic language throughout the former Roman Empire in the Middle East and North Africa – the home of Saint Augustine (354–430) and later, the historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) – in the seventh century, not long after the passing of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE (that is, in the twenty-third year of prophethood). The caliphs (“successors”) and rulers who came after the Prophet as the leaders of the *umat* of believers were responsible for this large-scale process of Islamization and the spread of Arabic. The vitality of this new religion and culture propelled Islam and the Arabic language to all corners of the earth and sustained generations of Muslims in those early centuries.

But we must also record that this process was not always smooth and peaceful, and that military might and wars were not infrequently involved. The warfare was not, however, waged to force people to embrace Islam, but rather the result of conflicts that arose in the context of political expansion by Arab Muslims. In actuality, the Muslim religion has not always been able to guard against the abuse of power by Muslims in authority. We cannot assume that past events proceeded flawlessly, simply because the past shelters under the label of Islam. Honesty toward the past depends upon our critical attitude in viewing it, whoever were the historical actors. The Muslim *umat* should not feel so pure that it closes its eyes to deviant behavior, particularly that of rulers with theological approval or *fiqh* – legal pronouncements – by the scholars, who claim to be the heirs of the prophets.

Naturally, no historical writings can possibly present a flawless map of the past. Good history demands honesty by its writer, and that is not easy to achieve: humans are partial to the interests they carry about like baggage. But history must present the facts, no matter how much the facts may damage the writer or some admired group of humanity. Writing history always demands first and foremost the personal integrity of the historian.

I need to comment on the problem of honesty. Some Muslim historians and writers are reluctant to mention problematic facts due to various considerations, as though the expansion of Islamic power had always been achieved by peaceful means. Because of that, Al-Faruqi uses the term *al-futuhāt* (*fatah* in the singular form), which means “opening,” that is, “opening the heart and the mind [of humankind] to the truth of Islam.”¹ For subjugation at the time of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs (610–661 CE), the concept of “opening” may be used,

especially in the era of the Prophet, where worldly power and riches in no way were a part of his mission. As for the siege of the Jewish tribe Bani Qurayza following its treachery after the Battle of the Trench, Ibn Al-Athir revealed this information, “The Messenger of Allah ordered the adult men of Bani Qurayza to be killed and their women and children to be spared.”² In the atmosphere of war, killing was permitted so long as it did not go beyond the boundaries of accepted custom. But in the eras that followed, the expansion of power did not always bow to religion and morals. Thus, we must be highly cautious in evaluating the use (or indeed the misuse) of religion in the interests of power. The stakes were very high; that is to say, people could act very cruelly, treacherously, and immorally, all in the name of God. As historian I will lay out in this work such excesses as they existed, even if they are neither agreeable to hear nor pleasant to acknowledge.

For me, the agreeable and the pleasant belong to the world of poetry. In history, bitterness must be given voice and unpacked bravely and responsibly, even though I may strip myself naked by doing so. There is something slovenly about the history written by people who try to conceal bitterness within a package of sweetness and light, writing history as entertainment. History is also a guideline for acting within the limitations of space and time. Within that space and time, history works itself out in accordance with the non-linear “laws” of society. The actors are humans with all manner of subjective tendencies and worldly interests often concealed, and not infrequently in packages of sacred verse.

Speakers of the variants of the Malay language may be greater in number or at least equal to the speakers of Arabic. Malay was formally consolidated in Indonesia as Bahasa Indonesia (“the Indonesian Language”) in the Youth Oath of October 28, 1928, in which Muhammad Yamin, a figure in the Jong Sumatranen Bond (“the Young Sumatran Union”), played a major role. In Malaysia, one says “Bahasa Malaysia,” but the roots of the two are the same: the Malay language that originated in the Riau Archipelago. Language was among the greatest contributions of Riau to the culture of Nusantara. Not only did the population that had been colonized by the Dutch in Nusantara speak Indonesian as their formal speech, the common people of East Timor were fluent in it, too.

The Indonesian language was key to the efforts to consolidate the national identity and overcome obstacles in interethnic communication. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Dutch East Indies government chose Malay as “the administrative language of power to optimize the efficiency of its colonial exploitation.”³ The official use of the Malay language in this way spread far and wide, reaching out and

grasping tribes and ethnicities hidden on even the smallest islands. As a medium of communication, the Indonesian language was indeed situated strategically.

Muhammad Yamin's role in strengthening the Indonesian language's acceptance as the language of unity was so important that a Dutch official, P.M. Hooykaas, commented that "that young man from Sumatra will be a pioneer in the efforts to use the Malay language [the official Dutch term for Indonesian] as a medium of communication and social interaction in Indonesia and Dutch will be hard-pressed because of him."⁴ Yamin therefore deserves to be remembered as an expert and thinker in the fields of language and culture more than as a controversy-laden politician. (The most serious of these controversies revolved around who had been the first to propose the concept of Pancasila in the session of the 1945 Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence [BPUPK], Sukarno or Yamin. I will review this crucial issue at the end of this chapter.)

In fact, long before Yamin and his comrades pioneered Bahasa Indonesia as the official language, Ki Hadjar Dewantara, a central figure in Javanese culture, had suggested that Bahasa Melayu, the Malay language, become the official language throughout Nusantara. In his writings he criticized his friend Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, who had said that the Javanese language was the language of slaves and had to be replaced by Dutch. Writing with considerable heat, Ki Hadjar commented:

Language and nation are one thing. It makes no sense to kill off one language in a contrived way to make space for a new, foreign language. And since the Javanese language is used by 20 million Javanese people, it is too reckless and hasty to speak of the death of such a beautiful language. If we want one language for all the people of the Indies, you should not force us to accept a foreign language, since we have the Malay language which is not only easy to learn, but by now has become the *lingua franca* of Nusantara.⁵

Tjipto was more of a radical than Ki Hadjar, who always appeared calm, patient, and reflective. Tjipto even wanted to kill the Javanese language, the mother tongue defended so reasonably by Ki Hadjar. Tjipto was disgusted with what was termed feudal tradition, but he was unrealistic in taking this attitude so far as to want to replace Javanese with Dutch. Therefore, the expression of Ki Hadjar that "language and nation are one thing" became very important in this respect. Wouldn't replacing Javanese with Dutch have resulted in the cultural and spiritual extermination of the Javanese people?

The solution provided by Ki Hadjar was a very wise one: let Javanese survive for the Javanese people or other groups that wanted to learn and use it, but take advantage of the potential of Bahasa Melayu as the language of unity. It was much easier to learn, and certainly more democratic, than the status-laden Javanese language. Javanese is an old language with an extraordinarily rich vocabulary, much richer than Malay. Naturally, in the democratization process, Javanese would encounter many obstacles, because its non-democratic structure was developed in tandem with a centuries-old and multileveled feudalism that organized society between sturdy status partitions.

On another occasion, Ki Hadjar was even more forceful in his defense of Bahasa Indonesia: "For the sake of the unity of the Indonesian nation, only Bahasa Indonesia has the right to be the language of unity."⁶ Although Ki Hadjar was a central figure in Javanese culture, defending the position of Bahasa Indonesia has to be recorded as one of his many contributions to the development of an inclusive Indonesian culture. He was very conscious of Indonesian identity in relation to Bahasa Indonesia as the language of unity, an egalitarian language that was an important pillar in the establishment of the country's democratic system.

Scientific analyses of the relationship of Bahasa Indonesia and democracy in Indonesia are few. If a Yamin or Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana defended the choice of Bahasa Indonesia, it should not be surprising, since they both were born into the Minangkabau culture of Sumatra, which shares linguistic similarities with Malay. But we must salute the Javanese Ki Hadjar who was no less outspoken in Bahasa Indonesia's defense. Thus, it is not surprising that later on many of the language experts and poets in the Indonesian language were Javanese, Sundanese, and other ethnicities that have so enriched this nation, as Ki Hadjar had predicted.

During what has been called the cultural polemic of 1935 between Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana on the one hand and Dr. Soetomo, Ki Hadjar, and Sanusi Pane on the other, we note with interest Tjipto's proposal to bury the Javanese language. For, in imagining Indonesia's future, the Javanese Tjipto had preceded Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana in adopting a European orientation when he proposed to replace Javanese with Dutch. Exchanging one language for another means changing the way one thinks and feels as a part of the culture of a nation; this is enormously difficult, no matter how feudal one believes the culture to be. In his later years, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana was not as rigid as when he first published his polemic at twenty-seven years of age. Just four years later, he reassessed the Eastern values that he had earlier judged to be out of date and an

obstacle to progress. This he did in the third cultural polemic in 1939. The writer Subagio Sastrowardoyo had this to say about Alisjabana's conversion:

In the cultural polemic of 1939, a change in the style of Sutan Takdir Alisjabana's argument became apparent. This temper now no longer flares up, indicative of a cultural view that is softer and calmer by comparison. Gone is his tendency to put forward his heavily biased views and estimations without seeing the possibility of compromise and synthesis. Rather, Takdir tends to see everything in totality, with all elements linked and fused together. And he even implicitly admits to the limitations of idealized rationalism and positivism by accepting irrational elements, for example, in political life, and that there are still many questions that cannot be answered by positivism and which at the end of the day have to be submitted to speculative philosophical thinking.⁷

Even at the beginning of the 1960s, Takdir gave a "high [assessment] of Indonesia's traditional arts."⁸ All this shows that in his intellectual and spiritual peregrinations Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana had experienced a number of significant turning points. No longer is the West viewed as the sole source of progress, let alone wisdom. In contrast to Tjipto, who wanted to replace the Javanese language with Dutch, Takdir wanted Bahasa Indonesia to become the language of science. He worked hard to achieve this goal. In addition to Yamin, Takdir can be categorized as one of the fathers of the modern Indonesian language.

The choice of *Melayu* ("Malay" – subsequently officially named "Bahasa Indonesia" by nationalist youth) as the national language promoted the fluent cultural conversation between the archipelago's rich subcultures, while at the same time contributing new vocabulary to this language of unity. Bahasa Indonesia is an egalitarian language. If the Indonesian nation succeeds in finding leadership that truly appreciates and understands this cultural wealth and fluently speaks proper Bahasa Indonesia, there is hope that Indonesia will long endure as a nation and a state. Ethnic frictions could be resolved with guidance from local wisdom, under the umbrella of national wisdom.

Over the course of the history of Nusantara, whether in the era of Sriwijaya, old Mataram, Majapahit, or the modern period, such local wisdom has been greatly underappreciated, particularly when power politics has developed with a centralizing appetite. Regions far from the center are generally treated as stepchildren, and their obligation is to bow to and pay tribute to the center of power. This is one of the

sources of the fears and disquiet that reached their climax in the regional rebellions of the modern era. The blending of the heterogeneous ethnic groups has still not been successfully concluded. Almost all provinces that have developed in Indonesia since colonial times, and continuing into the independence era, were at first based on ethnic territories and their subcultures. Interethnic marriage and migrations have, of course, occurred, but these have not become a tidal wave. For that reason, efforts to keep strengthening and accelerating national integration cannot be viewed lightly. The nation is still in the creative process of becoming an Indonesia that is intact and coherent. The Java–Outer Islands dichotomy has still not yet disappeared in the independence era, a historical legacy of ages past.

Let us take a fleeting glance at the etymology of the word *Nusantara*. It derives from two words: *nusa* and *antara*. *Nusa* (Sanskrit/Kawi) means “island, native country.” *Antara* means “distance, gap, interval, space between two objects.” Nusantara are the islands located between the Asian continent and Australia,⁹ positioned between two oceans, the Indian and the Pacific. (In the common Javanese speech level called *ngoko*, *antara* can mean “distance, space between two objects.”¹⁰) Because of the large number of the islands of Nusantara, more than 17,000, an expert was not wrong in calling this a Maritime Continent,¹¹ or perhaps it could be said to be an Archipelagic Continent.

This Maritime Continent’s distance from east to west is 5,110 kilometers, and it stretches 1,888 kilometers from north to south; it is spread out on both sides of the equator from 94°15′ to 141°05′ longitude east, and from 6°08′ latitude north to 110°15′ latitude south.¹² The total area of Nusantara’s land mass is 1,919,443 square kilometers,¹³ its seas total 5,800,000 square kilometers, and its coastlines run for 95,181 kilometers.¹⁴

If Indonesia is able to survive intact and fully sovereign as a nation-state, its people must rid themselves of subculture egotism, parochialism, regional conceit, ephemeral interests, and worthless political pragmatism. We must always remember that this nation is too important and was achieved at too high a cost to be sacrificed for mean-spirited and transitory aims. In drawing near to those ideals, the principle of “justice for all the Indonesian people” must not again be frustrated, as has happened so many times in the past. There is an old Malay saying: “The raja is just, the raja is honored. The raja is tyrannical, the raja is opposed.” “Raja” here in the democratic context is a system of power that has been in operation for more than sixty years since our Proclamation of Independence.

Justice of course has never yet been realized. This is a very serious issue that will determine the future fate of the nation. As I have seen it, since the 1945 Proclamation, there has never been a pattern of development that is truly guided by the principles of Pancasila, particularly the fifth of these principles, which has been left neglected for so many decades. To be sure, it has been honored in rhetoric, but it has been betrayed in practice. That means we have not yet been honest as a nation and as a state. If we as a nation continue to face problems, we must look for their roots in harsh reality: “The word is still no friend of the deed.”

The term *Nusantara* was first used by Ki Hadjar Dewantara, a freedom fighter and the founder of Taman Siswa.¹⁵ Yet although this name directs our attention to the sea, the promising potential of the maritime regions has still yet to be exploited in a good way. More than that, the attention we pay to these regions is very weak. In fact, the sustainability of the life of our nation will very much depend on the generosity of that salty water with its store of enormous natural wealth. But we must never forget either that, like the wind, water is not always our friend. When the seas run amuck with tsunamis, the land can be struck with terrible force. The location and geography of Nusantara renders many of its regions vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis. The largest tsunami of the twenty-first century struck Aceh on December 26, 2004, and left thousands of victims in its wake and many devastated buildings. On May 27, 2006, tectonic movements in the Central Java area around Yogyakarta caused physical destruction and numerous casualties. At the end of 2007, earthquakes shook Bengkulu, West Sumatra, and parts of Java and Sulawesi, causing much damage. There were not many deaths, because the public was growing more aware of how to deal with natural disasters.

The name *Indonesia* has been in use since 1884, when it was popularized by the German scientist Adolf Bastian from the University of Berlin when referring to the cluster of islands of the “Malay Archipelago.”¹⁶ But “Indonesia,” and “Indonesian” as the name of a new nation, only appeared in the 1920s within the circle of the Indonesian Association (PI) in the Netherlands. At first, not everyone in the nationalist movement felt comfortable with the name, but the majority vote in PI established it as the name of the newborn nation, even as the name *Nusantara* was still being used with the same meaning and continues to be used to the present day. To speak of Nusantara is the same as to speak of Indonesia. One might even consider renaming the country “the Republic of Nusantara,” a name that contains a sense of the seas and islands. But one benefit of using the name *Indonesia* is that the period of colonialization was so long, while Indonesia as a nation only emerged in the 1920s. On this basis, we can

say that Indonesia was not colonized for more than twenty-five years, including the three and a half years of the Japanese occupation.¹⁷

To be sure, the name *Nusantara* sounds more poetic and musical to the ear, and it matches the flavor of our language. It also seems more “native.” Of course, it implies many things. Therefore, we must first think carefully and deeply if we really want to adopt this name. The term *Nusa* in official use is held by two provinces: NTB (Nusa Tenggara Barat – West Nusa Tenggara) and NTT (Nusa Tenggara Timur – East Nusa Tenggara). The majority of the people of NTB are Muslim, while the majority are Christian in NTT.

And now, what of the term “Muslim Indonesia,” which has become popular in recent times? We usually link such a descriptive label to places where the adherents of a particular religion predominate. That’s why we refer to Christian Europe, Buddhist Tibet, and Muslim Saudi Arabia. Because the inhabitants of Nusantara, which then became Indonesia, are for the most part Muslim, it would not be wrong to say “Muslim Indonesia.” The meaning is quite simple: the majority of the people are devout Muslims – *santri* – or are in the process of becoming *santri*. Referring to people as *santri* indicates that they regularly observe the religious commandments associated with the Five Pillars of Islam. *Santri* come from all walks of life; they range from those who are highly educated to those who have only an elementary school education – that is, the majority of Muslims in Indonesia.

The term “Muslim Indonesia” absolutely does not mean to suggest that other religions and beliefs cannot grow and flourish, even though these are in the minority. Supposing that at some point in the future Islam were to be embraced by the majority of the population of Great Britain; then we would find the name “Muslim Great Britain” in use. It would be the same if the number of Muslims fell in Nusantara and those who espoused Hinduism and Buddhism became the majority; then Indonesia would again become Hindu-Buddhist. Spain, once ruled by Muslim Arabs, is another example. Even though the majority of the population always remained non-Muslim, still we use the term “Muslim Spain.” It refers to Spain’s having been ruled by Muslim power for about seven centuries, from the eighth to the end of the fifteenth century, a very long stretch of time. In other words, these terms do not have to be debated because they are already well understood and accepted.

Now let us focus on the religions that flourished in Nusantara before the arrival of Islam. It is a hard fact of geography that Nusantara is hemmed in by two continents, Asia and Australia, and two oceans, the Pacific and the Indian, providing space and fertile land for the spread of religions coming from outside. Because of its strategic geopolitical

location and its rich earth abundantly supporting human life, Nusantara was a target for other nations, in pursuit of various interests: religious, economic and commercial, cultural, and later, colonization. Among the most important and influential religions for centuries were Hinduism and Buddhism, as already mentioned. Both of these religions have completely Asian, specifically Indian, features. In Nusantara, these two religions on occasion struggled and even warred over influence, as when the Hindu Majapahit defeated the Buddhist Sriwijaya around the fourteenth century. Because a large part of the lands of Nusantara were inhabited, and indeed ruled, by Hindus and Buddhists almost during the same centuries, the progress of the new religion of Islam was necessarily connected with these two old religions, before it came into contact with European arrivals.

In this way, Islam, as the newcomer that then “defeated” its predecessor religions, came as a shock and a sensation of historic proportions. There is no certain historical response to the question of how this victory came about. Because of the substantial Muslim majority, at a later date some in the Muslim *umat* wanted to make Indonesia formally an Islamic state, or a state based on Islam. This wish was in fact based on political calculations in a democratic system that relies on a majority vote. More recently, small antidemocratic groups have emerged, with all their political rhetoric, to create an uproar in the name of sharia. They use the democracy in pursuit of means that are not democratic; for example, they refuse to take part in general elections. They emphasize sharia textualism over the substance of sharia, which aims at establishing justice for all.

In *The Religion of Java*, the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz actually wondered if the majority of Javanese were Muslim at all because of the syncretist practices so apparent in their populations¹⁸ But Hodgson, whose knowledge of Islam and its *umat* far outweighed that of Geertz, even if he was not particularly knowledgeable about Indonesia, saw the anthropologist’s work as misleading. A footnote in Hodgson’s *The Venture of Islam* explains Hodgson’s assessment, which has been praised as an important finding about Islam in Nusantara:

Unfortunately, its [Geertz’s work’s] generally high excellence is marred by a major systematic error: influenced by the polemics of a certain school of modern shari’ah-minded Muslims, Geertz identifies “Islam” only with what that school of modernists happens to approve and ascribes everything else to an aboriginal or a Hindu-Buddhist background, gratuitously labeling much of the Muslim religious life in Java as Hindu. He identifies a long series of phenomena, virtually universal to Islam and sometimes found even in the Quran itself, as un-Islamic;

and hence his interpretation of the Islamic past as well as some recent anti-Islamic reactions is highly misleading For one who knows Islam, his comprehensive data – despite his intention – show how very little has survived from the Hindu past even in inner Java and raise the question why the triumph of Islam was so complete.¹⁹

Its triumph was “complete” in the sense that an awesome change had occurred, with the displacement of religions in a tremendous demographic wave, whether at the elite level or among ordinary people.

The modernist school of Muslims mentioned by Hodgson would certainly have been Muhammadiyah, Persis, and Al-Irsyad, who at first were very active in opposing the syncretist tendencies evident in the religious practices of a part of Nusantara society, and not just in Java. However, as it developed further, the modernist movement, especially Muhammadiyah, increasingly considered cultural dimensions in its proselytizing outreach. This has given it greater flexibility without compromising its main principles and mission. Persis and Al-Irsyad have survived, but have not grown like Muhammadiyah, which continues to expand. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Muhammadiyah was threatened to a minor degree by political movements associated with “*jubah* proselytizing” (named after the traditional Saudi cassock-like robe); these attacked several Muhammadiyah charity centers with a high level of intensity. Muhammadiyah was already beset with heavy burdens, and many of its branches were no longer functioning (in one region only 28 percent were reported to be still active). Naturally, this represented a challenge for the survival of Muhammadiyah. If the branches were destroyed, Muhammadiyah would lose its standing at the grassroots level.

To return to the Islamization process. Naturally, Islam’s victory in Nusantara was phenomenal. Two giant religions whose ancient footprints had been implanted in Nusantara for centuries were thrust aside, with the exception of Hinduism’s persistence in Bali. Here and there Buddhism also lives on in certain parts of society, especially in Java. The 2000 census shows the numbers of religious adherents and their percentage among the entire Indonesian population of 201,241,999. Hindus numbered 3, 651,939 (1.81 percent); Buddhists numbered 1,694,682 (0.84 percent); Muslims numbered 177,528,772 (88.22 percent); and the combined Protestant and Catholic communities numbered 17,954,977 (8.92 percent).²⁰ In 1900, the population of the Dutch East Indies (as Nusantara was known) was only about 30 million.²¹ A century later the population had increased seven-fold, with no change in the percentage of Muslims. Although there is no conclusive answer as to why Islam achieved an overwhelming majority

of religious followers in Nusantara, there certainly are historical studies that have attempted an explanation. I will be speaking of this further.

I have mentioned that the Hindu and Buddhist religions had been very influential in Nusantara for centuries, particularly among the elites, while most of the population did not move very far from their traditional animist beliefs. There was a “general consensus,” writes Van Leur, “about the fact that Hindu culture only touched the top level of Indonesian society, and even then, only in certain aspects of life.”²² With the coming of Islam, the socio-religious map of Nusantara went through a drastic change, at least demographically, as we have seen. We therefore need to find the answer to the difficult question: Why did Islam become the religion embraced by the majority in Nusantara after so many centuries of Indianization, albeit elitist in nature?

Once Islam became the religion of the majority, the friction that later occurred with Christianity did not greatly affect the religious balance. Christianity and Islam are both known as missionary religions and have competed with each other since the seventh century in Southwest Asia, Africa, and Europe. Both sides were involved in the long and bloody Crusades (1095–1291) that the Christians initiated. This historical wound is still etched in the memories of both communities in various parts of the world. There is no comparable wound in Islam’s relationship with Hinduism and Buddhism, even though India, the birthplace of these two religions, was for centuries under Muslim rule. However, Muslims do not generally call that rule a form of colonialism. Why, for example, would Muslims feel uncomfortable about saying that Hindu India was under Muslim colonial rule? The same goes for Catholic Spain (Andalusia) – why don’t they say it was an Arab Muslim colony for centuries? That this particular Muslim colonial system was in fact not harsh, did not force the population to convert to Islam, and did not drive the people out, is another matter. In the hundred years after the passing of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam expanded at high speed. If that expansion had not been checked by Charles Martel at Poitiers in southern France in 732, all of Europe might have been under Muslim rule – but to such hypothesizing, there is no end.

The Rise of Islam in Nusantara

The kingdoms of Nusantara with their Hindu and Buddhist features gradually but inexorably were replaced by a system of rule with Islamic features. We can take the example of the Kingdom of Majapahit, which contained a mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. According to Coedès,

there are several reasons why Majapahit, the last of the Indianized kingdoms in Nusantara, collapsed. The main reason for the fall of Majapahit was the emergence of Malacca as a commercial center ruled by Muslims. Islam had set down footprints along the coast and, from the beginning of the fifteenth century, had gradually spread inland. Second, Majapahit was afflicted by internecine struggles for power.

The king of Majapahit, Rajasanegara, died in 1389 and was succeeded by his son-in-law and nephew, Wikramawardhana. After several years on the throne, in 1401 Wikramawardhana was opposed by Wirabhumi, the son of Rajasanagara by a concubine. The ensuing civil war lasted until the death of Wirabhumi in 1406. Although Wikramawardhana retained power, Majapahit's fragility could no longer be sustained. It survived the civil war for just over a century.

The third reason for Majapahit's collapse, according to Coedès, was the interference of the Yongle emperor of Ming-period China, who tried to uproot Javanese power over all of Nusantara and the Malay Peninsula. The Muslim Chinese admiral Zheng He was tasked with implementing this mission. In response, several emissaries were sent to China from Java, formerly subjugated by Majapahit, bearing tribute.²³ This meant that Majapahit had lost its moral and political authority.²⁴ There is no definite year to mark the fall of Majapahit, but its final collapse is estimated to have taken place between 1513 and 1528. There is no evidence that this collapse happened suddenly from the blows of the newcomer: Islamic power.²⁵ The disappearance of Majapahit from the stage formally marked the end of Indianization in the system of statecraft in Nusantara, where it had played a role since the beginning of the fifth century CE. The Indianization process lasted for over a millennium and bequeathed rich cultural and political legacies to the people of Nusantara.

Islam now took the place of Hinduism and Buddhism. If the process of Islamization really began in the seventh to eighth centuries CE, as the Medan Seminar concluded,²⁶ Islam's ascendancy as a political power to replace the established order must have been a long and difficult struggle. Historical evidence concerning this crucial issue is far from conclusive. What is even more astonishing is that when the Islamization process for which we have evidence began at the end of the thirteenth century, inter-island communications were very primitive and time-consuming. Still this wave kept rolling on, irresistible to any power, including eventually the gunpowder and firearms of Europe. The temperament of the sailor-merchants of Nusantara may have made a significant contribution to this Islamization process. Trading and proselytizing were an important part of the panorama of Nusantara at that time. There must have been an extraordinary passion to expand the radius of Islam.

I have said above that Islam offered an egalitarian position for everyone in the eyes of God and the eyes of history, a doctrine not offered by Hinduism. This may be one explanation for the emergence of Islam as the timeless victor, up to the present day. The Dutch sociologist W.F. Wertheim, the thesis adviser of the renowned historian Sartono Kartodirdjo, did in fact observe a sharp contrast between Islam and Hinduism in the status of people in their collective lives. But we must also be honest and admit that in certain social segments, some of the Islamic *umat* did not always obey the teaching of its religion to hold fast to the principle of egalitarianism. I shall give an example of this further on. Let us first follow Wertheim's argument concerning how thoroughly Islam humanized so many Asian anti-egalitarian practices:

Islam has made contributions on a large scale to the humanization of very many Asian customs and practices. The concept of the equality of humans did not lead to the eradication of slavery, but, as with Christianity, directed a better treatment of slaves and adopted children ... which contained an acknowledgment of the principle of basic equality between free men and slaves.²⁷

It has been said that Islam restored the self-worth of society's "little people." The following excerpt makes this difference all the more clear:

The attraction of Islam for traders who lived under the rule of Hindu nobles must rather be found in the world of ideas: Islam gave underclass people a consciousness of their individual worth as members of the *umat* of Islam. In Hindu ideology, such a person was only a creature who was lower than members of the higher castes. In Islam, he or she could, so it was said, feel equal to those others, or even, albeit lower in the social structure, in his or her quality of being a Muslim, superior to them, since they themselves were not Muslims. In this sense, Islam could be seen as the trigger of the revolutions that occurred in the twentieth century.

To put it another way, in Islam people felt that their self-worth was not bound by the walls of caste that served to denigrate their human dignity for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. Very similar phenomena occurred when the Crescent Moon confronted the Cross in the struggle for influence in Nusantara, which I shall discuss.

However, as mentioned earlier, over the course of history there have also been groups of Muslims who feel they are better than their

coreligionists, albeit not as sharply as in Hindu society, either because of bloodlines or from other artificial attributes. Among people of Arab descent, for example, the *Sayyid* group, which claims descent from the Prophet, feels grander than the non-*Sayyids*. In aristocratic circles, there is a certain haughtiness toward ordinary folk, whereas it is quite possible that the aristocrats themselves are the descendants of pirates or brigands. Or, for the rajas of Java, it is not impossible that the blood of Ken Arok, a former brigand of Tumpel who robbed Ken Dedes of Tunggal Ametung, flows through the veins of these nobles. We should not be so proud of bloodlines and descent. All will be wiped out if it is not accompanied by good personal qualities. Pride based on bloodlines and origin, but without real achievement, never lasts long, except through compulsion. And compulsion sooner or later will trigger discontent, which in turn leads to popular rebellion against the ruling elite. The more intelligent the common people, the harder it is to manipulate and trick them subtly, let alone coarsely. The Indonesian revolution of 1945–1949 was not just against foreigners who wanted to reestablish colonialism, it was also against the feudal system.

We might ask the Quran, Who is the greatest and highest in degree in the sight of Allah? Are such factors as blood or descent important, as seen in feudalism? Are ethnicity, skin color, or language the determining factors? Or, in modern times, is it the person holding academic, military, or bureaucratic titles? The firm and complete answer is: “Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.”²⁸ For me, this verse is a forthright declaration of the teaching of equality. To gain this most honored position, in Islam the door is wide open for all people who work hard and sincerely. Bloodlines, origin, position, and background all fall down when confronted with the spear-point of this verse. Before the Quran, all humankind is given the same position and the same ranking, like the teeth of a comb. For that reason, Islam ideally desires the formation of an egalitarian, moral, and meritocratic society, that is, a social order that gives a respected position to a person based only on personal integrity and quality, as well as his or her commitment to the noble, just, and civilized values of humanism. Islam strongly emphasizes the fostering of a strong and whole human character, and never more than in a leader. A person of weak character occupying an honored and strategic position will bring about disaster.

Over the course of the history of Islam, we frequently run into leaders or rulers who are weak of character, entailing all possible bad results for their countries and people. There is a saying that expresses how valuable good character is: “When wealth is lost, nothing is lost / When health is lost, something is lost / When character is lost, everything is lost.”²⁹

In the history of prophethood, long before being elevated as Prophet and Messenger, Muhammad was known by the public at large as possessing a lofty character, having been granted the honorific title of *al-amin* (the trusted one). His character is immortalized in the Quran in the verse, “And indeed, you are of a great moral character.”³⁰ So great was the character of the Prophet in that age that the Quran calls upon all those of faith to accept Muhammad as Messenger and good example.³¹ The objective and honest witness of history will surely reinforce this affirmation by the Quran. One of the hadiths says that Muhammad has the best temperament and behavior of all of humankind.³²

More than five centuries after the passing of the Prophet, a military figure appeared who was legendary in the eyes of both friends and foes. This was Salahuddin Al-Ayyubi (1137–1193), known as Saladin. He succeeded in taking back Jerusalem in 1187 after that city had been in the hands of the Crusaders for almost a century. He did not have one drop of Arab blood in him, but it was he who succeeded in uniting the Arab world – Syria, Egypt, and Mesopotamia – thanks to the quality and character of his leadership. Saladin was born an Armenian Kurd. He was a noble general of war and a lover of the sciences, and he treated his enemies humanely. He paid homage to the Arab Abbasid dynasty, which had been ruling since 750, although by now its authority was much diminished. No Arab general was the peer of Saladin in strength of character, thanks to the Islamic education that formed his personality.

The figure of Saladin is historical proof that the character of a person can outdo bloodlines and origins. To this very day, the Muslim world feels the highest respect toward this leader from the era of the Crusades. Unfortunately, Saladin had no idea how to do away with the system of dynastic politics, because, at that time, Quraysh blood – the blood of the Prophet’s clan – was still believed to confer the right of leadership. This theory of succession has still not been entirely corrected. It is even growing in influence in some countries, with its relationship to the monopoly of power and economic resources. Under these circumstances, Islam has become the prisoner of power politics. Yet sooner or later, the corruption will be revealed.

The Khawarij faction (a puritanical splinter group) from the beginning held the view that whoever managed to become the leader, his origins would not matter, even if he were African. What, after all, was the meaning of skin color compared to the quality of devotion and piety that formed a person’s character? But the radical methods and the path of violence that this group took to achieve its aims and its egalitarian theory did not reverberate strongly, and they ultimately fell by the wayside. Khawarij

extremism reached such a level that its followers even condemned as heretical Uthman and Ali, whom they judged to have committed great sins, a position that was rejected by the majority of the *umat*.³³ As a result, the Khawarij faction attracted widening antipathy in those early days; now its followers have become a small, even moderate, minority. The Khawarij emerged after the peace between Ali and Muawiyah following the Siffin War in 658 CE. Some 12,000 followers of Ali deserted in protest against that peace treaty, and these were the ancestors of the Khawarij faction, who for the most part originated in the rural areas in the east of the Arabian Peninsula.³⁴ Even though this faction has fallen in numbers, its sectarian spirit persists within the Muslim *umat* everywhere, including Nusantara, going by various names and claiming various justifications, each faction under its own leaders. “Khawarij blood” still flows in the river of history of the Muslim *umat*.

Let us return to our original analysis. In Nusantara, when compared to the Hindu kingdoms, the system of Muslim rule was clearly looser, even if it followed the dynastic pattern, a deviation from the example set by the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (632–661 CE). With the elevation of Yazid as ruler by his father Muawiyah in 680, the egalitarian political system in the world of Islam disappeared for over a thousand years. The remnants of this Islamic dynastic political system still survive into the twenty-first century in several Arab countries, in Brunei Darussalam, and, to some extent, in Malaysia as well, although the rulers there have more of a symbolic and ceremonial function, as in Great Britain, its former colonizer. In Brunei, the sultan is the functioning head of state.

In all the dynastic political systems, the egalitarian principle has never been given proper respect. The position of individual citizens is based on descent, a principle that is demolished by the Quran, as shown in the above excerpts. In modern times, this doctrine of egalitarianism still has to be pondered over and over in the interest of clarifying for the Muslim *umat* that for centuries their fundamental rights have been plundered by the dynastic system. As for those Muslim writers who defend the dynastic system, my suggestion to them is to consult the Quran and the evidence from the early history of Islam. They should not look at the period of history when Islam was contaminated by the political culture of Persia and Byzantium, beginning in the time of the Umayyads (661–749/750). The rulers were Arab, but their system of rule was imported from those two empires. Hadn't Muawiyah, before becoming the sole ruler, served as governor in Syria for twenty years? Syria itself had formerly been part of the Byzantine Empire.

As a political system, the Abbasid Empire (750–1258), centered in Baghdad, simply carried on the Umayyad pattern, but was more open to other ethnic groups, especially Persians, who originally had been in the position of *mawali* (vassals or second-class citizens).³⁵ Significantly, the Abbasid army from the lands of Khorasan (Persia) smashed the Umayyad force, causing huge numbers of casualties among fellow Muslims.

In one aspect, there is a slight similarity between the Hindu political system and that implemented by the Muslim kingdoms in Nusantara, and that is they both had dynastic features, absent the caste system of Hindu society. Muslim kingdoms such as Pasai, Siak, Jambi, Tuban, Gresik, Demak, Cirebon, Banten, Ternate-Tidore, Banjar, Bugis, Minangkabau, Aceh, and later, Mataram, all had a dynastic character, with the head of the state being a raja, sultan, or other title, complete with “sensational” honorifics. Some of these (rendered literally) are: Glorious Sultan King of the Great Universe; Spike of the World; He, the Great Ruler; Sultan Who Holds the World in His Lap; His Majesty, Spike of the Universe. These dynastic systems were an extension of those that took hold in the Arab world with the death of Muawiyah. The Byzantine and Persian patterns were taken over by Muslim rulers for a long period of time because, of course, it pleased and benefited them. The principle of egalitarianism in the fullest sense was never realized in any of the Muslim kingdoms of Nusantara. In the succession of power, the factor of blood became a sort of axiom that had to be held on to, even though in the eyes of the Quran, it is a very fragile factor, as fragile as a spider’s web: “The example of those who take allies other than Allah is like that of the spider who takes a home. And indeed, the weakest of homes is the home of the spider, if they only knew.”³⁶ As a result of this deviation, political theory never developed in the Islamic world for hundreds of years, to say nothing of the principle of *shura* (consultation) as the Quran teaches us. If I criticize the dynastic-aristocratic political system I am not automatically defending the democratic system, except under several conditions, which I shall cite, as relevant, in Chapter 2.

When and for what reasons did this large-scale process of Islamization happen in Nusantara? It took only a short time, from about the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, continuing more intensively into the seventeenth century. It is little understood how closely the development of Islam in Nusantara was linked to the world of trading. This was a world that was dynamic and egalitarian. The north coast of Java, with its harbor cities, had built up a trading network – which long had Islamic features – with Malacca, Pasai (in present-day Aceh), Bengal, Gujarat, and even Iran. Generally speaking, the traders were creative people, sensitive

to the winds of change, including changes in the system of values. Social systems that involved caste greatly hindered the dynamism of this constant movement, to say nothing of the low regard that Hindus and Buddhists held for trading activities. From its earliest times, however, Islam was propelled by a Prophet who earlier in his life had been a trader. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Islam provided a strong impetus to traders to expand the scope of their activities with commercial centers ruled by Muslims. If the Muslim *umat* later lost out in the world of trade, that came about from a loss of entrepreneurial ethos and acuity.

The historian Sartono Karodirdjo (1921–2007) saw several factors that facilitated the Islamization process, notably in Java. They include the following:

1. The completely open urban atmosphere impelled structural tendencies for greater mobility, including changing religions.
2. The old society that was disintegrating and losing its orientation needed a new identity and new values.
3. With the decline of the centers of Hindu-Buddhist power, changes in social structures brought changes in power structures.

Islam provided a new identity and new values, which in turn buttressed that process of change.³⁷ Majapahit had weakened politically and economically, and thus the weakening of its social structure was only a matter of time. As well as through trade, Islamization proceeded through the path of mysticism, as pioneered by Abdurrauf from Singkel (also in northern Sumatra) and Syamsuddin from Pasai in the sixteenth century, which had a significant impact on coastal Sumatra and Java.³⁸ Benda also sees these mystics and sufis as accelerating the influence of Islam in Nusantara: “Most probably these sudden changes were brought about by the spread of sufistic teachings which played a role as an impetus of this belief across the Asian continent and even to China. Furthermore, this Islamic mysticism was spread to Indonesia, not by Arabs, but by Muslim Indians.”³⁹

Once again, an Indianization process occurred, but this time it was an Indianization with Islamic features. If Islamization was as lengthy a process as stated by the Medan Seminar, which dates Islam’s arrival in Nusantara to the seventh or eighth century CE, then many links must be connected to explain that process. Therefore, several writers use historical accounts, tales and romances, family chronicles, annals, and other literary forms to connect these broken links, in spite of the difficulties in addressing the quality of these sources based on standards

of critical history.⁴⁰ People will always ask about the tracks leading up to an event, and if the sources are lacking they turn to tales and the like – with all their weaknesses and deficiencies. Such sources must be used with extreme care.

Still in regard to Islam's progress in Nusantara, the historian Anthony Reid notes two more aspects in which Islam was superior to the Hindu-Buddhist cultures whose rulers had exhausted their energies in clashing with the newcomers. First, Islam had a superiority in weaponry as the logical extension of "the general prosperity and international contacts available to the Muslims." He mentions, for example, that the Ottoman Turks had sent artillery to assist Aceh in "winning many battles in the sixteenth century." Not only that, "Muslim Chinese were often found to be among the sharpshooters and armorers in the cities of Southeast Asia, especially the Javanese ones of Giri, Gresik, and Banten." Not many of us have such an appreciation of the role of those Chinese Muslims in the process of Islamizing Nusantara. Second, Reid cites the quality of faith of the Muslim *umat*, which felt that God was always on their side, even though they were the minority. Their sense of solidarity and belief in themselves came from the quality of that faith.⁴¹

In this chapter we have discussed Hodgson's "quarrel" with Geertz on the penetration of Islam among the Javanese. Here I would like to bring in the views of Karkono Kamajaya Partokusumo, who during his lifetime was known as an expert on Javanese culture. (His understanding of Islam was close to that of Muhammadiyah.) For Karkono, Javanese syncretism should not be so quickly judged or denigrated. The following passage explains his view:

Even though their Islam is syncretic, they would never accept being called non-Muslim. As Javanese, they still follow tradition, ceremonies, and symbols, but their faith and monotheism follow the teaching of the true Islam. Many of the Javanese traditions that contain symbols do not have to be seen as polytheistic. Those symbols and traditions are distinctive characteristics of the Javanese, just like the singular traits that are still associated with other ethnic groups.

Whenever Islamic practice in Java or the Islam of the Javanese people is as I have described it, don't let this become a basis for dispute and reprehensible actions.

From the time when the first Javanese Muslim raja R. Fatah was crowned Sri Sultan Syah Alam Akbar in Demak in 1480 up to the present, when our country has become independent and is a republic, Javanese culture has always existed side by side with Islam, intertwined and complementary. There has never been compulsion or conflict

that has forced Javanese to abandon their traditions. In my opinion, traditions will surely shift or change in line with societal trends and the strength of religious practice.⁴²

Naturally, in the cultural domain, there has never been compulsion to become a puritanical Muslim, although matters may be different in the realm of power politics. It is often the case that religion is unable to guard against the ambitions of power politics. This occurs in all civilizations. In view of this, we should be cautious in differentiating between the expansion of power politics and religious development. Both Spain and India were under Muslim rule for centuries, with the majority of their people remaining non-Muslim. In India, the relatively unsuccessful Islamization process, compared to that in Spain, may have been due to the oppressive caste system. Islam was viewed as a solution, even though the majority of ordinary Indians remained Hindu. A portion of those who were Muslim left to form Pakistan and then Bangladesh. However, in modern India there are about 140 million Muslims, more or less 14 percent of the entire population, which now numbers 1.324 billion (2016), second in the world after China's 1.379 billion (2016).

Thus, the widely held theory about the *pénétration pacifique* in the advance of Islam in the face of this expansion of power politics needs to be corrected.⁴³ That theory is correct to the extent that it concerns the spread of Islam as a religion and a cultural force not occurring through compulsion, as this would conflict with the principles of the Quran, which was generally the reference used by the proselytizers of this religion.⁴⁴

But, if it relates to the spread of power, warfare is usually unavoidable. In this respect, we must read the conclusion reached by Ricklefs, which says: "Islam was spread in Indonesia not simply by persuasion and commercial pressures, but also by the sword."⁴⁵ Ricklefs should also differentiate between Islam as a cultural force and expansionist behavior by Muslim rulers to achieve their political agendas, which were occasionally no less deplorable than those of their non-Muslim counterparts. In fact, the stench of such behavior was more terrible in the struggles for power among Muslims themselves, as may be seen in various periods of the history of the Muslim *umat*.

Let us look at one such example. Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607–1636), highly admired by the people of Aceh, acted cruelly in building his power by murdering all the *orang kaya* (the independent nobility who were influential in the maritime political system) when he accused them of undermining the throne and stealing state property. Not only that, but Sultan Iskandar Muda also had all his sons condemned to death to avoid power struggles. The result of this was that for three generations after

Iskandar, the Aceh sultanate was ruled by sultanahs (female rajas), who were easily influenced by the *orang kaya* of succeeding generations, who quickly reappeared after the demise of Iskandar.⁴⁶ And so, let us not exaggerate the greatness of a leader to the point that his despicable deeds are simply covered up. History wants to force open the past just as it was, but this difficult to do. Apart from the requisite source material that is never complete or unbiased, it is not uncommon for the political interests *du jour* to present obstacles to our search. But an uncompromising historian will never give in to the limitations of source material and political obstacles. He or she seeks to expose the reality of the past, even if rulers stand in the way.

We cannot close our eyes to the dark events of history. Religion is not infrequently used to justify or legitimize a system that betrays the message of that same religion. Fatwas issued by religious scholars throughout history often have a partisan cast in their efforts to defend the existing power. In the past, religious arguments were often aimed at winning over the common people so they would not be inclined to revolt against Muslim tyrants, even if this has not always been successful. I believe that fatwas such as this are nothing more than betrayals, backed by religious arguments, of the holy aims of the religion itself. Such fatwas clearly are made-to-order for rulers intent on holding onto their thrones, or they are issued to curry favor. True religious scholars are those who issue fatwas based on religious teachings; they are understood to be honest and brave in the face of all threats and inducements. Those who courageously issue proper fatwas are the religious scholars who are strong of character. But how rare such individuals have been!

In the progress of Islamization, something paradoxical occurred that is worthy of note. It was the arrival of the Westerners in Nusantara and their Christian missionary activities that accelerated Islamization. There is an interesting perspective here. Islamization commenced at the time when Indianization had reached a dead end both politically and culturally. An acute crisis hit the Indianization process, which had reached its saturation point. The Islamic experience pointed to another reality. With the arrival of the West and the wave of Christian proselytization, Islamization progressed all the more quickly and firmly. In contrast to its previous interaction with Hindus, who had come from Asia, now Islam had to confront Christianity, which even though it had originated with the Prophet Abraham, was now Westernized. Long before the sixteenth century, Christianity and Islam had been engaged in a fierce armed struggle during the blood-soaked Crusades. These had started with Pope Urban II's speech at the Council of Clermont in 1095 and ended in 1291 with the fall of Acre and the control of all Palestine by the Muslim

Mamluks. Echoes of those Crusades were felt in the contest between Islam and Christianity in Nusantara, beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing to the present day.

It is an incontrovertible fact, not only in Nusantara but in various parts of the world, that once Islam has set down its cultural footprint, however imperfectly, its adherents only very rarely change their faith, and this only in certain cases. Take the example of Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587–1629), who twice served as the Dutch governor-general in Batavia (1619–1629). Coen was not only known as having been singularly instrumental in strengthening the position of the Dutch East India Company by violent means – destroying anything in his way⁴⁷ – he was the first person to introduce the rice-for-faith system. That means that each child who studied in a Christian school was given a pound of unhusked rice. Hence the term “rice Christians,” people embracing religion for material gain, as Wertheim has written.⁴⁸ As history unfolded, Coen’s tactics were never effective, because generally faith that can be bought with material things is a low-quality faith.

With all its weakness in all the different aspects of life, the percentage of the Muslim *umat* of the entire population of Nusantara is very high, about 88.22 percent.⁴⁹ This is the strongest indicator that converting out of Islam for any Muslim is virtually unimaginable, to say nothing of a well-educated one. The cases that deviate from this general pattern are of little concern, although they still need to be stemmed. The worrisome problem is when the quality of the Muslim *umat* overall is unacceptably low. Ignorance is the main reason for the poverty and backwardness suffered for centuries by the Muslim community throughout the country.

So the greatest enemy is the disease of ignorance, which produces poverty and backwardness. The most important jihad should be to drive this sickness out of the body and spirit of the Muslim *umat*. If this problem of ignorance can be overcome, then the solution for so many other problems can be found. But this requires changes in the paradigm of thinking. From the quantitative – the numbers chase – to the qualitative, it calls for pursuing quality in every domain: science, technology, the economy, social and moral spheres, and Islamic thinking. Because of that, speeding up the process of sharpening and enlightening the mind is the only choice open for the Muslim *umat* to regain the position of *khaira umma*, “the best community,” as the Quran expresses it.⁵⁰ Each Muslim nation may compete pursuing this ideal. Unless it radically changes its paradigm of thinking, I worry that God will look askance at this *umat*, for it is still steeped in and lulled by a false pride in the name of religion; it is sunk in the greatness of the past, but it fails to deal with the present, as may be seen in the Arab world. Islam demands

the birth of an open community that firmly grasps the universal values of prophethood, but also fosters local values that can be compatibly integrated to enrich the practice of this religion in collective life. A purely legalistic approach will only end in the formation of an Islamic culture that is dessicated and lacking vitality and that surely will not last long. Humans are creatures that do not want to remain forever deprived in a culture of aridity. There is a spiritual demand for something that goes beyond the material.

Let us return to the Islamization process. Why was the advance of Islamization accelerated by Western expansion? We have already spoken of the paradox⁵¹ of history in Nusantara. Supposing Western colonialism had not come to Nusantara, it is no sure thing that the majority would be Muslim. Thus, the echo of the Crusades proved useful in Nusantara, in that it broadened the belief that Christianity was the religion of the colonizer, and as such must be resisted. So it is not surprising that the doctrine that forms the backdrop of resistance against invasion by the West was born in the womb of Islam. The nobility who culturally were still drenched in Hinduism saw Islam as a liberating force. With their entry into the ranks of Islam, as pioneered by the religious adepts, scholars, and teachers, the proselytizers of reform, this class of nobles felt that their position was safe, at least for the present, until they and their religious leaders were defeated by the gunpowder and artillery of the West.

We do not know for sure what percentage of people in Nusantara were Muslim when the Europeans arrived in the sixteenth century. But they were not the majority, even if several Muslim kingdoms had held a foothold in their territories since the end of the thirteenth century. "It was especially the arrival of the Portuguese," writes Wertheim, "that caused a great number of the nobility to embrace Islam as a political move to confront Christian penetration."⁵² From that moment on, the belief arose that the invasion by the West could be stemmed by Islam, even if the Muslim rajas did not form a united front. In fact, they quite often confronted one another. The late, famed journalist Mochtar Lubis, known to be neutral in discussing matters of religion, never hesitated to say publicly that Christianity was the religion of colonizers. "Christianity was equated with the colonial government in the same way as it was as the religion of the Dutch colonials. Both the Catholic and Protestant churches in Indonesia always enjoyed financial assistance from their mother organizations abroad."⁵³

To lengthen the radius of their influence in the face of the quickly expanding Islam, the two Christian religions became active in the areas of education and social and health services, especially in their most basic forms. Lubis comments further:

They built schools and hospitals, and the colonial government helped, protected and encouraged them. While Islam continued its presence by *pribumi* [native, indigenous] efforts, the overseas churches kept pumping in fresh blood and funds for the sake of the mission and church work in Indonesia. Thus, Christianity even today is marked by foreign elements, such as pastors and nuns from Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, and priests from the us or the Netherlands as well as from other countries.⁵⁴

We need to expand this observation by Lubis. After Indonesia gained independence, the Muslim side no longer needed to dwell on this because “indigenization” (*pribumisasi*) of Catholicism and Protestantism was proceeding rapidly. There were still foreign pastors and priests, of course, but their Indonesianness was pronounced in a number of ways. My friend Franz Magnis-Suseno was born in Germany; in defending Indonesia as his home, he can outdo the loyalty of native-born Muslims. My friendship with Magnis goes back a long way, and we are often seen together in seminars, forums, and similar discussion groups. On June 13, 2007, Magnis sent a letter asking me to make a brief recommendation in the interest of his trip to Europe to raise funds for the construction of Building s2 and s3 STF (“Philosophy High School”) Driyarkara, in Jakarta, because the old building was no longer adequate. I was happy to make that recommendation. It went more or less like this: “Seen from the aspect of enlightenment, the Driyarkara School of Philosophy has thus far made many contributions in enriching and sharpening the vision and views of the Indonesian intelligentsia, whether Christian, Muslim, or others.”⁵⁵ Magnis-Suseno is among those Catholic thinkers who are less concerned about the number of religious adherents than about the quality of the adherents to a religion.

I have found an identical attitude in the Venerable Monk Pannyavaro of Candi Mendut. In a conversation we had in his monastery one day when my wife and I paid him a visit, Pannyavaro said that having a large number of followers is not important, but the quality of their commitment to virtue is crucial. This monk has been my good friend for years. We appreciate each other in our differences, but we meet in a moral riverboat (*biduk*) for the betterment of all creatures. For me, a sincere friendship across faiths is very affecting. Humankind is indeed one. But let power politics intrude into those friendships, and the atmosphere will shatter, as it frequently does, even between adherents of the same religion. Examples of this are almost too numerous to mention, whether in the past or as they continue to accumulate in the present. This is the effect of pragmatic politics without a clear moral vision.

Let us return to our discussion. I have been outlining a picture of the past when Nusantara was still under a colonial system that was very dark and oppressive for the *pribumi* population. The churches at that time were all most unanimous in their support for this system; several academics have admitted this. The past cannot be changed, but it can be forgiven for the future of us all. Didn't the mosques in Andalusia under Arab-Muslim rule or in India under Mughal-Muslim rule also side with those in power?

"As long as they developed themselves in Indonesia," writes Lubis, "whether Catholic or Protestant, the churches found a pleasant place in the Dutch colonial structure. There are no records of the Christian churches criticizing or condemning the cruel and inhuman practices done to the Indonesian people by the VOC or the colonial government, the war against Banda, the *hongitochten* in the Maluku, the expansionist war in Aceh and other regions, the administration of *heerendiensten* (voluntary labor for Dutch interests) and *kultuurstelsel* (forced cultivation)."⁵⁶

Such attitudes are not surprising, because the church leadership of that era was in the hands of the foreigners. It was not easily differentiated from the colonial structure. But in the revolution for our independence (1945–1949), Muslim and Christian worked shoulder to shoulder to drive out the Dutch, who were trying to reinstate colonialism with the help of the British. This strongly contrasted with the attitudes of the churches before the twentieth century.

The Influence of Colonialism, Islam, and the National Movement

I mentioned in the Introduction that it would be difficult for us to imagine an Indonesia, either as a nation or as a state, had it not been preceded by a colonial system, and specifically Dutch colonialism, which lasted longer than Portuguese and British colonialism. It was the former Dutch colony that became Indonesia. During the Japanese Occupation (1942–1945), short as it was but no less harsh, Indonesia stood up as a nation that had been conceived in the 1920s. Nationalism and the independence movement were the direct result of the Dutch educational system, which had opened the hearts and eyes of the people of Nusantara. Western education had raised a tiger cub. Nationalist leaders gradually headed in the direction of independence using modern organization, inspired by their Western education. In this way, colonialism indirectly served Nusantara.

The Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or VOC) showed another face of colonialism. Long before the budding of national consciousness, at the start of the seventeenth century

the VOC had emerged as the trade monopoly power over various agricultural products of Nusantara. In the late eighteenth century the VOC fell into corruption and debt, and in 1799, the Dutch government revoked the company's charter and took control. By 1910, the Netherlands had expanded its control over almost all of Nusantara.⁵⁷ In his self-defense at the state court in Bandung in 1930, Sukarno exposed the brutality of the VOC:

We know how during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the East India Company, impelled by fierce competition with the English, Portuguese, and Spanish, established a monopoly system. We know how harshly and brutally they implanted and strengthened that monopoly. We know how in the Maluku Archipelago thousands of lives were ended, rajadoms were destroyed, millions of clove and nutmeg plants were eradicated every year. We know how, in order to guard their monopoly in the Maluku Archipelago, the rajadom of Makassar was conquered and its trade extinguished, so that hundreds, thousands of Makassarese lost their livelihoods and were forced to become pirates. We know how in Java, following a "divide and conquer" policy, as Professor Veth or Clive Day or Raffles might say, one by one the kingdoms fell under the control of the VOC, and the people's economy was constricted (by *contingenten* and *leverantien*) – yes, was absolutely pressured and extinguished.⁵⁸

Sukarno was not inventing these accusations; these were the hard facts of history, and they describe what really happened. Holland, a small country, had given birth to cruel murderers so it could grab extraordinary profits. With this bitter fact before us, we blush to speak about civilization and humanity. We condemn the pirates Sukarno speaks of, but we also must understand their motives. The colonial system is the skeleton in the closet of civilization. Human conscience must oppose this system, whatever the people, whatever the religion. We need to reread and frequently reflect on a sentence in the first paragraph of the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution in this connection. Let me quote it here: "Whereas independence is the inalienable right of all nations, therefore, all colonialism must be abolished in this world as it is not in conformity with humanity and justice" This brief but dense paragraph did not emerge out of nowhere, but was extracted from the cry of the souls of all those who struggled for independence through the long years of the colonial system.

Forcing Nusantara under one colonial administrative umbrella would facilitate the management by the Dutch of this colony, including draining the wealth of its soil. This was the forerunner of the Dutch East Indies

colony, which became the main “capital stock” of Indonesia in later days. The political process of this union constituted another form of indirect “service,” although built on countless victims. For more than two hundred years, the Dutch exerted themselves in so many ways, including war and diplomacy, to conquer Nusantara. After Aceh was subdued in 1912, up to World War II and the arrival of the Japanese in 1942 there was no more meaningful resistance from the people of Nusantara against the colonial system.

Thus, the Dutch only had thirty years in which to feel cushioned from the opposition and disturbances of the Muslim *umat*. In early times it had been a sporadic opposition, driven by the spirit of jihad, without modern weapons. Defeat was a constant risk. But it was precisely this defeat that gave birth to the multitude of heroes who lie beneath the soil of Nusantara. Perhaps the correct title for them is Heroes of Nusantara, not National Heroes, because there was not even the slightest notion of Indonesia as a nation before the twentieth century.

The factor that triggered the modern national movement was not the traditional Islamic educational system in the form of the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), but the educational system of the West that opened *pribumi* eyes and hearts. As well, during the 1930s a number of Indonesian students from Egypt became especially energetic in the movement against colonialism. The *pesantren* system served as a latent force in this opposition; however, at the outset this concept of a national movement was not within the frame of the Indonesian identity, so to speak. Fighting against the Dutch throughout the nineteenth century was led entirely by the Islamic scholars, the more traditionalist religious scholars (*kiyai*), and other Muslim figures. But, to reiterate, it was not within the context of an Indonesia. Their resistance was to maintain their own sovereignty and sense of self-esteem. Let us take, for example, the wars in Maluku, Makassar, Banjar, the Minangkabau lands, Java, and Aceh, which broke out throughout the nineteenth century. All of these were led by local Muslim figures, whether Islamic scholars or aristocrats. Even though this nineteenth-century resistance was not waged to create a nation called Indonesia, the heroic struggle became important political capital for the national movement of the twentieth century. Without such capital, how difficult it would have been to create a nation in an archipelago of thousands of islands!

When did the national movement under the banner of Indonesia actually begin? The date is often set as May 20, 1908, when the Budi Utomo (High Endeavor – BU) society was established. That date is commemorated annually as the Day of National Awakening (Hari

Kebangkitan Nasional – Harkitnas). But, historically speaking, is there a firm basis for choosing this date? To answer this question, I will excerpt part of my column in the magazine *Gatra*,⁵⁹ which included testimony from Ali Sastromidjojo's autobiography. I believe this testimony is the property of all the leading figures of the Indonesian Association (Perhimpunan Indonesia – PI). My argument is based solely on history, nothing else. I am quoting Ali's testimony as he gave it in 1923 in a meeting of the PI:

My national consciousness had only barely reached the level of an ethnic Javanese identity. For that reason, I then experienced moments of radical transition in the development of the *Indische Vereeniging* ("Indies Association") to the *Indonesische Vereniging* ("Indonesian Association"), which occurred in The Hague, causing a radical mental change in my soul. Immediately, my feelings of being a Javanese began to lose substance. Only then did new feelings and a new consciousness immediately grow. I began to be aware that I was not simply a Javanese, but was part of a great nation, the Indonesian nation! As an Indonesian, I was no longer an *inlander* ["native"], *inheemse* ["aborigine"] or *bumiputra* ["indigene"], but an Indonesian who possessed a motherland with a new name: Indonesia! ... All our thoughts and deeds while studying in various universities in the Netherlands were aimed at achieving the realization of those feelings and consciousness of being Indonesian.⁶⁰

Similar emotions were experienced by other PI figures. For these educated children of the colony a sense of "Indonesianness" now became a credo of struggle whose vibrations were growing stronger and louder all the while.

Next, in that column, I further clarified my argument:

Ali was being quite honest in his admission and his testimony. Awareness of Indonesianness only appeared in the 1920s, replacing regional identities, whether Sulawesi, Ambonese, or Javanese. But what about Budi Utomo? We greatly appreciate the energy put out by BU as a cultural-intellectual movement, but not as the creator of a nation which henceforth would be known as Indonesia.

Thanks the struggles of the PI, which was then reinforced by the 1928 Youth Oath, the scars of Dutch colonialism appeared as a new nation on the equator as an archipelagic cluster of lovely islands, as Ali Sastroamidjojo had described it in his feelings. BU simply had not conceived of an Indonesia. Between the years 1908–1931, BU closed

itself off from non-Javanese ethnicities. It was, as the historian Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara wrote, “an exclusive organization.”⁶¹

Because of that, so that we are honest and fair to our past, I propose the designation of the origin of National Awakening Day be the formation of the Indische Vereeniging (“Indies Association”), a name later made more forceful in Indonesian as Perhimpunan Indonesia (“Indonesian Association”). Ali said it was 1923 when that change occurred, while Hatta in his Memoir, wrote that it was in 1922⁶²

But if people feel less than comfortable with this, then just make Youth Oath Day, October 28, 1928, as the beginning of National Awakening. The SBY-Kalla government should not hesitate to take the radical resolution in this magazine, because the old resolution is ahistorical and flawed and thus must be corrected. The building of our national history must be erected on a firm and proper foundation. Foundations that are frail will always be shaky, or, to quote the words of a poet, “A web on a shaky branch won’t last long.” We want Indonesia to last until this world crumbles!⁶³

In the history of modern Indonesia, there are still many issues that are not clear, such as who actually took the initiative to launch the attack on March 1949 in Yogyakarta. Was it Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX? General Soedirman? Soeharto? There is unanimity that the one on the ground who carried it out was Lt. Col. Soeharto. And what about Supersemar (the order of March 11, 1966), which gave authority to Soeharto, who then, among other things, dissolved the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) on the following day? Even today there is no certainty about this.

In connection with Islam and the National Movement, I have clarified that the idea for a National Movement emerged for the first time among the students in Dutch schools, either in the Netherlands or in the motherland. The majority of this educated group was Muslim, even if non-Muslims held important roles, too, such as J.B. Sitanala, Arnold Mononutu, and A.A. Maramis. I must provide a special note about the firmness of Mononutu’s commitment to the idea of being Indonesian, as Hatta recorded it:

In 1925, a lot happened that was connected with the Indonesian Association. The colonial government [in Batavia] was threatening the parents of many of the members. Those who were civil servants were ordered to choose between their children remaining as members of the Association or their [i.e., their parents] losing their positions. Among those being threatened was the father of Arnold Mononutu. This man had become a senior clerk in the Manado Resident’s office.

Arnold was ordered to choose. Either leave the Association or, if he remained a member, commencing the following month he would not receive any allowance from home. This amounted to fl200 per month. Arnold replied to his father's letter, saying that he became a member of the Indonesian Association because of his certainty and he could no longer withdraw. And because of that, he forgave his father for cutting off his remittance.⁶⁴

Who wouldn't be touched by Mononutu's sense of patriotism, when in fact he was a Christian, the religion of the Dutch? He made the political choice to belong to the PI with the fullest certainty, even if it made him suffer. Arnold Mononutu was indeed a man of character.

And then, during the Revolution (1945–1949), who wouldn't have known of T.B. Simatupang, the Christian general who fought side by side with his fellow Muslim generals to drive out colonialism?

As a result of the brutal politics of the colonial government, the PI moved quickly, gathering funds every month to assist Mononutu, who had been cast adrift. But, writes Hatta, these brutal colonial methods “only strengthened the solidarity among the members of the Indonesian Association.”⁶⁵ From the aspect of religion, the Mononutu case is quite interesting. This “son of Manado” put the interests of the nation ahead of his religious relationship with the colonials. He forgave his father because he had been forced to cut off his remittances at a time when he, Arnold, really needed them to continue paying his tuition costs in Europe. So we see that not only since the era of the Revolution have Christian friends stood fully for the idea of Indonesia as a nation. Ever since the National Movement era, these friends of different religions worked closely with their Muslim comrades for the independence of the motherland. Dr. J.B. Sitanala, a Catholic, became one of the administrators of PI, then the target of strong suspicion by the colonial power. Such historical facts need to be repeated so that the force of national integration grows ever stronger in the midst of religious pluralism and our variegated subcultures.

Before we go on to discuss this topic, we ought to step back a pace or two, and take a look at the sociological map of Nusantara under the colonial system. Although the influence of the Dutch educational system became the main driving force of the national movement, the access of *pribumi* children to these centers of learning was very limited. Until the 1945 Proclamation of Independence, in terms of power relations in Nusantara, there were three important social groups whose interactions affected the colony. First, Dutch people in the home country were represented by the

Dutch Government in The Hague. Second, there was the community of the Dutch throughout Nusantara, who were increasingly represented by the Dutch East Indies Government in Batavia. Third, there was anyone else, other than the common people who themselves were governed by the first two groups and whose influence on the government was almost non-existent.⁶⁶ The colonized people for the most part were illiterate, and their fates had been at the mercy of others for decades, even centuries. By the era of the Ethical Policy at the beginning of the twentieth century, the government had no desire to improve *pribumi* minds. This was quite logical for the colonizers, since an intelligent people would clearly be dangerous for the continuation of the colonial system. The Dutch were very aware of this problem because they intended to rule rich and beautiful Nusantara forever in the interests of their little country in Europe.

At the end of the nineteenth century, there were in all of Nusantara over 80,000 lower school students, most of whom were in missionary schools. Of that number, in 1900, only 2,000 native children entered missionary schools, because the government naturally hindered them from attending. Thousands of others were in village schools whose standards were far below those of the missionary schools. Compared to the total population of 30 million⁶⁷ in Nusantara at that time, only a small percentage of its children went to schools of good quality. About 90 percent of the illiterate children were Muslim. If we look at the fact that in 1882, of 40,000 *pribumi* students, only 44 were girls, we immediately see that the majority of illiterates were female. To be sure, the Western educational system was gradually being introduced, but the Dutch opposed *pribumi* efforts to educate themselves. The Dutch wanted to prevent them from getting to know the Western world, for once their eyes were opened the colonized peoples would resist the West, which in Nusantara was represented by the Dutch.⁶⁸

However, over the course of a history that began in the early twentieth century, the eyes of the people of Nusantara did finally open. The opposition awaited the proper time to explode into the open, even though it brought much hardship and suffering. How difficult it was for the *pribumi* elite to conduct an enlightenment movement in the midst of such mass ignorance and poverty. The Islam that this mass embraced was more for spiritual use, while the technology used to win the worldly competition was ruled by a religion not their own. A religion with a historical claim so breathtaking would become stranded midway on the journey if its community were ignorant and poor.

Palmier gives a picture of the extreme difference in income between the Europeans and the Javanese. On the eve of the 1930 world depression,

in 1929, 69 percent of the Europeans who lived in Java earned more than 5,000 florins annually. In contrast to that amount, more than 80 percent of Javanese *pribumi*, and 69 percent outside of Java, earned less than 300 florins annually.⁶⁹ Such conditions of poverty and ignorance in the end gradually drove a people's movement to change the people's fate with their own hands. Thus, we have the birth of Gerakan Al-Iman (Movement of Faith) through a Malay-language magazine published in Singapore in 1906, but exported to Nusantara; the establishment of the Adabiya (Polite Manners) School in Padang in 1909; and the publication of *Al-Munir* (Enlightenment) magazine, also in Padang, in 1911. These were among the responses of modernist Muslim groups to the totally destitute and illiterate situation of the people of Nusantara. There was no other way to improve their destiny save through the process of honing and enlightening their minds.

The following chronology gives a clear indication of the means by which the *pribumi* elite confronted wide-eyed the closed, discriminatory, and conservative colonial system: Al-Jami'at Al-Khairiyah (Association of the Beneficent) in 1905; Budi Utomo (BU) in 1908; Sarekat Dagang Islam (Islamic Trade Union – SDI) in 1911, which became Sarekat Islam (Islamic Union – SI) in 1912; the Indische Partij (Indies Party – IP) in 1911; Muhammadiyah in 1912; Al-Irsyad (Guidance) in 1913.⁷⁰ We see that the first two decades of the twentieth century witnessed a flare-up of popular movements aimed at independence, thanks to the infusion of the Western system of education their members had received. This was an unintended and unexpected contribution by the colonials to the formation of an Indonesian nation several years later.

Something that is rarely mentioned is the radicalism of the Indies Party, which early on had demanded the independence of the Indies,⁷¹ anticipating the statement of the Islamic Union, which began its agitation in this cause only in 1917. In that year, SI not only demanded self-government, but also called for independence to be achieved by any means.⁷² This meant that both IP and SI had taken militant positions, even though physical preparations and weaponry were completely lacking. The only thing available was their energy and spirit to break loose from colonialism. In the colonial climate, these two parties were truly brave and risked serious danger by taking this political position. Budi Utomo, as an intellectual-cultural movement, did not follow the SI and IP, even though it was senior to them by several years. So, once again, the designation of BU as the dawn of the national awakening is in no way supported by historical fact. Everyone acknowledges BU's good services in pioneering the process of enlightenment in *priyayi* (Javanese gentry) circles. That, among BU's contributions, was an important ingredient in the awareness

of the members of this ethnic group. In an announcement by the BU board signed by its secretary Soewarno, which was carried in the Semarang daily *Locomotief* on July 24, 1908, we read: "Our organization, Budi Utomo, was founded on May 20 with an initial membership of some 650 persons. The objective of the organization has been reported most succinctly by *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* [*Batavia News*]: to lighten the burden of the daily struggle of the Javanese *bangsa* [people, nation] through a harmonious and spiritual development."⁷³

The use of the term *bangsa* for an ethnic group at that time was actually quite widespread. There was not just a Javanese *bangsa*, but an Acehnese *bangsa*, Minangkabau *bangsa*, Batak *bangsa*, Ambonese *bangsa*, Sundanese *bangsa*, Banjar *bangsa*, and so on, because naturally the Indonesian *bangsa* was yet to be imagined in the first and second decades of the twentieth century.

In the meantime, the proposal to designate SI the pioneer of the national movement is also not correct, as it ignores the pluralism that could be clearly seen in the PI and Youth Oath circles. The SI, known earlier as SDI (Sarekat Dagang Islam – Islamic Trade Union), had initially been a movement to empower the economy and trading business of the Muslim *umat* that felt threatened by non-Muslim commercial activities in Surakarta. However, in 1912, a radical transformation that changed SDI into SI took place under the charismatic leadership of Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto. It was not just the name that changed. The movement changed its orientation from economic to political. As a result, the economic empowerment of the Muslim *umat* was neglected, with the energies of the Muslim elite now focused on its political interests in confronting the colonial system. SI's H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, a graduate of the Dutch Administrators' School, was the first Muslim leader in the modern era to emphasize Islam as a "binding factor and a national symbol."⁷⁴ Despite his Dutch-style education, Tjokroaminoto did not want to work in the colonial government. Under Tjokro, SI grew quickly and came to be viewed as a threat to the colonial system. Thus, the Dutch administration sought a way to weaken the SI's political position by hitting its centralized power.

Tjokro was also the "godfather" of a number of communist and nationalist figures who appeared later on, such as Alimin, Muso, Sukarno, and many others. He was the real father of Indonesian nationalism, even though this ideological term only became popular in the 1920s. It is probably not too much to call Tjokro, as Anton Timur Jaylani did, "the 'definer' or architect to build the Muslim nation."⁷⁵ Aspiring leaders of the Indonesian nation studied under Tjokro at his home in Surabaya. Not long after his death in 1934, as has happened repeatedly in

modern Indonesian history, the PSII (Indonesian Islamic Union Party) split into the Abikusno Tjokrosudjono and Agus Salim factions. Political egotism was one reason for such factionalizing. Not just the PSII with its Islamic ideology, but parties with Marxist or nationalist ideologies were also vulnerable to this disease. Generally, factionalism was not caused by philosophical views that could not be reconciled, but rather was triggered by the considerations of practical politics. Political parties led by Indonesia's intellectual class were never immune from the friction of interests that brought with them factionalism.

The Birth of Indonesia as a Nation

The movement aimed at the formation of a nation in an effective and directed way, after a national consolidation process, only came into being in the 1920s. This development took place both in the Netherlands, through PI, and in Nusantara, through youth and student organizations from various regions who had gathered in Jakarta. According to Ali Sastroamidjojo, there were only about sixty Indonesian students in the Netherlands at that time. They maintained their fervor in struggling for the ideals of an independent Indonesia, even though their colleagues at home were experiencing a spiritual crisis following the failure of the communist rebellion in 1926–1927. The PI even published a magazine, *Indonesia Merdeka (Independent Indonesia)*,⁷⁶ a name that was a symbol of extraordinary intellectual courage if measured by the reality of the times and where the magazine was published. The era of the 1920s was a laboratory for the budding and flowering of Indonesian nationalism and the weakening of regional sentiment. Bahasa Indonesia increasingly played a central role in fostering the sense of what it meant to be Indonesian (*keindonesiaan*), a concept still in its infancy.

Also in the 1920s, youth organizations like Jong Java (Young Java), Jong Sumatranen Bond (Young Sumatran Union), Jong Minahasa (Young Minahasa), Jong Islamieten Bond (Young Islamic Union), Jong Batak-bond (Young Batak Union), Jong Celebes (Young Celebes), Sekar Rukun (Harmonious Flowers), and the Vereeniging voor Ambonsche Studerenden (Association of Ambonese Students) held meetings in Jakarta in an effort to harmonize their language as they united themselves, leaving behind local nationalisms and reaching for Indonesian nationalism.⁷⁷ Once again, I need to stress that national consciousness emerged in the circles of Nusantara youth who had been Western-educated. This is not surprising, because the curriculum they absorbed in their schools broadened their humanistic perspectives, including the concepts of democracy

and nationalism, which increasingly commanded their attention. By opening these centers of education, the Dutch, who had initially only wanted to mold low-level civil servants, found that they had been nurturing ravenous tigers. This process of national awareness advanced very quickly and reached its climax on October 28, 1928, thereafter being known as the Youth Pledge. The term *pledge* seems to have come later, for its name prior to that was the Congress of Indonesian Youth. Its three important decisions were:

First: We, the sons and daughters of Indonesia, acknowledge one motherland, Indonesia.

Second: We, the sons and daughters of Indonesia, acknowledge one nation, the nation of Indonesia.

Third: We, the sons and daughters of Indonesia, revere the language of unity, the Indonesian language.⁷⁸

Although the wording of the covenant mentioned “sons and daughters of Indonesia,” I cannot find the name of any “daughter” among the committee members. But including the word *daughters* meant that the “sons” were well aware of the importance of women in the national struggle. And, through the Youth Pledge, in the words of the late historian Sagimun M.D., “the Malay language was crowned as Bahasa Indonesia.”⁷⁹ How great was Malay’s contribution to forming an Indonesian identity!

If we read the names involved in the PI activities in Europe and the Youth Congress in Indonesia, it becomes clear that the nation was created by young people in their twenties who had a Western education, whether in Indonesia or in Europe. They used the weapons of the West to form a nation, the Indonesian nation. Once again, I emphasize that this nation was formed and established in general by young people and students, and a small percentage of the older generation, such as H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto, Surjaningrat (Ki Hadjar Dewantara), Tjipto Mangunkusumo, E.F. Douwes Dekker, Agus Salim, Tan Malaka, Semaun, Soekiman Wijosendjojo, and Darsono. But the ones who were directly involved in the movement to consolidate nationalism in the 1920s were educated young people.

A poetic interpretation of the wording of the Youth Pledge was given by the poet SCB (Sutardji Calzoum Bachri); it is an interpretation I had never read in any source. In the speech he gave on culture after receiving the Jakarta Academy Award on December 10, 2007, SCB provided this commentary on the Youth Pledge: “The Youth Pledge has really never been known as poetry. But if we look at what is contained in its wording

there is imagination that is demonstrated by words that are dense but succinct and full of meaning, so it meets the conditions of being poetry.”⁸⁰ If we look at the committee members of the Youth Pledge, we see they include Muhammad Yamin and Amir Sjarifuddin, who were talented poets, especially Yamin. It is not impossible that the text of the Youth Pledge was drawn up by Yamin. If Sutardji esteems it as poetry, it makes sense to do so. Yamin initially worshipped the region of his birth, West Sumatra, and then worshipped Indonesia, later becoming an ultranationalist.

Let us go back to the problem of the formation of the nation. It is clear that the emergence of Indonesia as a nation and then as an independent state are the fruits of the work and struggles of figures in the national movement, whether they used a political approach or a sociocultural-religious one. Earlier I mentioned briefly that during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the Indies Party and the Sarekat Islam (Islamic Association – SI) were born with a political orientation that grew more radical over time. In contrast, BU, Muhammadiyah, Al-Irsyad and others were conceived of having sociocultural-religious orientations. The combination of these two approaches of the two groups increasingly awakened the people of Nusantara to the importance and need for the independence of the motherland, and worried the colonialists. And the worries of the Dutch were not without basis, because of their bitter experience in confronting local rebellions that sustained the opposition to the colonial system, even if only sporadically. The Aceh War (1873–1912) against Dutch colonialism was the longest and took the most lives, including several senior officers of the Dutch army. On the Acehnese side, those who perished numbered in the thousands.⁸¹ Even though all the popular uprisings ultimately failed in the face of the military technology and the trickery of the colonialists, the echoes of resistance were never extinguished from the collective memory of the children of Nusantara.

In the third decade of the 1920s, the waves of the popular movement grew all the more powerful, but its political and socio-cultural patterns remained unchanged. Among the more notable popular movements born at this time were Taman Siswa (Garden of Students) in 1922, Partai Komunis Hindia (Communist Party of the Indies – PKH) in 1923, Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union) in 1923, Nahdlatul Ulama (Revival of the Ulama) in 1926, Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian Nationalist Party) in 1927, and Perti (Partai Tarbiyah Islamiyah – Islamic Education and Upbringing Party) in 1930, along with several other local organizations.

SI weakened during the 1920s as a result of the factionalism of its radical and moderate forces, or, as they were known, the “Red SI” and the “White SI.” The Red SI fused with the Communist Party, which was founded by H.J.F. Sneevliet, a Dutch Marxist who came to Nusantara with one purpose: to spread the understanding of communism. The Semarang branch of the SI was successfully “reddened.” After this fracture, the SI never again achieved the greatness of its first four years. But it would be difficult to find the equal of its services as a pioneer of the movements to erect the pillars of nationhood through the political approach.

The communist leaders lacked patience. With preparations that were all wrong, the PKH planned armed rebellions in West and Central Java and West Sumatra in 1926–1927. As expected from the start by Tan Malaka, one important figure who did not support the premature revolution, the colonial government managed to crush the rebellions in a series of lightning strikes. Very soon the leaders of these rebellions, the majority of whom were Muslim, were exiled to Boven Digul in New Guinea, while the top figures fled. Some reached Russia, the center of the international communist movement at that time. Lenin’s victory in Russia in the October Revolution in 1917 and the anticolonial slogans held special allure for some of the groups in the movement and helped persuade them to merge with the PKH, including some religious scholars.

The destruction of communist power in Nusantara inspired Sukarno and his friends to establish the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) on July 4, 1927. The young Sukarno was obsessed with unity. The year before, in 1926, he had written a long article in the daily *Suluh Indonesia Mudah* (*The Torch of Young Indonesia*) titled “Nasionalisme, Islamisme, dan Marxisme” (“Nationalism, Islam, and Marxism”). According to Sukarno, these three political ideologies had to work together in order to achieve the great goal of the independence of the nation. This is part of what he wrote: “We are certain that all the leaders of Indonesia are aware that it is unity that is bringing us to greatness and to independence.”⁸² So obsessed was Sukarno with the concept of national unity that he seemed to have forgotten the SI’s bitter experience of having been stabbed in the back by the communists, thanks to the tactics of Sneevliet. For in 1914, Sneevliet had established the ISDV (Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging – Indies Social Democratic Association), which on May 23, 1920, changed into the Partai Komunis Hindia (PKH), the forerunner of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), with Semaun as its first chair.⁸³ The ISDV was established in Surabaya, and at first all its members were Dutch citizens.

Even though Sukarno put nationalism at the forefront of his article, in reality Islam and Marxism as formal political ideologies had emerged

earlier, through SI and the PKH. The party that openly bore the flag of nationalism was the PNI, which had been established only in 1927. And even if the SI did not proclaim its nationalism in the same way, the character of its nationalism cannot be any more in doubt. In contrast, the position of the PKH was problematic, because besides struggling for the independence of the motherland, this party was also loyal to international communism, with its base in Moscow. The dual loyalties are obvious from this vantage point: to Indonesia and to a foreign country – even though Tan Malaka, a PKH figure, often strayed from the general line of the Comintern (Communist International). Tan Malaka was never anti-SI or opposed to Pan-Islamism, a movement that had been slandered by the Comintern at a congress in Moscow. Tan Malaka was a genuine patriot and nationalist who took the weapon of Marxism to fight colonialism. Marxism, after all, was having its moment of triumph at that time, particularly after Lenin had succeeded in making the 1917 October Revolution in Russia.

Tan Malaka, born in Nagari Pandan Gadang Suliki, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatra, around 1897, needs to be viewed against the larger context of the growth of Indonesian nationalism. Unlike other figures on the left who became increasingly anti-Islam, Tan Malaka hewed his own unique and independent path. As a true nationalist, Tan Malaka never kowtowed to Stalin, who had replaced Lenin as the top leader in the Soviet Union after 1924. Tan Malaka was a free man, a characteristic that had stuck in his soul ever since his childhood in Suliki, where it was an integral part of the egalitarian Minangkabau culture.

The proud Tan Malaka, a slave to no one and to no thing foreign, be it Stalin or the Comintern, was a phenomenon within Indonesian communist circles. The tuberculosis that was eating away at his lungs did not diminish his energy or spirit in opposing colonialism. As for his attitude toward Stalin, let us consider what Mohammad Hatta recorded:

But he [Tan Malaka] would not stay in Moscow. He would not rest, but was always on the move and struggling for an independent Indonesia. He would continue his journey to the “Far East” and from there link up with the independence movements throughout Asia. He would never be able to live in Moscow where Stalin was dictator. He did not have a spine that bowed easily. He bowed to principles that were agreed to in joint consultations, but he could not, and rarely did, bend to any one individual. In the communism that he had studied, from the start there was “every one at the same level and feeling as one” – democracy in the fullest sense. But communism under Stalin planted the seeds of slavishness within its ranks.⁸⁴

If he had not been an independent man, how would he have been courageous enough to set himself against Stalin, the dictator, at the risk of serious consequences? Tan Malaka was a man without a home in search of something great: the independence of a people. Sickness and pain were no concern to him. He was hunted by the colonial system wherever he went, but he was never deterred. He kept on moving without being intimidated, for nationalism was in the very marrow of his bones. The élan of freedom that carried him from the village republic culture of Nagari Pandan Gadang found increasingly wider and more exhilarating space beyond his Minangkabau homeland, although it was filled with traps. The following excerpt from Chairil Anwar's poem 1943 poem "I" ("Aku") describes the passion behind such dangerous adventuring.

I am an untamed beast
Driven from its herd
Even if bullets pierce my flesh
I will attack in rage
I will take the pain and poison
Away in flight⁸⁵

It is unfortunate that Tan Malaka did not live a long life. In 1949, at the age of fifty-two, he was assassinated by a fellow Indonesian, a vile act committed by a narrow-minded man. This man did not understand what Tan Malaka meant for a colonized people, even though the Soviet Union's socialist system so praised by Tan Malaka represented hope more than reality. Communism, so generous with its promise to eradicate poverty from the face of the earth, in the end was brought to the grave of history by poverty itself. Of course, Tan Malaka never imagined that one day communism would collapse as a result of all the promises never realized.

Even though Tan Malaka did not like Stalin, he continued to praise the socialist Soviet Union, while attacking capitalism led by America and Britain. In one of his works addressed and dated "Lawu, June 10, 1946" and published in Bukit Tinggi in 1947, Tan Malaka was certain that the socialist system was bound to succeed. Sadly, Tan Malaka had no chance to witness the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the twentieth century. Such an event – the failure of the Soviet Union's socialist system to create a society without oppression and exploitation – would have been unimaginable to Tan Malaka. As he wrote in the little work just mentioned:

With the disappearance of the *latifundia* (estate lands of the aristocracy), often hundreds of square miles in area, and the aristocratic caste in

Russia, the oppression and exploitation of the peasants also disappeared, as did finally the peasantry in the old sense of the word. With the advances of collectivism (working together) and mechanization (the use of machines), workers of the land have emerged alongside workers in the factory and mines.

The position of the worker in relation to the boss (the peasant in relation to the landlord) has changed into the position of worker to worker: equality.⁸⁶

We read other praise of the Soviet Union in connection with the problems of labor and cultural diversity:

In the Soviet Union, the differences in the shape of the body, its size, skin color, language, and culture of one group of mankind with those of another no longer gives rise to contention, hatred, and hostility. The Soviet Union is able and willing to concentrate all similarities of one group to another, for example, in the necessities of life (political and economic). It is also willing and able to be flexible about the differences, for example, as regards language and custom. By using the Russian language as the medium for all of Soviet Russia and letting Caucasians, Turks, Mongols use and develop their own languages within one great "federation" of the socialist system, the contradictions of nationality have vanished.⁸⁷

Thus, Tan Malaka appears to have been very certain at that time that the socialism/communism of the Soviet Union would succeed in creating a just and prosperous society, as dreamed of by communists elsewhere. We appreciate Tan Malaka the Marxist, even though all his dreams collapsed forty years after his passing. Therefore, Tan Malaka's thoughts about socialism/communism are no longer relevant. But before the Soviet Union disintegrated and before the Berlin Wall fell, belief in Marxism, in the West as well, was quite strong. If Tan Malaka had witnessed this entire historical drama, I am sure that his thinking would have changed dramatically as well, but his spirit of anti-capitalism might have even grown harsher. Capitalism as a system of exploiters has not much changed to this day.

Nonetheless, I have to record that Tan Malaka was a phenomenal figure in the struggle for the nation's independence, one of the great leaders who was tireless in fighting for the interests of his people. Chairil Anwar's poem, quoted above, captures the energy and pace of his struggle. The testimony of Rosihan Anwar is worth recording in its connection to the role played by Tan Malaka: "When I read his life's history, his

struggle for Indonesia, his ability to assert his intellectual weight in a forum like the Comintern – before he was even thirty years old – I see Tan Malaka as a great son of Indonesia. It is most regrettable that he has been forgotten.”⁸⁸

Or, in the mournful words of Zulhasril Nasir: “Tan Malaka was a fighter who died so tragically – someone who tirelessly thought about and struggled for his nation for over thirty years died at the hands of his own people.”⁸⁹ His death in Kediri on February 19, 1949, was tragic. I still cannot accept the cliché of the revolution eating its own children. Naturally, one’s political choices not infrequently bring a person to a painful and dark corner of a historical drama. Tan Malaka was a victim of that drama.

Revolutionaries could not have been responsible for this sadistic murder. Its design could not have been known by Commanding General Soedirman, as both he and Tan Malaka shared the same vision of the struggle. Neither agreed with using diplomacy to confront the Dutch, and thus both supported continuing guerrilla tactics after the capture of Sukarno and Hatta in Yogyakarta on December 19, 1948. Alfian expresses his regret for this murder by asking this question: “Was there ever the death of a fighter more tragic than this? The general atmosphere of this tragic death was too complicated to be discussed, let alone be cleared up.”⁹⁰ With the passage of time, such complexities will become simpler and the mystery of Tan Malaka’s death will be uncovered. His hostility toward Sjahrir was certainly not the reason for his murder, because in 1949 Sjahrir was no longer in power. And the humanist Sjahrir was not the type to finish off his political opponents in so barbarous a manner.

We do not know how the political elite reacted to Tan Malaka’s murder – at least, I have not been able to discover the answer to this question. If the relevant sources could be traced, the reconstruction of the events would be clearer. In the end, as Franz Magnis-Suseno sees it, Tan Malaka was a national sage: “Tan Malaka was really a teacher, a national guru and sage, and the *Madilog* [his great synthesis of Marxist materialist dialectics and Hegelian logic] was his teaching.”⁹¹

I have already mentioned the immensely important and strategic role played by the Indonesian Association (PI) in consolidating the word *Indonesia* as the name of a nation. It is noteworthy that the figures behind this move were young people between the ages of twenty and thirty, who were still university students in Europe. They devised the term *Indonesia* to replace the name “Dutch East Indies” for the colonized nation. In this connection, Hatta’s speech before the Congress of Democracy in August

1926 in Bierville, France, to introduce the name of Indonesia before a world forum deserves to be recorded once again:

To those who criticize our presence at the Congress in Bierville, we would like to state that our presence showed to democratic people in the West that there is an unbreakable relationship between the basis of humanism and the revolutionary struggle for a nation's independence. The first step in introducing our motherland Indonesia abroad has been successful. The name "Indonesia" does not need to be advanced by a resolution. I was there, and after listening to my speech at the opening of the Congress, everyone used "Indonesia." The Dutch people, who in the opening address were still using "the Dutch East Indies," did not repeat that either in debate or in other speech. In their writings to the outside, to friends and as general information, they said "Indonesia." [This they did] especially after exchanging ideas with me. In the agenda of the Congress leadership, the name "Indonesia" was recorded, and cannot be changed back to "Dutch East Indies."

On the basis achieved at Bierville, the Indonesian Association has been able to convey its propaganda outside the country.⁹²

With confidence in their own intellectual capacity, these Indonesian youth in their twenties had succeeded in their mission to introduce the name of a new nation: Indonesia. After Hatta's speech, the Dutch delegation naturally felt awkward about repeating the name "Dutch East Indies," even though Indonesia was still in the grip of colonialism. It appears that the experience of colonization had quickly matured our youthful fighters in thought and deed, as well as giving them access to world literature. This is rarely found among the members of later generations, including the present writer.

To be honest, we feel jealous of the PI delegates' intellectual ability to argue their views before all comers in international forums. One such congress was organized by the League Against Imperialism and held in February 1927 in Brussels. A delegation attended consisting of Mohammad Hatta, Nazir Sutan Pamuntjak, Gatot Tarunamihardja, and Achmad Subarjo. Hatta chaired the delegation. In this congress, the PI delegates succeeded in landing one resolution that called upon the Congress to:

1. Be sympathetic to Indonesian independence movement and always support it in any way possible.
2. Demand the Dutch government to allow full freedom of movement, abolish exile and the death penalty, and provide a general amnesty.⁹³

The ambassadors of this colonized nation fought resolutely abroad against colonialism at the risk of arrest and imprisonment, with all its sufferings. Living under foreign oppression forged them into intellectual adulthood before their time. In Brussels, Hatta was chosen to be an executive member of an international organization that the Congress had organized: the League Against Imperialism and Colonial Oppression and for National Independence. Albert Einstein was chosen to be honorary chair.⁹⁴ That same year, there were wide-scale arrests in the Dutch East Indies of those accused of involvement in the communist rebellions in Java and West Sumatra. Planning for these rebellions was held in secret meetings at the Prambanan Temple in Yogyakarta.

Ali Sastroamidjojo, another member of the PI, recorded that Hatta's speech at the Bierville Congress had aroused the fierce anger of the colonialists. This excerpt explains:

In his speech, Bung Hatta, who at that time was only around twenty-four years old, spoke out clearly about the struggle of our people to achieve their independence. The name "Indonesia" was brought out into the open for the first time in this congress. The Dutch government, which was always surveilling Indonesian student activities, had to have known what had happened at Bierville and was highly incensed. And all the more so, because the name of the colony, the Dutch East Indies, was presented to the Congress as "Indonesia" along with information about the objective of our national movement, i.e., independent Indonesia. In fact, for years the Dutch government had propagandized that the people they ruled in the colony lived prosperously, happily, and in peace and quiet, so that people in countries outside of the Netherlands believed that the Dutch colonial government was *the best [colonial administration]* in the world. So, one may well understand how great the Dutch anger was against Bung Hatta's speech at Bierville.⁹⁵

If propaganda for independence outside Nusantara was pioneered by the PI, inside Nusantara it was accomplished by political parties and sociocultural and religious organizations. Regardless of frequent internal conflicts, they all shared one goal: to break free from colonialism. Anticolonial movements with modern methods were for the most part centered in Java. West Sumatra was the most prominent anticolonial region outside of Java. Interestingly, leftist forces throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s were quite vocal in these Minangkabau lands, and this movement was generally led by religious scholars educated by Sheikh H. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, such as H. Datuk Batuah, who tried

“to blend Islam with communism.”⁹⁶ Another man who appeared on the political stage in West Sumatra, the orator Rasuna Said (1910–1965), was no representative of the left but no less fierce in his opposition to colonialism. At the age of twenty-three he was arrested and imprisoned in Semarang. The authorities tried to persuade him to leave politics, but Rasuna remained unmoved. He was freed in 1939, just as World War II broke out. Rasuna was a prominent member of the Permi (Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia; Indonesian Muslim Unity) party led by Moechtar Loetfi. Moechtar himself was exiled to Boven Digul shortly after Rasuna’s arrest.⁹⁷ In the era of Guided Democracy (1959–1965), and even before that, Rasuna was known to be very close to Sukarno, so that there was friction between him and other Muslim figures from the Masyumi political culture who would have been diametrically opposed to this modernizing group.⁹⁸

In the early 1930s, Permi was not the only object of suspicion. Muhammadiyah, which was known to be moderate, was under heavy surveillance by the authorities. The governor of West Sumatra, G.F.E. Gonggrijp, in his letter of April 16, 1930, to Governor-General De Graeff, charged that Muhammadiyah was “not loyal and had an anti-West attitude.” He advised that Muhammadiyah in this region no longer be treated like a branch of the Muhammadiyah in Java. This was a heavy blow to Muhammadiyah, coming on top of the ban of one of its main figures, A.R. Soetan Mansoer, from carrying out proselytizing activities.⁹⁹ Strangely, Gonggrijp’s request was turned down by the Office of Native Affairs (Kantor Urusan Pribumi) and the Dutch East Indies Attorney General, R.J.M. Verheijen. Gonggrijp was even urged to “pay more attention to improving relations between Muhammadiyah and the *adat* [customary law] authorities.”¹⁰⁰ It appears that the letter of the executive board of Muhammadiyah to Attorney General Verheijen sufficiently influenced this official to avoid making an enemy of the West Sumatra Muhammadiyah. Governor Gonggrijp himself was then reassigned one year later.

With the weakening of Muhammadiyah’s political influence in this region, Permi then took over that role, but Muhammadiyah’s proselytizing continued to permeate Minangkabau society.¹⁰¹ Because of the specific conditions in Minangkabau at that time, the local Muhammadiyah had changed its cultural character to a very political one. But after being reprimanded by its executive board in Yogyakarta, Muhammadiyah West Sumatra returned to its original function as a proselytizing movement. In other words, in the interest of proselytizing, the non-political Muhammadiyah in Java succeeded in tempering the political position of Minangkabau Muhammadiyah with the good intention of maintaining cohesiveness and solidarity, albeit at the sacrifice of the

latter's short-lived radicalism. There were political benefits as well, as Governor Gonggrijp was reassigned. The Dutch authorities in Batavia obviously did not want to see the usually peaceful Muhammadiyah become radicalized over the Gonggrijp affair.

We now turn to another topic to do a bit of speculating. If World War II had not erupted, would Indonesia have become independent in 1945? Ultimately, of course, Indonesia did become independent, and there was enough cause for that: anticolonialist feelings were at a high boil, even if the leading figures were frequently at odds. The colonial authorities appeared intractable and had no desire to grant independence to a colony that they had exploited for so long. The feelings of moral obligation reflected in the Ethical Policy at the beginning of the twentieth century had not been aimed at freeing Nusantara, but rather at perpetuating the colonial system in a more "civilized" manner. Let us look back at September 1901, when Queen Wilhelmina delivered her address to the States General, the Netherlands legislature. Here is some of what she said: "As a Christian power, Holland has an obligation to arrange a better legal position for the Christian people in the Netherlands Indies, to give stronger support to the spread of Christianity and provide clarification to all officials that Holland has a moral obligation that must be fulfilled toward the people of that territory."¹⁰²

Note closely the wording of that speech. Wilhelmina still links the moral obligation she speaks of to strong support for the spread of Christianity. Meanwhile, the Muslim majority population, poor and ignorant, is not the main target for empowerment, let alone for independence – far from it. Therefore, the persistent efforts and tribulations of the national movement might not have led to independence had World War II not occurred. The outbreak of that war gave the leaders of the independence movement a strategic opportunity to free their oppressed nation.

Governor-General B.C. de Jonge's interview with the *Deli Courant* in 1936 shows he was still arrogantly dreaming. He said, "We've ruled here with the lash and the whip for 300 years and we will do the same for the next 300."¹⁰³ Sjahrir commented cynically: "It's true that he's only certain of this based on his prosecutors, soldiers and – Digul."¹⁰⁴ It is obvious from de Jonge's statement that the Dutch benefited unduly from their colonial system while the Muslim peoples fared miserably. Poor and ignorant, they were targeted with the lash and the whip. And having been lashed and beaten, it was not at all certain they would want to unite. This is another aspect of the weakness of the Muslim community, which has experienced the sledgehammer of history time and time again without learning from its sufferings.

Here is Hatta's defense speech of March 9, 1928, before the court in The Hague: "That Dutch power will come to an end, that is, for me, a certainty. The question is not whether or not, but whether sooner or later. Let not the Netherlands deceive itself that its colonial power will remain strong to the end of time."¹⁰⁵ In fact, the Indonesian Association wanted to achieve independence peacefully, but because of Dutch obstinacy Hatta arrived at "the certainty that Indonesian independence could only be gained by violence."¹⁰⁶

Hatta's prediction was borne out when the 1945–1949 revolution to preserve the nation's independence saw so many heroes perish in the cause. The Dutch, supported by the British, were unwilling to let go of Indonesia after the Japanese occupation. They felt no shame in carrying on with their brutal colonial policies. From this perspective, the Dutch and other colonial powers do not deserve to be called civilized nations. Quite the opposite, they were barbarians who treated other people coarsely and rapaciously. But ironically, after independence was won, that same coarseness and rapacity were imitated by the authorities of the independent nation. The result is that the people, especially the peasants, laborers, and fishermen, have yet to truly feel the meaning of independence. This has been the tragedy of history suffered by many newly independent nations after World War II.

At the beginning of his defense speech, Hatta asked why in Indonesia high-school students were already engaged in politics, unlike in the West where high-school students only prepared themselves for politics. Hatta mentioned the names of youth organizations such as Young Java, the Young Sumatra Union, Young Minahasa, Young Ambon, the Young Islamic Union, Young Indonesia, and others. Then Hatta answered his own question, explaining how hideous the colonial system was, and that it must be ended:

To be able to comprehend the reality, you have to remember that young people do not teach themselves but are taught within conditions and situations where they grow and flourish, and in the society where they exist. In colonial society, a young person quickly experiences harsh and bitter reality. He sees with his own eyes the suffering of the oppressed masses. He sees those masses begin to accept their sad fates, how for decades this youth just submits to the torments of a system that one day will surely sink out of sight. This youth feels and understands the suffering and torment of the people. That is the reason why almost all youth organizations in Indonesia contain in their programs the following objective: improvement of the social welfare of the people Such youths truly feel the shame of being colonized That is why

the youth of an unfree people, from their earliest years, have grappled with thoughts that are not experienced by Western youths of the same age.¹⁰⁷

As one of those colonized youths, at twenty-four years of age Hatta very clearly described the bitterness and suffering of the colonized. De Jonge was right; they had been colonized by the lash and the whip.

No less poignantly, two years later, before the colonial court in Bandung in August 1930, Sukarno answered the charge of using radical language in the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI) courses:

Honorable judges, to be sure, my language is radical. My language is not that of old grannies who faint dead away if they hear the word “independence.” My speeches are not the sermons of priests in church or those of the one who does the preaching in the mosque. I am a *revolutionary* nationalist, a *radical* nationalist, a nationalist *with the head of a buffalo*! My language is language that comes from the heart and throbs with a national spirit, throbs with frustration and disappointment over the calamities and suffering of the people.¹⁰⁸

At the end of his defense speech, Sukarno declared himself to be the representative of the suffering people:

I am really standing before the court of you honorable judges not as Sukarno, not as Gatot Mangkoepradja, not as Maskoen or Soepriadinata. I stand here as a part of the Indonesian common people who moan and grieve, as one of the sons of Mother Indonesia who is loyal and devoted to Her. The voice that issues forth from my throat in this court now does not exist only within walls or partitions, my voice is listened to by the people whom I serve, echoing this way and that, crossing the plains and mountains and oceans, to Kota Raja [and] to Fak-Fak, to Ulu Siau near Manado all the way to Timor. The common people who listen to my voice feel that they are listening to their own voices.¹⁰⁹

The language Sukarno used was truly the language of war, even if he rebutted all the charges brought against him. The fighter against colonialism naturally has to be skilled at arguing against such charges, even though, in its emotional power, language constitutes the overflow of opposition that smashes the existing system. Hatta and Sukarno performed their historical tasks most courageously before the courts of the colonial power. If these two great minds could only have worked

together longer in the post-Proclamation period, Indonesia would be far better off than it is at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Why the partnership of these two leaders broke apart will be discussed in another part of this work.

During the 1930s, the national movement faced very difficult times. The main players, such as Sukarno, Hatta, Sjahrir, and many others were arrested and exiled. Some went to the island of Ende, others to Boven Digul and Bengkulu, while others disappeared overseas, like Tan Malaka and several other leftist leaders. Why Sukarno, Hatta, Sjahrir, and others stood so strongly against colonialism was not least because they themselves had directly felt how rotten and brutal that system was. It was a system that did not value other people as fully human. Sukarno and Hatta were absolutely certain that colonialism had to end soon. And that is what happened. With the outbreak of World War II, Indonesia was given a golden opportunity to seize the independence it had so longed for, although it was disrupted by the brutal Japanese occupation.

Devising a strategy to cope with the Japanese occupation polarized the leaders of the national movement. Sukarno and Hatta worked together with the Japanese military, while Sjahrir and his colleagues operated underground against the occupiers. But it was never in doubt that all these leaders were against colonial powers, whoever they might be. Therefore, Sjahrir's claim that those who collaborated were no different from "Japanese dogs" cannot be supported.¹¹⁰ Accusing Sukarno and Hatta of weakening the national movement during the Japanese occupation is a very unworthy charge. Their years of suffering in exile were proof that they were leaders who could not be bought.

In March 1942 when the Japanese first arrived, they were greeted with enthusiasm. Japan had promised to rid them of the Dutch. The Dutch East Indies government surrendered to the Japanese without resistance and unconditionally on March 8, 1942, at Kalijati, West Java. Governor-General de Jonge in 1936 was so certain that the Dutch would be in Indonesia centuries to come, but Dutch rule crumbled in the face of the Japanese army. Thus, it was not surprising that the cry *Banzai! Banzai!* ("May the emperor live ten thousand years!") was shouted everywhere as a sign that Indonesia was on the threshold of independence. Several months before the Japanese landing, Radio Tokyo had broadcast the Indonesian nationalists' song "Indonesia Raya" ("Great Indonesia"). Even after the humiliating capitulation of the Dutch, "Indonesia Raya" continued to resound. This was one of the tactics used by the Japanese to trick the Indonesian people – and indeed, many were tricked – because not many days later "Indonesia Raya" was forbidden, replaced by the

Japanese national anthem, “Kimigayo.” Also, the new Indonesian flag, the Red and White, was taken down and replaced by the Japanese Rising Sun.¹¹¹

What this all meant was that the Japanese, themselves Asians, were the new colonizers, replacing the Dutch, who had previously acted so arrogantly. The cruelty and brutality of Japanese colonial rule left deep wounds in Indonesia. But it is well worth noting that the Dutch army did not make a single move to confront the Japanese invasion, showing how weak the Dutch colonial defense was. Although Sukarno and Hatta warned that the Pacific War would erupt at any time, the Dutch never trained the Indonesian people to cope with the danger. The Dutch must have worried that if they trained Indonesians for war, ultimately the barrels would be pointed at them.

At the end of Dutch colonial rule, a number of Indonesians were appointed to the KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger; Royal Netherlands Indies Army), such as T.B. Simatupang, A.H. Nasution, Alex Karilarang, Kartakusumah, Oerip Soemohardjo, Soeharto, and several more. These names converged in PETA (Pembela Tanah Air; Defenders of the Motherland), the defense force organized by the Japanese. After the Proclamation of Independence, ex-KNIL and ex-PETA members became the core of ABRI (Combat Force of the Republic of Indonesia), the forerunner of the TNI (Indonesian National Army). Soedirman, who later became Commanding General, came from PETA. And it is true that during the Revolution, the former KNIL soldiers aimed their rifles at the Dutch army that wanted to reestablish its power.

An interesting point of debate in the relationship between KNIL and PETA is the idea in some quarters that they conducted a struggle for command of the army. According to A.H. Nasution (ex-KNIL), such a struggle never happened, even though he first wanted Oerip Soemohardjo (a retired KNIL major) to take the position of Commanding General, not Soedirman from PETA. The following explains what Nasution said:

I had just then selected Pak Oerip, because as a retired major, he was prepared to be an adviser to the youth groups. That was something we really appreciated. We were the ones who made this choice. The role of KNIL and PETA was not too visible then. In my view, none of those present contested this, and of course we only proposed Pak Oerip because he had earlier been the Army General Chief of Staff at that time. Pak [Soe] Dirman came after that. But Pak Dirman was the one who was chosen, because he had the additional support from South Sumatra.¹¹²

Nasution strongly disputed the idea of a rift between elements of KNIL and PETA at that time. If such an impression was created, it was because “the PSI [the Indonesian Socialist Party] was always concerned about the problem of a KNIL-PETA rift. For me, that never happened,” he explained.¹¹³

When asked about the difference between KNIL and PETA, Nasution replied, “The former KNIL was clearly just an instrument. But the former PETA in the body of Indonesia had its own spirit, and that spirit came from Japan, from, among other things, the Bushido spirit.”¹¹⁴ Maybe it was simply because of the Indonesian taste for sports that the image was projected of ex-KNILs fighting it out with ex-PETAs over positions in the army, itself as young as the Japanese occupation had been short. Nasution, in his old age, gave a wise answer. KNIL and PETA had both been trained by colonialists: the Dutch and the Japanese. They had derived great benefit from that training in the interests of defending Indonesian independence. With the *Sapta Marga* (the “Seven Roads,” or the Seven-Point Military Code of Honor), the TNI (Indonesian National Army) ideology was firmly in place. Educational background, whether KNIL or PETA, no longer mattered, especially after 1950, even if there was a “tendency to Japanize all formalities,” as Nasution said.¹¹⁵

October 5 is celebrated as Republic of Indonesia Combat Forces Day, originating with President Sukarno’s proclamation on the formation of the People’s Security Forces (TKR) on October 5, 1945. Because of his experience in KNIL, Oerip was appointed to implement the organization of that newborn army.¹¹⁶ But it was Soedirman who was selected to be the Commanding General based in Yogyakarta. This shows that in the military at that early time, a selection system was practiced. Up to a certain point, the military also recognized democracy, in its own way, before it was put to the test. With the war to protect national independence, the Indonesian army gradually matured and became experienced in handling various forms of warfare.

World War II, the Constitution, and the Proclamation of Independence

Before going on, we need to look at how World War II, specifically in the Pacific, was linked to Indonesian independence. For although fatigue had enveloped the national movement in the 1930s, the spirit and fire for independence had never faded or dimmed. Hatta’s and Sukarno’s predictions about a Pacific War had come true. This war changed the world map dramatically.

The Pacific War ended in August 1945. Japan's stamina for continuing the war had already weakened. Even if the United States had not dropped the atom bomb on Hiroshima on August 6 and on Nagasaki three days later, the defeat of Japan was imminent. There is a very serious moral question here that needs to be addressed. Many military observers view the dropping of the bomb as unnecessary, including General Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969); he indirectly criticized Harry S. Truman, who appointed him to lead NATO and preceded him as president. (Eisenhower served as thirty-fourth president of the United States from 1953 to 1961.) Eisenhower was present when Henry L. Stimson, secretary of war in Truman's cabinet, spoke about the potential use of the atom bomb against Japan. Eisenhower later wrote the following in *Mandate for Change: 1953–1956* (1963):

During his recitation of the relevant facts, I had been conscious of a feeling of depression and so I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary, and secondly because I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives.¹¹⁷

But Truman and his supporters were determined to strike Japan with this terrible weapon. Eisenhower's voice was not heard.

The scientists bear their own share of responsibility for the use of the atom bomb against their wartime enemy. This may be seen in Albert Einstein's letter of August, 2, 1939, to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. At the very end of the letter, he hinted that Hitler's Germany was preparing to make an atom bomb.¹¹⁸ This letter clearly pushed Roosevelt to develop an American bomb. It is in this context that we must read the origins of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki drama at the end of World War II.

World War II was born from the womb of modern Western civilization, triggered by the ambitions of the German dictator, Adolf Hitler, the would-be conqueror of all of Europe. Germany, humiliated by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles following the end of World War I, was waiting to take revenge. Even a nation like Germany, which had produced so many scientists and philosophers, could fall into the hands of the bloodthirsty and territory-hungry Adolf Hitler in conditions of instability and while bearing a burden of shame. What is hard to understand is the philosopher Martin Heidegger in the 1930s praising Hitler with these words: "The Führer himself, and he alone, is the German reality, present and future,

and its Law.”¹¹⁹ Shortly after the war, when Hitler was no more, “Heidegger characterized Hitlerism as an historical explosion of a structural malady that afflicts all mankind and he stated his concern that it would take a long time to be free of that poison.”¹²⁰ When Hitler was ashes, Heidegger found the courage to speak critically of the leader he had praised. (Hitler and Eva Braun, who were married on the night of April 28–29, 1945, killed themselves on the following day after ordering that their corpses be burned.) Of course, it is not easy for someone to live in a totalitarianism that muzzled every possible freedom of the self. But why didn’t Heidegger flee from Germany, as Albert Einstein had done, for example, rather than engaging in philosophical prostitution? Every person exercises his or her own judgment with all its risks.

In the East, Japan’s Emperor Hirohito was not strong enough to oppose the plans of his army, which was out to conquer Asia. Thus, it was not surprising that Japan and Germany forged an alliance. Both wanted to emerge as the lords of Asia and Europe, respectively, an ambition that ended in the suicide of civilization. Although the numbers of the dead are unknown, estimates of the victims of World War II run between 50 and 60 million, including both military and civilians. The greatest number of victims were the people of the Soviet Union, who were mobilized to block Hitler’s invasion. Nothing in history matches the numbers of these casualties. In the end, Hitler even called upon twelve-year-old children to take part in the defense of Germany.¹²¹ This dictator created total war beyond all human reasoning.

The Pacific War led directly to Indonesian independence. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, causing great damage and many Americans casualties, President Roosevelt requested the approval of Congress for the United States to enter the war. Here is the second paragraph of Roosevelt’s speech:

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.¹²²

Japan, disregarding the ethics of war, had committed a reckless act that wrecked diplomatic relations with the United States. With that, World

War II in the Pacific now became a large-scale conflict. At almost the same moment, Japanese troops attacked Hong Kong, Guam, the Philippines, Wake Island, and the Midway island chain.¹²³

In his speech, Roosevelt assured his people that the final victory would be theirs.¹²⁴

As Hitler's Germany did in Europe, Japan held the upper hand in the early years of the war, but it became exhausted over time, until it was finished off by the atom bomb. Indirectly, the acceleration of Indonesian independence was also a "blessing" of the atom bomb. August 17, 1945, is the official date of the birth of the Republic of Indonesia, only seventeen years after the Youth Pledge of 1928 that declared the unity of nation, motherland, and language. We see therefore that Indonesia is a young nation, less than a century old.

With this fact in mind, Indonesia no longer needs to bear the onerous burden of history, the burden of a people colonized over a long stretch of time. As a nation, Indonesia was colonized for less than a quarter of a century, including three and one-half years by the Japanese. The milestone of history that can be used to mark the formation of this nation can be either the moment the Indonesian Association was established in 1922 or the Youth Pledge of 1928. I want to dispel all the myths about Indonesian history, including the myth about the exaggeratedly long period of colonization.

We shall next consider the formation of the 1945 Constitution (known as the UUD 1945). The UUD 1945 was the work of the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence (BPUPKI), which was set up on May 28, 1945, and then continued by the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (PPKI) from August 18, 1945, to August 22, 1945. The PPKI completed its work in only five days, while the BPUPKI worked for eighty-three days. The UUD 1945, which in its final formulation consisted of thirty-seven articles, was a brief constitution and was completed in quite a short time. Whether in the BPUPKI or the PPKI, the majority representation was nationalist and Islamic groups, or, for the latter, more precisely *santri* groups, as the nationalist groups were for the most part also Muslim. The categorization of groups into nationalist and Islamic must be read in the context of the political orientation of that time, not from the aspect of an individual's religion.

According to Anhar Gonggong, BPUPKI Chair Dr. K.R.T. Radjiman Wedyodiningrat played a major role in formulating the UUD 1945. Even the formulation of the Small Committee chaired by Engineer Sukarno, which produced the Jakarta Charter, was redrawn from scratch by Radjiman, who "*insisted* on holding discussions on general issues."¹²⁵ As a Budi Utomo member of standing, Radjiman would certainly not have been

happy if Islam were seen as dominant in the UUD 1945. Thus, the changes in the text of the Jakarta Charter of August 18, 1945, cannot be separated from the efforts of BPUPKI Chair Dr. Radjiman, even if these were accomplished through the authority of Mohammad Hatta as the deputy chair of the Committee of Nine.

After the draft UUD was overhauled, on the proposal of Otto Iskandardinata the PPKI in its evening session of August 18 elected Sukarno as president and Mohammad Hatta as vice-president.¹²⁶ When the Proclamation of Independence was made, Indonesia did not yet have a president and a vice-president, and so Sukarno and Hatta had signed the draft proclamation “in the name of the Indonesian people.” At first, Hatta hoped that everyone present at the home of Admiral Maeda, where this vital text was composed, would participate in signing. But Sukarno, from the youth faction, stepped forward and loudly said, “Not every one of us here has to sign the draft. It’s enough if just two persons sign in the name of the Indonesian people, that is, Bung Karno and Bung Hatta.”¹²⁷

And so, at ten o’clock in the morning of August 17, 1945, the text of the Proclamation was read out by Sukarno at No. 56 Jl. Pegangsaan Timur, Jakarta, where he was living at the time. Like lightning, the Proclamation flashed to every corner of Indonesia. The entire people greeted it with tumult and uproar. A PI figure, whom I have much quoted here, Ali Sastroamidjojo, had only moved to Jakarta in April 1945 from Pamekasan, Madura. Ali, who had not been involved in the Proclamation, was surprised to hear the shouts and clamor of children who had heard that Indonesia was now independent. This was Ali’s reaction as he took in this tremendous historical event:

It would be difficult for me to describe our reactions here. My wife, whom I rarely ever saw crying, right then and there sat down, dazed, with tears flowing down her cheeks. I too felt very moved. All kinds of memories of the past rose in my mind. *Indonesia merdeka!* Indonesia was independent! The words that had symbolized the aspirations and dreams of our nation for which we had struggled so long and with such suffering and sacrifice, were now reality! Our nation, our country was free. Many different emotions rose within me. Joy mixed with sorrow. Happy, because God had allowed me to experience the realization of our nation’s dreams, and sad from remembering our friends in the struggle who were no longer among us and could not enjoy the fruits of their struggles and sacrifices.¹²⁸

Ali’s sincerity in these sentences is felt very deeply. The same feelings were indeed flaring up in the breasts of Indonesians throughout the

archipelago, not just fighters like Ali Sastroamidjojo. It was entirely proper for Ali, who had first thought of himself as a part of the Indonesian nation only during the 1920s, to grieve for all the fighters who had not lived long enough to experience what the Proclamation of Independence meant for themselves and the nation.

During the period of the Revolution, the UUD 1945 could not be implemented fully. Political friction among the national elite led to Sutan Sjahrir's emergence as prime minister, and he even served three terms. This meant that the presidential system adhered to by the UUD 1945 had been disregarded, even though Sjahrir still very much depended on the prestige of Sukarno and Hatta to maintain his government; for the intellectual Sjahrir, although he was the major figure in the Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI), did not enjoy significant mass support. In the 1955 general election, his PSI, which was supported by intellectuals, was reduced to only five seats in Parliament. Sjahrir seems to have been too cerebral at a time when most Indonesians were still illiterate. No one doubted Sjahrir the brave and tenacious fighter. But we can never forget that Sjahrir and his group were quite weak in their ability to communicate with the masses.

The fragile UUD 1945 was replaced in 1949 with the UUD RIS (the Federal Republic of Indonesia), which was the outcome of the Roem-van Roijen Round Table Conference. RIS was able to survive only briefly before being replaced by a unitary state with the promulgation of the UUDS (the Provisional Constitution) of 1950, with Mohammad Natsir of the Masyumi Party as its first prime minister. Sukarno was delighted with the formation of this unitary state and enjoyed a honeymoon for several months before divorcing over differences of opinion concerning the Irian Barat issue, to which we shall return further on.

The UUDS lasted for about nine years and then was torpedoed by Decree No. 5 of July 1959, which reinstated the UUD 1945. This legislation remains in place to this day, even though it has been amended four times in the Reformasi (Reform) period, after the fall of the New Order in 1998. Because these amendments are seen on various sides as signs of its weakness, it needs to be amended again, which is exhausting work. Indonesia in its sixth decade is still constitutionally unstable and as far as ever from achieving social justice.

Let us return to the Revolutionary era. The Dutch accepted that the end of the war would also bring an end to European domination over colonial lands. Colonized countries were moving to liberate themselves in historical waves – irresistible waves. In contrast, the Dutch still would not give way over Indonesian independence. Helped by the British, and through underhanded maneuvering, the Dutch returned in October

1945 to resume their colonial rule. They appeared to feel no shame at having been so roughly booted out of Indonesia by the Japanese. They supposed that Indonesia, which for decades had prepared itself mentally for independence, would be easy to rule again. At the cost of much sacrifice and with whatever military preparations were at hand, Indonesia had to fight for four years to uphold its Proclamation of Independence. It was only in December 1949 that the Dutch would recognize Indonesian independence as a result of the Roem-van Roijen Round Table Conference, held from August 23 to October 29, 1949, in The Hague. It was this conference that produced the short-lived Federal Republic of Indonesia, before the NKRI (Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia; the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) was formed on August 17, 1950, with Mohammad Natsir of the Masyumi Party as prime minister.

The impetus for the NKRI was Natsir's "Integral" motion in Parliament, which was supported by all the factions, including the PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia; the Indonesian Communist Party), Masyumi's clearest political rival. Sukarno was quite satisfied with how Natsir overcame conflicts between the states created by the Round Table Conference. The later abuse of the unitary state concept in the interest of homogenization was not Natsir's fault, but entirely due to the centralized politics that killed the aspirations of the regions to flourish.

In the Round Table Conference, the Indonesian delegation led by Prime Minister Mohammad Hatta sat across from Prime Minister Willem Drees of the Netherlands. The official transfer of sovereignty by the Kingdom of the Netherlands was performed on December 27, 1949, in Amsterdam. In Indonesia, at the Presidential Palace on the same date sovereignty was transferred by the representative of the Dutch government H.V.K. Lovink from the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the government of the Federal Republic of Indonesia, represented by Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX. At that gratifying moment, the Dutch flag was lowered and the Red and White raised. Lovink immediately went to the Kemayoran airfield to return to Holland. On December 28, 1949, President Sukarno left Yogyakarta, the capital of the wartime Republic of Indonesia, and returned to Jakarta as president of the Federal Republic of Indonesia.¹²⁹

The NKRI was established on the basis of the 1950 Provisional Constitution, which opened the door for a system of parliamentary/liberal democracy in Indonesia. This system lasted until July 5, 1959, when the UUD 1945 was reestablished by presidential decree. This move was opposed by some of the political parties, including Masyumi, but without effect. The army under the leadership of A.H. Nasution fully supported

this decree, for Nasution had been moving in this direction since 1954. President Sukarno himself was only convinced of the need for this change in 1957. In other words, the idea to return to the UUD 1945 arose at first in the military, not on the civil side. Later on, most of the parties supported it because of the strong current of national politics at the time.

Ideological Clashes: The 1955 General Election and Islam versus Pancasila, 1956–1959

In September 1955, the first *pemilu* (general election) was organized under the aegis of the UUDS 1950, a first in the entire history of Nusantara. There were two agendas to be achieved by this election: to choose a parliament and to form a Majelis Konstituante (Constituent Assembly) with the task of framing a permanent UUD to replace the provisional version. The first agenda went well, and while the second one proceeded smoothly, after three years (1956–1959) the session choked on the issue of the foundation of the state: Pancasila or Islam.

At the outset, three proposals were submitted for the foundation of the state: Pancasila, Islam, and Social Economy. Only a minority supported the third of these proposals, and so the fierce battle was fought over whether it would be Pancasila or Islam. At the end of the session on June 22, 1959, both of these forces failed to obtain the backing of two-thirds of the vote in the Assembly. The majority of the political forces said that the Assembly had failed to frame a UUD, even though in fact only 10 percent still lacked interparty consensus, that is, on the foundation of the state. This is what provided the impetus for the famous Decree No. 5 of July 5, 1959, with its two decisions: (1) the declaration of the reinstatement of the UUD 1945 to replace the UUDS; and (2) the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly that had been produced by the 1955 general election. This meant that Pancasila, as contained in the UUD 1945, had won by decree its confirmation as the foundation of the state from July 5, 1959. Because of the number of academic studies related to the foundation of the state, we need not lengthen the discussion here.¹³⁰ But there is one reflection that I need to record here.

Let us step back a little. In speaking about the foundation of the state, we cannot simply jump to the post-1955 general election period that ended with Decree No. 5. In the BPUPKI, which had been established by the Japanese occupying forces as Dokuritsu Junbi Chōsa-kai on May 28, 1945, several weeks before the August 17 Proclamation of Independence, the issue of the foundation of the state was brought up by the organization's chair, Radjiman Wedyodiningrat. According to Hatta's notes, on June 1,

the fourth day of the session, Radjiman asked, “What is to be the foundation of the state that we will form?”¹³¹ At first, impatient for independence, the members responded coolly. Sukarno, however, was quite prepared to answer such a philosophical question. His speech became known as the birth of Pancasila, because Sukarno went on in great detail for one hour without text to explain his views on the foundation of the state. A first-class orator, Sukarno easily understood how to proceed at the BPUPKI session.

After modification of the five principles put forward by Sukarno, on August 18 the formulation of Pancasila as we know it today was agreed on. It was thus Sukarno, and no one else, who came up with the idea of Pancasila on June 1, 1945. Muhammad Yamin’s claim that he had attached five principles similar to Sukarno’s Pancasila to his own speech of May 29 cannot be accepted. No eyewitness has supported the idea that Yamin was the originator of Pancasila. After the system of Guided Democracy collapsed in 1966, a gradual de-Sukarnoization movement was recklessly conducted, particularly as it related to this foundation of the state. Sukarno, it was now said, had not sparked the concept of Pancasila, but rather Yamin in the “smuggled” attachment to his May 29 speech.¹³²

My important note on this issue is that whether or not we approve of Sukarno’s politics during the Guided Democracy period, we may not falsify history. Doing so cheats us of our civic education and shows far from noble ethics. Sukarno, at the end of his life, was subjected to insult on top of injury and was even robbed of his great work, Pancasila, for the purpose of erasing his deeds and good services. Sukarno’s many mistakes in the last years of his power have no bearing on the debate in the BPUPKI in 1945.

There is no justification for the belief that the idea of Pancasila was Muhammad Yamin’s.¹³³ It is a historical lie used to launch the de-Sukarnoization process by Soeharto’s New Order (1966–1998). Yamin, who had been close to Sukarno, had already died, while Sukarno himself passed away on June 21, 1970, at the age of sixty-nine. To be scrupulously accurate, we cannot say that the term *Pancasila* itself originated with Sukarno; rather, it was chosen on the advice of a linguist.¹³⁴ Who was that linguist? It might have been Muhammad Yamin, who was an active member of the BPUPKI session.

I need to discuss the 1955 general election objectively here, even though its results were sabotaged by Decree No. 5 of July 1959. It was a gift of history that this general election was carried out democratically, directly, by secret ballot, and peacefully. Barely ten years after independence, Indonesia bravely conducted a democratic process in a civilized manner

in the midst of sharp ideological and political conflicts between the parties, especially between Masyumi and the PKI. Of course, modernist politicians remember this event proudly, because it was organized by the 1955–1956 cabinet of Burhanuddin Harahap.

Harahap was a Masyumi leader of simple presence but possessed of great self-confidence. The drafting of the General Election Law and its preparations had been underway since the Wilopo-Prawoto Cabinet (1952–1953) and had been carried forward by the Wongso-Arifin Cabinet (1953–1955), but it was well conducted by Burhanuddin Harahap's cabinet. Wilopo tasked Minister of Justice Lukman Wiradinata (PSI) and Minister of the Interior Mohammad Roem (Masyumi) to draft the legislation so important for this young state.¹³⁵ The event itself was extraordinary. Indonesia had organized a general election that was virtually flawless in its execution.

Because the 1955 general election was an important milestone of democracy in Indonesia, we need to study it further and locate it in the history of a recently independent nation. Intellectually, Burhanuddin Harahap was not as prominent as other Masyumi figures. Neither was he a writer of the stature of Natsir, Roem, and Sjafruddin. Burhanuddin was more of a man of action in erecting a national politics that was moral and ethical. And there is no doubt that he was an intelligent and consistent statesman. His career in politics was partly fused with the energetic performance of the Masyumi Party in its efforts to erect the pillars of democracy and constitutionalism. This party was martyred precisely because it denounced the methods of authoritarian politics that were fatal to democracy and denigrated the Constitution.

We may debate the involvement of Burhanuddin Harahap in PRRI/Permesta (1958–1962), but his good services in upholding democracy under the UUDS were phenomenal. For over half a century the name of Burhanuddin Harahap has been buried in the dust of history, when in fact the 1955 general election was the very important work of his cabinet. It was a democratic performance that Indonesia can be proud of. We need an analysis of Burhanuddin's role to connect the links in a broken chain and critically spotlight the historical significance of a countryman who has been condemned to oblivion for decades now.

Burhanuddin Harahap's cabinet did not last long, but it is vitally important to remember his role in the general election. Only in 1971 was there a second general election; however, its quality was far inferior to the one in 1955, as it was organized within the superficial democratic environment of General Soeharto's New Order regime.

Sixteen years separated the two elections. According to law, general elections should be held once every five years, but after Decree No. 5 of

July 1959 and until 1998, democracy existed in name only in Indonesia. The winning parties were determined before the vote was held. From a democratic perspective, such a general election is no more than a political farce. The reality was an authoritarian political system within the environment of a semi-feudal culture.

This was the tragedy of democracy in Indonesia. Its main cause was the disputes that frequently broke out between irresponsible and narrow-minded leaders. The result was an unhealthy course of democracy and the risk of failure to create prosperity for the masses, as had been demanded with such spirit in the August 17, 1945, Proclamation of Indonesian Independence. In the end, although Burhanuddin Harahap and his Masyumi Party experienced disaster, and this greatly harmed the development of an egalitarian political system in Indonesia, the peaceful 1955 general election is a milestone of democracy that cannot be forgotten.

What I fail to understand about modern Indonesian history as it relates to democratic dreams and ideals is that the attitude of certain political parties during difficult periods is inconsistent with the defense of democracy. The political elite is so pragmatic that its members have no trouble at all in selling themselves to those in power at the cost of democracy. In my view, this tragedy has occurred at least twice since Indonesia achieved independence. The first time was when the PNI, NU, PKI, and PSII, together with several other small parties, accepted Guided Democracy in 1959. The parties that refused, Masyumi and PSI, and to a certain extent Partai Katholik, were in the end powerless to block this move, and Masyumi and PSI were dissolved. The second time was in the era of Pancasila Democracy. Even though, beginning in 1973, the number of political parties was shrunk to three – Golkar (Golongan Karya; Functional Groups)], PDI (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia; Indonesian Democratic Party), and PPP (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan; United Development Party) – their role was not significant. The decisive power in Indonesian politics during this period was Soeharto, supported by the military and Golkar. The other two parties were merely “direct objects” with no independent sphere of action, although at the end of this era, the PDI began to demonstrate an opposition stance and presented Megawati as a central opposition figure confronting the New Order regime.

Pancasila Democracy finally collapsed, triggered primarily by the 1997 monetary crisis in Thailand that then shook Indonesia and several other East Asian countries in the following year. The indirect cause of the fall of the Soeharto regime in May 1998, though, was corruption. The New Order had survived for three decades, but in the end it too disintegrated,

leaving the people with their lives turned upside down, just as at the end of the Guided Democracy that the New Order had replaced.

In 1998, the era of *Reformasi* ("Reform") arrived, giving much hope for the people's welfare and prosperity. Eleven years later, however, in 2009, the hopes for overall improvement had yet to be realized.

In one of my columns I concluded that the central problem Indonesia has faced since Proclamation has been ineffective leadership at the national level.

Indonesia, by contrast, with a population ten times that of the neighboring country [Malaysia], is like a paralytic elephant because of the lack of strong and effective leadership. Some have even long suffered from the disease of slavish mentality as a residue from the colonial system of olden times. This disease is chronic for the interests of the future Therefore, let us draw the same conclusion that Indonesia's main problem in today's era is the problem of leadership. Period!¹³⁶

Can the system of democracy that we espouse give birth within the brief period of independence to the quality of leadership needed to respond to the complex problems of the nation? It is hard for me to say, but we should not always be dreaming of killing democracy because of its half-failures, so we can then turn the clock back to an authoritarian system. The only wise attitude to take is not to despair in the effort to repair Indonesia's democracy, which has not yet brought prosperity to the mass of people. Democracy is indeed exhausting. For me, though, the idea of returning to an authoritarian dynastic system will only increase the height of the place from which we are bound to fall. Because of that, our choice of democracy is the right one, even though to make it work we have to learn from all the mistakes we have lived through.

If learning is still too difficult, then my question is, Does the Indonesian nation not feel ashamed in front of the world as it survives one failure after another? A more serious question is, Has Islam, embraced by the majority of Indonesians, run out of the energy to build a strong and healthy democratic system? I remain optimistic that the Indonesian nation will ultimately be able to answer those two questions with the willingness to redirect bad behavior into a positive and constructive direction. All Indonesians must move in this direction and work hard to avoid the consequences of our mistakes and weaknesses.

Among those weaknesses we have seen all along are the attitudes of the elite who so easily split into factions and fail to act responsibly in guarding the pillars of democracy. Those pillars support the freedom of the people to voice their aspirations, and they support the freedom

of the press and the opening of the doors of the bureaucracy to the public, widely and without discrimination. I still share Hatta's optimism: "Democracy can be repressed because of its own mistakes, but after being put to the bitter test, it will reemerge with full awareness Therefore, it can never be completely lost."¹³⁷

Hatta's faith in democracy was so strong, but how difficult was it for that system to operate in Indonesia. I wrote this in one of my columns about democracy in the hands of "the Crazy Guy":

America, which calls itself a fortress of democracy, can still produce a president who is power-crazy. President George W. Bush is the best example from the beginning of the twenty-first century. Because the us is a superpower, this "Crazy Guy" can use his power to oppress other nations.

The biggest victims are Muslim countries. Afghanistan is a poor, weak country, and Iraq is a rich but ill-fated country. In 2003 Saddam Hussein, the dictator, was crushed by Bush and his allies using false charges. The Iraqi people, divided into Shia, Sunni, and Kurds, are among those who have suffered the most in recent years. Afghanistan is poor and yet has been plundered by foreign powers. First by the Soviet Union, then by the West. The average life expectancy in Afghanistan is only about 47 years, far below that of 69–72 in Indonesia. Compared to Afghanistan, Indonesia is far better off. But is that comparison relevant?

Of course not. Indonesia is a country with thousands of islands, rich in natural resources that can support the well-being of its people, provided the country is headed by someone with sensitivity and good conscience. Afghanistan is a barren land with a harsh environment. If there is any similarity between these two countries it is the religion. The majority in both countries embrace Islam. If democracy is forced upon Afghanistan from outside, in Indonesia democracy has been the choice since the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, in theory, democracy's roots in Indonesia are strong, so why hasn't it brought prosperity to the people? This is the question that has never been settled since Independence, more than sixty years ago.

Are the Indonesian elite all crazy? Clearly not. But it is an open secret that some are power-crazy and money-mad. This is one reason for the chaos that damages this country. Democracy in the hands of people who are mentally unstable will lead to catastrophe, such as has beset Indonesia for so long. Even though Hatta had argued that if democracy disappears then Indonesia's independence would disappear as well, democracy in our country is far from being healthy. Hatta's hope that democracy would bring prosperity is still far from reality. We

may say that Indonesian democracy is a “leaky” democracy, or, for a more vivid expression, “RBI” (Leaky Republic of Indonesia).

Everywhere we hear about leaks: national budget leaks, regional budget leaks, political leaks, economic leaks, haji affairs leaks, educational budget leaks. Every day without end there is news of leaks.

Wherever our Mr. Crazy holds power, that’s where those leaks become unpluggable. Now that the regions have become autonomous, the number of Mr. Crazies has soared. Out of about 460 Level II Regions, not even 5 percent have been run on the principles of good governance. Education, health, and clean water sectors have received serious attention in almost none of these regions. Some 80 percent of regional budgets go to salaries, so that the development process is severely hampered.

Such an atmosphere must be improved as quickly as possible. If not, democracy will become a burden on us all, while other, better systems are yet to be found elsewhere. Whatever political system we follow, if the humanity supporting it is lacking, the hope for a better future for our nation will become more and more remote. *Quo vadis*, Indonesian democracy?¹³⁸

This is the tragedy of democracy in Indonesia – a tragedy that can of course repeat itself so long as “crazies” are elected as players on the political stage. It has been exceedingly difficult for our people to learn from bitter experience in managing the state in the post-Independence era. I will continue my discussion about democracy in connection with Islam in the next chapter. I am critical of democracy in practice, but I defend it in theory. There should be no wide gap between theory and practice, such as we have lately observed in Indonesia. The killing off of the Masyumi Party by an authoritarian regime greatly damaged the course and development of Indonesian democracy. That party was led by statesmen who were the product of Western education but who had a profound commitment to Islam and nation. In terms of political morality, they were the vanguard of democracy in Indonesia. In contrast to the Socialist Party of Indonesia (PSI), which did not have strong support at the grassroots level, Masyumi had deep roots, especially in Jakarta and in many provinces outside Java, as was manifested in the 1955 general election.

The question that is difficult for us to answer is, How could such a deep-rooted party be destroyed so easily? I will not answer that question here, other than to say that in the chess games of national politics, it would not be too difficult to destroy any political party that is not sufficiently strong in Java. Even the PKI, which had been one of the great waves

in Java, was in the end crushed by the machinery of power wearing a military mask.

Who could have imagined that Masyumi and the PKI, two political forces that had widespread mass support, would cease to exist so, their destruction occurring within less than six years of each other? Critical studies of these two mutually hostile parties are ongoing. The central question remains: Why were these two political ideologies – of the extreme right, such as Darul Islam (the House of Islam) and Tentara Islam Indonesia (the Indonesian Army of Islam), and of the extreme left – unable to survive for very long after independence. (The Masyumi Party cannot be included in the extremist category because it was led by broad-minded statesmen and intellectuals.) I hope that serious researchers will be interested in answering this question.

