

Introduction

This book is my reflection on Islam, humanity, and Indonesian identity. I am a devotee of history “with a mission,” to cite an attribute applied to Toynbee.¹ This book draws on a variety of sources, including historical ones, both Indonesian and foreign, primary and secondary. It is written in tribute to Indonesia, to Islam – the religion of the majority of Indonesians – and to humanism, which theoretically informs and protects Indonesian nationalism.

My mission in writing this book is linked to the future of Indonesia, at least as I see it as one of its citizens who is now in his seventies. I feel a kind of profound disquiet about Indonesia’s still unsuccessful realization of the promises of independence expressed by its leaders so many decades ago. Those promises had been made long before the Proclamation of Independence in 1945. It is this disquiet that pushed me to write my reflections on history, for the future of the nation. In my travels to the numerous islands throughout Nusantara (the Indonesian archipelago), the unmatched beauty of the country left an indelible impression on me. I asked myself why it was that Indonesian history did not reflect its natural landscape. Instead, we have managed our nation.

To create a framework for this book, I needed to consult a wide variety of reading materials, texts that would lead me to the type of wisdom that could be acknowledged on all sides, Muslim and non-Muslim. My aim was simple enough: that Indonesia remain whole and survive far into the future, that it not be destroyed at the hands of its own children who do not know themselves, who are greedy, blind, and obtuse. This nation must be defended honestly and responsibly. This is the concrete and true meaning of our post-independence nationalism.

The following interconnected considerations are central to making such a study:

1. The responsibility of the majority *umat* (community) to the nation is far from what it should be.
2. This will be the first book that sets out to deal with the themes under discussion in an integrated way.
3. The influence of political ideology and of authority in general is fading, which will encourage more transparent communication among our fellow citizens.

First of all, as the majority population in Nusantara, the Muslim *umat* (community) should no longer question the close relationship of Islam, humanity, and Indonesian identity. Those three must be expressed in the same breath to ensure that the Islam developed in Indonesia is friendly, open, inclusive, and able to provide solutions to the problems of the nation, no matter how great. Let us call it an Islam that is dynamic and amicably rubs shoulders with all our cultures, subcultures, and diverse religions. An Islam that provides justice, pleasure, security, and protection to all people who reside in our Nusantara, without discrimination, regardless of the religion that they do or do not follow. An Islam that solidly sides with the poor, even as its teachings seek the alleviation of poverty, until poverty is successfully driven out of this nation of islands.

If a minority of people – egotistical and puffed up with cheap rhetoric – insist on showing Islam with a fierce face, like some monster, this will naturally frighten and repel many clear-headed groups, whoever they are, whatever their religion. A monster that claims to speak on behalf of God has clearly cut loose from sharia law in a true sense.² The powerlessness that is sometimes felt by a community when confronting the challenges of the modern world, together with all the complex issues that accompany it, must not be used to intimidate the members of that community or encourage them to take extreme and wildly dangerous measures. Suicide bombing in Indonesia, along with the murder of others, is an extreme expression of despair and helplessness, whatever the political or ideological cause. For all Indonesians, suicide bombing is clearly intolerable and unjustifiable. The cause that these jihadis proclaim is not relevant and is in fact misleading. In other words, such deeds are political adventuring designed by the narrow-minded, those who “feel right on the wrong road,” to borrow the phrase sent to me by D. Zawawi Imron, an Indonesian literary figure from Madura.³

From this perspective Islam, humanity, and Indonesian identity should be understood as a plaited unity that is complementary and mutually enriching. People should not be so easily trapped seduced by the notion that Islam cannot be “caged” in the vessel of the nation-state called Indonesia. Islam, as this view would have it, knows not the boundaries of nation, race, or state. This is clearly an impractical, utopian view. If there were any truth to such notions, why does the Quran acknowledge the differences between tribes and races so that they would get to know each other in order to exchange ideas and culture?⁴ A fatal error can of course occur if people then make idols of ethnicity, ancestry, and nationalism, as we shall discuss later on.

Based on what we know, Islam was born and developed entirely in the flesh and blood of history and not in a cultural vacuum, much less in a

quiet place far from the bustling atmosphere of cities. Islam was born and developed in the fierce commercial climate of the Quraysh tribe, not in an isolated Bedouin village. After the Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation at the Cave of Hira in the year 610 CE, he never returned there but went straight into the midst of a society that had long been crushed by injustice and discrimination. The Prophet initially shared his teachings within his own family circle and only gradually moved out into the public. Historically, Islam has always interacted and grappled with society, which is continually transforming in response to social changes, with the goal of directing such changes to stay on the road of justice.

Even during the Medina period (622–632 CE), Islam was growing and developing within a commercial urban environment. Thus, whether in Mecca or in Medina, Islam was always in close contact with a world that was dynamic, competitive, and creative – the world of trade. So great was the pull of trade that some of the Prophet's companions forgot about God and walked off even as he was delivering the Friday sermon. The Quran describes this in the following verse: “But when they saw a transaction or a diversion [O Muhammad], they rushed to it and left you standing [and preaching]. Say, What is with Allah is better than diversion and than a transaction, and Allah is the best of providers.”⁵ Here the Quran is very clear that even some of the companions of the Prophet were not invulnerable to the temptations of the world. And that happened during the time of the Prophet and in his very presence. His companions were just ordinary people. Thus, it is not too surprising that warfare later broke out among them upon the death of the Prophet. All this must be seen from the perspective that they were ordinary people who were not directly guided by divine revelation.

Can one, for example, separate the birth of Islam from the Arab environment? Of course not. Only those blind to history theorize that Islam emerged in a cultural vacuum. The Quran was written in the Arab language, the mother language of the Prophet Muhammad as the bearer of the final revelation. What was forbidden was the idolizing of one's homeland, ethnic group, clan, tribe, or nation-state, which would create an ideology in conflict with Islam.

But in the case of Indonesia, if nationalism is understood as being limited to an ideology of opposition to colonialism and oppression, how can or why should it be rejected? In Sukarno's historic speech *Indonesia Accuses*, delivered at his trial in 1930, he quoted Sun Yat-sen, who said that nationalism gives a country the power to advance and gives an ethnic group the power to protect itself.⁶ Why then, he asks, must it be opposed and condemned? We have to think within the specific context of place and time, for otherwise we will certainly go astray. When

introducing a revealed teaching that is transcendental in nature one must use the greatest wisdom in considering the local atmosphere. The local environment must be carefully studied for the successful implanting of a teaching. A teaching is not something merely to be sung, but serves as a guide for humanity because the power of the mind alone is insufficient to solve the complex problems of facing us. Humankind, as a player on the stage of history, may not act as its own referee.

Colonialism, oppression, and racism are the skeletons in the closet of history that must be banished from the face of the earth. The first paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution states, "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." From the beginning, our constitution has emphasized the central position of humanity and justice. On the basis of such a formulation, Indonesian nationalism has two inseparable goals: banishing colonialism and struggling to establish humane and just values.

Naturally, we must start from Indonesia, a young state still searching for a more appropriate, just, prosperous, and appealing future. Who can deny that these two goals are indeed in line with and arise from the same source as the teachings of Islam that are against oppression and for justice? Of course, according to the theories of Rousseau and Hegel, a citizen's highest loyalty is to the nation-state, an understanding that must be rejected by someone of faith. We cannot accept nationalism as those European philosophers defined it. We take only its positive aspects in the interests of the country, which are the interests of us all.

While I was studying at Northern Illinois University at DeKalb and at the University of Ohio in Athens, Ohio, in the early 1970s, I heard such utopian notions from an Indian Muslim, but I questioned whether they were realistic. That Islam was universal in the essence of its teachings and humanitarian mission – yes, that was true. But the social practice of Islam in the cultural format of various ethnicities can never be free from local, national, and even global influences. That is totally natural, and there is no need to debate the particularities of historical Islam. What must be tightly guarded are its main doctrines: the oneness of God, belief, and good actions. None of these may be altered. They must stay intact as the fundamentals of a Muslim's system of faith.

Therefore, it is not an error of terminology to speak of Arab Islam, Indian Islam, Nigerian Islam, American Islam, Iranian Islam, Turkish Islam, Brunei Islam, Chinese Islam, Indonesian Islam with all its variations, and so forth. And it's not just this big picture, but people also speak of Islam as it is understood by Muhammadiyah, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Persis, the hard-liners, and so many others.

I want to comment on these issues for reasons that I hope are religiously strong and scientifically valid. I admit at the outset that I bring my own subjective views to my reading of the map of Islam, the map of Indonesia, and the map of humanity. This is unavoidable. Over the course of my life my thinking on these questions has evolved significantly. The increasingly fluid sociopolitical conditions in Indonesia may no longer be dealt with using static, narrow ideas that idolize an imagined history – as long as an attitude of moral consistency runs through the analysis like a red thread. Do I possess such intellectual integrity and honesty? Let society judge me, and judge honestly. It is its right. The progressive life is packed with the clash of ideas to find the best and the most true.

The second consideration that motivates this study is that, as far as I know, no other comprehensive study speaks deeply, critically, and creatively about the problems of Islam within the framework of Indonesian identity and what it is to be human. We have the valuable legacy of the Indonesian intellectual Nurcholish Madjid, who wrote on similar themes, and which I have found helpful; however, he did not publish a comprehensive study but rather papers and articles that were later collected in book form.⁷

In Indonesia, the meaning of “humanism” extends to the qualities of a “just and civilized” character, as contained in the second precept of the Pancasila, the statement of five principles that is Indonesia’s elegant national covenant. The earliest formulation of this concept came from Sukarno, at the time the Indonesian Constitution was being drawn up. This was Sukarno’s formulation of this second *sila*, or principle, in his radio speech of June 1, 1945: “Internationalism, or humanism.”⁸ I shall cite this statement at greater length later on.

The term “God, the One, the Only” also originated with Sukarno⁹ and later became the first principle, in agreement with the Jakarta Charter dated June 22, 1945. The clause that followed read, “with the obligation to enforce Islamic sharia for its adherents.” On August 18, 1945, the day after the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence, this was changed again to simply “belief in God, the One, the Only,” a change that has been most vigorously challenged by Muslim circles for years, by blaming Mohammad Hatta for being the architect of the meeting conducted one day after Indonesia’s bell of independence had sounded.

Over time, the paradigm of my thinking has undergone a change: after much study, I found that Hatta’s political stance can be completely understood and even justified. The wording Hatta put forth was one of the ways he used to preserve the unity of the nation that he had struggled ever since his twenties. I must also note that Hatta was an observant Muslim, both in word and deed. He was a man of rare personal integrity.

So it would be historically inaccurate to say, as some do, that Hatta was a secularist simply because of that meeting on August 18, 1945. In fact, Hatta was the “godfather” of all the top leaders of the Masyumi Party, which had fought to make Islam the foundation of the state, in opposition to the supporters of the Pancasila. To read Indonesian Islam outside the context of history is to err like a man crawling in circles in the darkness, thinking he is walking in daylight.

The third consideration is that, with the diminishing influence of political ideology, cultural exchange among Indonesia’s diverse citizens has become more fluid. As long as it is not contaminated by power politics, this form of communication can be very effective in cementing national integration, which sometimes still seems vulnerable and fragile. Also, Indonesia’s ethnic subcultures are increasingly using the Indonesian language and modern technologies to communicate with one another. Even though there are small groups here and there that still question Pancasila as the philosophical foundation of the state, the dominant thinking that flourishes within Indonesian society has consciously and willingly accepted Pancasila.

There have been instances when the acceptance of Pancasila as the philosophical basis of political or social organization was forced on those who were unwilling to receive it. Nevertheless, to this day there is no other concept that is as “right” for strengthening the unity of the nation as these five principles, read as an integrated whole. Studies by Muslim writers like me that break new ground on this important issue are still needed. To defend this nation, we cannot afford to be torn apart by narrow interests – local nationalisms, ethnic identities, or the politics of religion.

As for the moral atmosphere of the nation that remains vulnerable and even fragile, the main reason does not stem from the Pancasila. On the contrary, it is that the Pancasila has been betrayed by behavior and actions, including those of leaders and elites. This is the irony we witness in the history of modern Indonesia. In the past it was believed that ideological antagonisms were the main causes of our failure to attain the goals and promises of independence. However, now that those antagonisms have faded, it is plain that Indonesia has still not yet regained its moral consciousness. Justice is increasingly rudderless, the political climate is more and more chaotic, and the Indonesian ethos now appears to accept that the ends justify the means. The ideals of independence seem more distant than ever. Rather, corruption has grown all the more terrible after the disappearance of those ideological antagonisms from the political arena. I have not even mentioned the networks of the narcotics trade; not one subdistrict can guarantee that its territory is free from this

deadly poison. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Indonesians have become increasingly worried by the contagion of materialist culture and the worship of money. Mosques, churches, temples, monasteries, and pagodas are still widely visited, but the question remains, does this correlate to any significant extent to the moral improvement of the nation?

If this analysis is correct, and I feel it is, we have to say that our sickness is cultural and mental in character. Cultural sickness comes from the increasing brittle spiritual building in which this nation resides. What I mean is that we are suffering from a chronic illness for which we have to find a cure, once and for all, so that the future will be brighter, fairer, and pleasant for all of us.

It has been a long time since the anthropologist Koentjaraningrat said that one of the forms of that sickness is “a mentality that likes to take shortcuts.”¹⁰ That is, wanting to get rich quick, without working hard, or what is usually called “a fanciful and opportunistic mentality.” This sickness infects a wide range of groups and does not exclude the religious scholars and leaders. Its long-term outcome will make our national personality and character increasingly unsteady, fragile, and vulnerable.

If such behavior is not restrained, there is no guarantee that there is anything we can do about Indonesia’s fate. It is futile to hope that others will come to our aid if we are unable to heal ourselves. The future of our people is entirely in our hands. Even a senior observer of Indonesia said: “Indonesia is beyond help.”¹¹ I cannot bring myself to reach such a grim conclusion as long as we realize how serious Indonesia’s problems are and struggle to overcome them. We must not stay silent, but rather do whatever is best for the public interest and for our collective future.

Saving the nation is a collective task and the obligation of all citizens without exception. Of course, the government must be capable of directing all the strengths of the people to this end. The people of Indonesia, generally speaking, are still “followers” – if there is an example of virtue at the top, they will follow. For Indonesia, it is axiomatic that exemplary behavior by the leaders is required.

The Relationship of Islam, the Indonesian Soul, and Humanism

I have mentioned that Islam, the Indonesian soul, or “Indonesianness,” and humanism must be spoken of in one breath. Seen from the perspective of its early history, Islam, as the final message from Heaven, within a relatively brief space of time succeeded in gaining a portion of

the earth that contained a great diversity of peoples and cultures. Some one hundred years following the death of the Prophet, this religion had spread throughout the world with great speed and had been embraced by peoples and races of great diversity with their own distinct histories. Islam always came into areas that were themselves rich in systems of values and beliefs. For more than fourteen centuries, Islam has been active and creative on the face of the earth; at the start of the twenty-first century its adherents number about 1.3 billion, spread across various nations and states.¹² Of the 187 countries in the world, it is virtually assured that not one of these is without Muslim inhabitants. There is no sign that Islam's global expansion will wane; even in the United Kingdom, Islam has become the second religion after Christianity, even though, according to Karen Armstrong, the proportion of churchgoing citizens has fallen to about 33 percent.¹³ But we are obliged to ask, of these 1.3 billion Muslim, what percentage still makes religion the compass of their daily lives? Who knows – quite possibly the percentage is lower than what we find among the Christian community in the United Kingdom.

Thus, we must humble ourselves and not pound our chests in pride. We must realize that Islam is facing a serious corrosion of its practice. And we have not even begun to speak of Islam in the realm of politics, where the picture is even more dismal. Islam is now becoming increasingly a doctrine justifying flawed and immoral political behavior. In contemporary Indonesian history, examples of moral misconduct and deviance are easy enough to find. Statements of support by several Muslim groups for the corrupt and repressive authoritarian regime some years back are one example. The situation is becoming ever more grave, due to the religious arguments made in approving those statements. Other bad examples have accumulated; we need not record them here. One can find similar doings not only here in Nusantara, but in all Muslim countries. Islam has been made into a commodity of power politics on a global scale.

As it turns out, we are not always honest in our religious practices because it is so easy for us to invoke the name of God to conceal short-term political objectives. Barack Hussein Obama, when he was the junior U.S. Senator from Illinois, mentioned the following observation by his mother: "For my mother, organized religion all too often blankets closed-mindedness with the cloak of piety, covers up cruelty and oppression in the robe of the truth."¹⁴ Throughout history, many different belief systems everywhere in the world have abused religion for low-minded goals. Religion thus becomes a bartered commodity. But religiosity used to gain a self-seeking goal, we know well, is among the types of religious behavior that are of no value in the eyes of Allah.

That politics in Indonesia as it relates to religion, particularly Islam, at times presents an opaque picture is nothing strange. It would be difficult to differentiate, for example, between the behavior of someone who claims to believe in revelation and someone who could not care less about religion, even though we hear sharia slogans shouted everywhere. It even not infrequently happens that calls to the night prayer have been exploited and made to justify the political tendencies of the moment – to defend the position of a leader, for example. I expressed these thoughts at a forum once:

We commit too many deviations and even moral crimes, and do so not infrequently in the name of God. This is no different from the conduct of people who hijack God for their own base interests of the moment with no feelings of guilt or regret. Such unlovely scenes cannot be allowed to go on, for I am sure this will disgust people who think clearly and deeply, whatever their religion or ethnicity Indonesia is a nation that claims to be religious, but every day and night the noble and lofty values of religion are trampled on and raped under the shelter of all kinds of theological justifications and sacred quotations.¹⁵

Long before this, people were encouraged to practice their religion in a civilized way. Sukarno at least in theory emphasized the principle of a civilized belief in God (*Ketuhanan*), or a cultivated belief in God, in the sense of religious people having noble character and manners and adopting an attitude of mutual respect.¹⁶ In other words, being religious in a civilized way is the same as being religious in an honest, sincere, and generous way. By “generous” I mean that the principle of pluralism is important; it shows in our willingness to recognize the rights of others to hold that the greatest truth resides in their respective religions, even if we do not agree with them. At the same time, other people must respect the position of Muslims who say that Islam is the truest religion. The expression “the truest” here must be understood in the light of the distinct beliefs of each adherent. It is uncivilized and it disturbs the peace to say, “Our religion is the truest and your religion is packed with myths and confused beliefs.”

The Quran enjoins all believers: “So race to [all that is] good. To Allah shall you return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ [about religion].”¹⁷ It appears that differences in religious understanding will never be resolved here on earth until the last day. The highest judge to decide in the end, according to this verse, will be the authority of God. The task of the adherents of all

religions is to vie with each other in establishing and spreading all that is good for everyone, not just for themselves or their own group.

But claims about which is “the truest” may not be allowed to wreck our Indonesian homeland, a nation-state owned by all of us, or make us veer off the narrow path of “a just and civilized humanity.” Sukarno was right in citing Mahatma Gandhi’s saying “My nationalism is my humanity.”¹⁸ Thus, “Indonesianness” in the sense of Indonesian nationalism should never slide toward expansionist nationalism, which is no different from modern imperialism according to the theory of the Iranian scholar Mostafa Rejai.¹⁹ He said, “Both in theory and in practice, nationalism is connected to messianism, expansionism, imperialism, and war.”²⁰ From this perspective, the contentious question arises as to whether or not Indonesian nationalism at the time of the takeover of East Timor was expansionist in character. I tend to say that Indonesia at that time was pursuing imperialist politics, since this territory had not previously been a part of the Dutch East Indies, whose territorial unity itself was the main justification for an independent Indonesian homeland.

In this connection, it was noteworthy that the writer and Catholic activist priest Y.B. Mangunwijaya said that the takeover of East Timor by Indonesia was illegal in international law, which only recognized Indonesia as being the former Dutch East Indies. East Timor was the former colony of Portugal, not Holland. According to Mangunwijaya, no fewer than 120,000 East Timorese were killed or went missing during the takeover, and tens of thousands of Indonesian soldiers perished in carrying out that expansionist policy.²¹ As for the concern that East Timor under the Fretilin (Revolutionary Front of Independent Timor Leste [East Timor]) would go communist, and therefore had to be preemptively taken over, this is another matter that is not directly related to theories of nationalism.

In the discourse about nationality, the circle of major figures of the early days of the national struggle also clashed in their opinions. This of course was perfectly natural. Take the example of the polemic over nationalism between Agus Salim and Sukarno, two fathers of the nation who came from different subcultures, the Minangkabau of West Sumatra and Java-Bali, respectively. Their exchange was carried in the publication *Fajar Asia* in 1928. Both Sukarno and Agus Salim shared a love for Indonesia, but in Salim’s mind Sukarno’s love was excessive. Sukarno had said, “It is no more than your obligation that you enslave and bind yourself up in servitude to your mother Indonesia and become a son who has devoted himself to her.”²² Salim was against the idolization of the motherland (the impression one has of the above excerpt, even though this may not have been Sukarno’s intention). Yet apart from

their differences, Salim also wrote about his similarities to Sukarno: they had the same orientation, “love of nation and motherland,” and the same objective, “ennoblement of the nation and independence for the motherland.”

The same starting point: In the arena of colonial politics, this was the struggle between the holders of power and the mass of the people who demanded their rights under natural law, that is, inalienable sovereignty over their own people and motherland, and independence from any foreign nation.²³

At this level, there were no basic differences between Salim and Sukarno. “But,” wrote Salim, who distinguished between differing in principle and differing in intention, “our principle is religion, that is to say, Islam. Our intention is *Lillahi Ta’ala* [for Allah].”²⁴ This was written decades ago, before Pancasila entered the stage of national history. But, as it turned out, this polemic from 1928 continued right up to the eve of Indonesia’s Proclamation of Independence and after it as well, meaning that it touched on the philosophical basis of independent Indonesia (which I will discuss at greater length). Fifty-seven years separated 1928 from the enactment of Pancasila as the basis of mass organizations and parties. How bitterly and for how many years was this problem of the philosophical basis of public life debated, until a forced consensus was imposed by Indonesia’s authoritarian New Order government in 1985.

Chapter Highlights

I will now give a brief chapter-by-chapter preview of the book before we enter into the broader discussion. Chapter 1 introduces the cultural and religious struggle that has been going on in Nusantara and Indonesia for centuries. Long before the arrival of Islam and even Hinduism and Buddhism, the lands of Nusantara were populated by the adherents of various religions and animist and dynamist beliefs. Hinduism and Buddhism, or perhaps a mixture of the two, were present in a number of islands from the fifth century CE. The first activities of Hindu believers are visible in Kutai (in East Kalimantan) and in West Java with the appearance of the Kingdom of Tarumanegara at the beginning and middle of the fifth century, respectively. The coming of Islam, therefore, was preceded by other, older religions.

It is one of the wonders of later history that this newcomer, Islam, “conquered” Nusantara so that over time it became the religion that is still embraced by the majority of the inhabitants of the archipelago. But Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucianist minority groups

have lived in peace side by side with their Muslim brothers and sisters. The main cause of the occasional conflicts in the modern era has not been religious differences but rather economic and political interests exploited by irresponsible and parochial provocateurs.

Up to the sixteenth century, Java and Sumatra in particular were still centers of Hinduism and Buddhism. The influence of Islam had not yet become widespread, although there is a theory that Islam arrived in Nusantara in the first century Hijra (seventh–eighth centuries CE) straight from Arabia.²⁵ If this theory is correct, Islam would have endured a period of struggle for about five centuries before the appearance of the first Muslim kingdom in Pasai (today's Aceh Special Territory) at the end of the thirteenth century. Buddhism and Hinduism have marked differences. Hinduism is elitist and is based on a caste system, while Buddhism is rather like Islam in social structure, having more egalitarian features. The most profound and enduring impact of these two Indian religions was in central Java, where two monumental temples – the Buddhist temple Borobudur and the Hindu temple Prambanan, both dating back to the ninth century – are maintained by the Indonesian government, even though the Hindus and Buddhists themselves are minorities in Indonesia, with the exception of the Hindu majority in Bali.

Although Islam emerged as the “victor” in its contest with these predecessor religions, its cultural achievement was more formal and quantitative. Qualitatively speaking, the old cultural remnants were maintained and fostered by some people in Nusantara. Furthermore, Islam as a religion came to Nusantara for the most part not through the power of the sword, but rather following the pattern of its Hindu and Buddhist predecessors, that is, via peaceful penetration, so that the older systems of belief disappeared from the surface only. That it traveled this peaceful path was one of the conclusions of the Medan Seminar,²⁶ but it is not impossible that as Islam expanded its power the path of violence was also traveled. We cannot close our eyes to violence, if it really did occur. We must look at our past as it was.

Beneath the surface, the multilayered syncretist forms survived, especially animism and dynamism, the original beliefs that had taken root long before the arrival of Indian influences.²⁷ The firmly implanted layers of old values explain why the puritanical Islamic movement that began in the nineteenth century in West Sumatra encountered so many cultural difficulties. The struggle continues to the present day, but it has almost never given rise to significant social upheaval. The aggressive puritanism seen in the Padri movement in the Minangkabau lands of West Sumatra has gradually yielded to more enlightening and persuasive

cultural approaches. The Muhammadiyah movement was founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta, the center of Javanese culture, and then rapidly flourished in the Minangkabau lands from the early 1920s. In addition to bearing the banner of a moderate puritanism, its activities in the fields of education and health have strengthened it as the most renowned “deed-oriented” Islamic movement in the world. In terms of numbers, almost no other Islamic movement can match it.

The traditionalist Islamic movement in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) – literally, Revival of the Scholars – that arose in 1926 at first wanted to check puritanical influences: it tolerated the old traditions and values. It has more recently come closer to Muhammadiyah in the sense that it has opened itself widely to new Islamic thinking. We might even say that the NU youth are more “advanced” than the Muhammadiyah in absorbing the results of the new thinking that has appeared in the Muslim world since the end of the twentieth century. I see such developments not as cause for concern but rather as part of the “race” to spread good values and enlightenment – which must be addressed positively, regardless of who is doing it. Recently, too, Muhammadiyah and the NU, representing the mainstream of Islam in Indonesia, have marched shoulder to shoulder under the banner of an Islam that is open, modern, and moderate, a social model that is highly strategic for Indonesia’s continuance as a pluralistic nation. It has become axiomatic that so long as Muhammadiyah and the NU cooperate, Indonesia will remain safe from the threat of extreme radicalism. For it is also true that, in addition to these two major streams that have drawn much closer to each other now, Muslim movements with more radical characteristics and their own political agendas have also sprung up over the past twenty-five years. This is at the same time a refutation of the view that Islam is monolithic. We see this phenomenon not just in Indonesia, but across the world, wherever Muslims have established communities.

This chapter also discusses the process of Islamization in Nusantara that replaced the Indianization process, the coming of colonialization, the emergence of a national movement, the birth of the nation and state of Indonesia, political and ideological combat, and the establishment of Pancasila as the foundation of the state philosophy.

Chapter 2 focuses on Islam’s views of democracy, tolerance, and religious and cultural diversity; the countless expressions and interpretations of the religion; and the message of anti-violence. Diversity of religion and culture characterized the inhabitants of Nusantara long before the birth of Indonesia as a nation, less than a century ago. An ahistorical notion would have it that the Indonesian people are centuries old, beginning in the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, and so forth, and continuing through

the coming of religions from India, Arabia, and Europe. But what is old is not the Indonesian nation of peoples as we know it today, but the forerunners of this Indonesian nation, the multitude of ethnic groups, each with its own rich cultural mosaic, customary laws, and languages. The Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic kingdoms were also the forerunners of the Indonesian state that was brought into existence on August 17, 1945.

At the time of the European invasion of Nusantara in the early sixteenth century, the kingdoms the invaders encountered had Islamic features, but each was independent. They were not infrequently at war with each other. The Dutch needed more than three centuries to subjugate these kingdoms. They began by setting up the East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC) in 1602. Aceh was the final Muslim kingdom to be defeated, and only in the second decade of the twentieth century. To weaken Aceh, Professor Snouck Hurgronje, religious adviser to the Dutch East Indies government, provided the key to “taming” political Islam.

The colonial system in Nusantara was painful and humiliating. One by one, the Muslim kingdoms were overpowered. The natural riches of the archipelago were shipped to Europe, while the people of Nusantara were kept uneducated, impoverished, and oppressed. Nonetheless, without colonialism, could the nation and people of Indonesia have ever been imagined? In other words, you might well condemn the colonial system – whether it be the Portuguese, the English, the Dutch, or the Japanese – and it really was worthy of condemnation, but the fact remains that it was due to the influence of colonialism that we began to imagine Indonesia, first as a nation, and then as a state. Its main constituent parts were the kingdoms “that succeeded in being united,” being forced to do so by the Dutch in a colonial administrative system. In the early twentieth century, the figures of the national movement, educated in the West, created a nation in the 1920s to which they gave the name Indonesia.

Also, in Chapter 2, we critically discuss the problems related to the differences in vision of the newer and older generations of Muslims, the reasons for the appearance of radical groups, and the global dimensions of Indonesian Islam. Chapter 2 ends with an account of the efforts of mainstream Indonesian Islam to find a meeting point in religious thinking. Thanks to the modern education that increasingly spreads throughout that mainstream, this sought-for meeting point has become a very real possibility. The young, educated generation, which is prepared to cast off the arrogance of dogmatic certainties, will sooner or later discover the best solution to the problem of the relationship between Islam and Indonesianness. Muslim and Indonesian identities must be

woven into one broad carpet that accommodates all citizens. The Islam being offered, of course, is an Islam that is tolerant, inclusive, and friendly to everyone who shows a good will toward the building of Indonesia as a homeland for all its inhabitants, citizen or non-citizen. Islam must become the big tent of the nation, and religious leaders must always show wisdom of a high quality.

In this regard, we cannot close our eyes to the weaknesses of the Muslim *umat* in Nusantara. One of these weaknesses is the fact that the majority do not possess the qualities they should display. Chapter 3 focuses on this problem. In this chapter, education receives special attention, since speaking of the quality of the Muslim *umat* has no meaning at all if the problem of education is not solved. Education that is oriented toward formalism but neglects substance, and so is incapable of creating good human beings who are intelligent, independent, and sincere, will only produce unemployed graduates, regardless of how many academic titles they hold. This chapter also looks critically at the achievements of Muhammadiyah and the NU in education and enlightenment. Systems bearing the label of Islam have been proliferating of late; the question is, to what degree are those systems able to offer an alternative to the current systems that are considered no longer effective? This chapter also discusses Islamic activities, and particularly the Muslim parties that are in a state of deterioration. The final part of the chapter discusses Islam and the future of Indonesia.

Chapter 4 concentrates on Islam as an open religion, on the issues of sincerity and symbolism, and on the global map of the *umat*. It tightens the links between Islam and being Indonesian and human on the universal level. This chapter takes a daring approach, philosophically and theologically. It includes Iqbal's thinking on *ijtihad* ("interpretation and conviction arrived at through reasoning and judgment of the Quranic code") and the dialogue between God and humankind.

Chapter 5 attempts to summarize the entire essence of the flow of thought from the Introduction through Chapter 4. This chapter as well tries to imagine the perspective ahead for Indonesia based on the arguments raised in this work. At the end of this chapter, I summarize my thoughts on Islam, humanity, and Indonesian identity.

Before proceeding to Chapter 1, there is something I need to reemphasize. This work is the effort of a Muslim in his advanced years to see Indonesia strong, sovereign, just, prosperous, intact, and respected by other nations. Respected, not because of the size of its population as the fourth largest in the world, but because of the moral and intellectual qualities of its people with their rich and complementary cultures. Respected, not because Indonesians are good at theorizing, but because

we are skilled at translating theories into policies that defend the weak and the destitute. Respected, because Indonesians truly care about justice for all.

To move in the direction of this big idea, history must be made into a torch. History is not simply for amusement or entertainment,²⁸ as Bertrand Russell has said. History is a mirror. History is the past that can give inspiration to anyone who wants it. History is also the laboratory of wisdom for anyone who wants to find a pearl within it. History is a critique of our behavior when we slide off the rails we have collectively laid. Above all else, "history," writes Allan Nevins, "is truly a bridge that joins the past with the present, and at the same time shows the way to the future."²⁹

This work is my response to the conditions of modern Indonesia as well as to the map of the global Islamic *umat*, or community, which seems powerless to overcome the challenges that arise, one after another. A strong sense of cultural stagnation is still felt in all Muslim countries, as if great achievements no longer belong to them. But no matter what the situation, the flag of optimism must always be flown, even in the midst of the sea of pessimism that has engulfed part of the Indonesian people and the global Islamic *umat*. Russell well describes the difference between stagnation and progress: "Periods of stagnation are periods during which people feel powerless. Periods of progress occur when people feel that great deeds are possible and thus want to own a share in them."³⁰ Under these unhappy conditions, some Muslim writers have come forward in an effort to find the answer to these questions: Why has the Islamic world too long been at the tail end of civilization? Why does it find it so difficult to rise up?

Indonesia, with the benefit of its critical optimism, must truly rise again by giving birth to great works of high quality in the sphere of justice, and in well-being that is felt by all. Islam, if understood correctly and intelligently, will give an awesome impetus to the strengthening of Indonesian identity under the aegis of "belief in God, the One and the Only" and "a humanity that is just and civilized," as one manifestation of our faith and our common existence as a nation. Islam, Indonesianness, and humanism must be woven together so elegantly and beautifully that the widespread subcultures that constitute Indonesia as a nation and a state feel the safety and tranquility they need to survive in this "continent of islands" for all time.

Our weakness since Independence has been that we do not seriously manage and organize our Indonesianness, with the result that in certain periods, social explosions with political, economic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds have continued to occur. They always result in victims.

I hope that in weaving together the conceptual framework of Islam, Indonesianness, and humanity, this nation would be prepared to organize and reread its past in the interests of the present and of the future in an honest, responsible, and profoundly loving way. The Islamic *umat* as the majority has a very great historic responsibility to defend Indonesia so that it stays intact and united, and never wavers.

Let our rich cultural mosaic flourish in the Indonesian garden that shelters all who dwell in this fertile region without fear, without a sense of alienation. The populations spread over the little islands of Nusantara must truly feel their Indonesian identity as a pleasing certainty, an awareness, and not the result of compulsion. That goal can only be realized when the majority *umat* sets the example in defending the integrity and unity of the nation, a prospect that still feels very far off. Thus we must strive for this purpose tirelessly and without succumbing to apathy. Indonesia is the home we all share, the home whose roof can never be allowed to leak as a result of particularism and indifference.

My experience over the past eleven years with leading cross-religious, cross-cultural, and cross-ethnic figures has brought me to conclude that Indonesia can still be repaired. There is still a sufficient stock of honest and sincere people who genuinely love Indonesia and who are ready, if asked, to speak openly about its future design. If Indonesia's leaders, in the not too distant future, could succeed in displaying a finely calibrated statesmanship at all levels, I feel that many of the nation's ills could be cured. The people deeply need the exemplary ideals that have almost disappeared from our contemporary culture with its pragmatism, love of simplistic solutions, and lack of long-term vision. Most of the politicians who have appeared over the past eleven years are indeed lacking in vision and sensitivity.

Indonesia should have been a more stable society, since culturally the nation was formed before politically the state came into existence on August 17, 1945. But too few true leaders appeared on the scene. What did appear were politicians and bureaucrats without a long-term vision, who found it easy to barter away principles that they should have held fast to. In other words, the nation turned out to be morally loose. The principal question then arises, Why is a nation that claims to be religious so lacking when judged in terms of morals and ethics? The answer to this question must be found. The root of the problem must be studied honestly and with academic rigor for the purpose of improving the lives of Indonesia's people. That Indonesia's culture is sick is something spoken of widely. We need to find the remedy to cure this sickness.

From the point of view of constitutional politics, there are some who propose changing the structure of the state from unitary to federal.³¹

My comment after reading Nazaruddin Sjamsuddin's booklet is: "The thoughts incorporated in this little book need to be evaluated critically and with suspicion. In fact, in 1945, Mohammad Hatta came out with this same idea." Since the question of federalism is still quite sensitive, I think we should let time, which matures all of us, show us which system is the best for the future of the nation. Once emotions can be controlled by the power of reason, there will be no problem "too dangerous" to discuss deeply, openly, and seriously. The federal idea actually is still held in some intellectual circles in Indonesia; several months before he passed away on February 10, 1999, Y.B. Mangunwijaya tenaciously defended the idea.³² If the emotional situation in Indonesia permits, I myself tend toward the choice of federalism. Forget for the moment a state as big as Indonesia – Malaysia, whose population is only about one-tenth that of Indonesia, is a federal state. We must, of course, be particularly cautious in discussing such a sensitive issue.