

Book Review

Indonesia's Islamic Revolution

Kevin Fogg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020)¹.

Conventional analyses of Indonesian nationalism and revolution have customarily foregrounded the roles of secular nationalists like Sukarno and Hatta, the military, and the leftist groups such as the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI). The roles of Islamic groups have tended to be downplayed, if not ignored altogether. While assertions of the more significant contributions of Islamic groups in Indonesian political development have been made, such as B. J. Borland's *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (1971) and Michael Laffan's *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia* (2003), Kevin Fogg's *Indonesia's Islamic Revolution* breaks ground by pushing the logic of the idea, demonstrating that the Indonesian Revolution was not just a nationalist undertaking, but also a "Islamic" one. It provides compelling illustration of specific ways and the significant extent to which various Islamic groups, both elites and grassroots movements, played various roles in the Indonesian Revolution of 1945-1949. Of equal importance, it also shows the lasting impact of the revolution on the practice of Islam and on Islam a political force, thus illuminates crucial points about the position of Islam in contemporary politics in Indonesia.

After a thorough review of relevant literature on the position of Islam before the revolution in Chapter 1, which both beginner and seasoned observers of Islam and Indonesian politics would appreciate, the first part of the book explains in detail in what senses the revolution was Islamic. Chapter 2 highlights the Islamic framing of the call for participation in the national revolution and the exhortations came from Muslim clerics, many of whom acted as revolutionaries. The following chapter sheds light on the use of Islamic militias and organizations to mobilize mass participation. Two groups are discussed in particular, Sabilillah and Hizbullah. A fascinating analysis of the use of amulets, magic and trances is discussed in Chapter 4. Emphasized is that despite injunction against it by modernist, pious Muslims, ordinary Muslims regarded their use as something in accord with Islamic teachings. Chapter 5 focuses on the social aspect of the revolution, where revolutionaries tried to undertake reforms by, among other things, toppling down long-standing social and cultural hierarchies. The case of Aceh is discussed as exemplar of the success of Muslims in social revolution. The last chapter in Part I focuses on the case of Darul Islam in West Java. While it stood out in some respects such as leadership, the chapter shows that it was fundamentally similar to the struggles of other Islamic groups in other parts of the country.

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Consisting of seven chapters, the second part examines the ways and extent to which the revolution had impacted the development of Islam in Indonesia as a socio-religious practice as well as a political force. Chapter 7 discusses the failure of the Islamic leaders to have the provision for implementing Islamic law for Moslem adherents—the so-called Jakarta Charter—be incorporated in the Constitution. This episode heightened distrust by Muslim leaders towards their secular counterparts. This made them realize that need for a more effective organization and mobilization to fight for the interests of the Islamic community. These efforts were evident in the formation of the political party called Masjumi, which is discussed in Chapter 8, and in the establishment of, and their dominance in, the Ministry of Religion. It was as platform that enabled Muslim intellectuals to shape policies and influence practices of Islam, as discussed in Chapter 9. The practice within Masjumi of allowing younger and foreign-educated Muslims to assume important positions, while putting the old influential member in advisory positions, paved for the rise Muslim intellectuals who pushed for the fusion of socialist and Islamic teachings, as Chapter 10 elaborates. From the bosom of Masjumi also rose regional Islamic parties and other splinter groups. The final chapter in Part 2 examines the diplomacy pursued by the early government with countries in the Middle East, which showed the Islamic orientation or aspiration of the incipient nation-state.

The book is lucidly written and cogently argued. The engaging, even lyrical writing style, with use of shorter sentences and level-headed but precise vocabularies, makes the book a pleasure to read. Another strength is the extensive use of sources in Bahasa Indonesia. Unlike several other books in Southeast Asian Studies that tend to be sparing in use of local authors' works, this book profusely cites them, along with relevant works in English. The author's erudition is on display all throughout the book.

The Western media and the liberal strands of domestic press often promote Indonesia as a showcase of "moderate Islam", even "liberal Islam." In their narrative Islam is not a legitimate political force but a benign socio-cultural and religious way of life. The book's main message may have chilling effects on them. By foregrounding critical role played by Islamic groups in the Indonesian Revolution, and by demonstrating that this episode in turned revolutionized the understanding and practice of Islam in Indonesia, the book underscores the entwined relationship between Islam and politics as one of the key features of the country's foundational process. Even without intent, the book validates the long-standing gripes by Islamic activists over the marginalization or restrictive role of Islam in national politics and academic discourses. In addition, it helps legitimize the increasingly vigorous pro-Islam activism in the past two decades. The book may prove divisive politically, but academically it is not just a welcome addition to the expanding body of work on this area. It is, in fact, long overdue.

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