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A Little Less Holiness

Mobilizations, Power Struggles, and Control over Islam in Indonesia

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Abstract

This article examines patterns of religious mobilizations, particularly those involving Islamic organizations, elites' conflicts, and their influence in shaping state control over religion in Indonesia. It explores key events from the early 1900s, following the implementation of ethical policies, and the brief period of Japan's occupation to the end of the Sukarno era in 1965, to contextualize the conditions that allowed the institutionalization of Islam. The first period was marked by early mobilization, during which Islamic organizations took part in anti-colonial movements. During the Japanese occupation, Islam was seen as a significant ally and was accommodated largely by the colonial state. This resulted in the institutionalization of religion in the bureaucracy, which remains in place today. Meanwhile, the period from early independence until 1965 was characterized by intensified contestation, during which nationalists, communists, and the Islamic groups vied for political and economic resources.

Keywords

religious mobilizations – power struggles – blasphemy – law and religion – institutionalization of religion – Indonesia

1 Introduction

This article examines Islamic mobilizations and their implications for policies and institutions related to religious matters from a historical perspective by revisiting key events from 1901 to 1965. The beginning of the time frame refers to the declaration of the Ethical Policy in 1901, a Dutch colonial policy that partly contributed to the emergence of an Indigenous (*pribumi*) middle class, who received a Western education and was exposed to nationalist ideas. Meanwhile, the year 1965 was an important point in the country's history, not only being when the destruction of the organized leftist movement—represented by the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI, Indonesian Communist Party)—took place, but also being the year when a crucial regulation pertaining to religious matters, the Presidential Determination No. 1 of 1965 on the Prevention of Religious Abuse, was introduced.[1] This is a regulation that later, in the democratic period of Indonesia, continued to resonate deeply with religious mobilizations.

The question is: how has the institutionalization of religions, including those represented in the legal frameworks, developed in Indonesia? Specifically, to what extent do religious mobilizations impact efforts to institutionalize religion, including the creation of legal instruments concerning religion? What pattern can be identified from Indonesia's history of Islamic mobilizations from late colonial to pre-1965 Indonesia, and how does this pattern explain the institutionalization of religion? How have power struggles involving state authorities and contending political and religious elites within this timeline shaped the trajectory of the relationship between the state and religion? Lastly, how do we contextualize this historical understanding to comprehend contemporary phenomena of religious mobilizations?

Existing studies (Elson 2009, 2013; Butt and Lindsey 2012; Butt 2018) focus on the significance of the state philosophy of Pancasila to explain the institutionalization of religion in Indonesia. Pancasila comprises five principles that incorporate contrasting ideologies arising from the contentious debates among the nation's founders in 1945. The debates involved Islamists and nationalists, who sought to define the nature of the Indonesian state—whether it would be Islamic or secular. In the end, it resulted in strong recognition of religion, represented in the first principle, 'Belief in one God' (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*). Although this principle does not render Indonesia a theocracy,

1 Penetapan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 1 Tahun 1965 tentang Pencegahan Penyalahgunaan dan/atau Penodaan Agama. Article 4 of this presidential determination was inserted into the Kitab Undang-Undang Hukum Pidana (KUHP, Criminal Code) as Article 156a, and its amended version later appeared as Article 302 of the 2023 Criminal Code.

over time, according to Butt and Lindsey (2012:13), it has functioned as 'the machinery of state to encourage and promote the exercise of faith, including Islam'.

While an explanation focusing on ideological contests has merit, the historical role of religious mobilizations, especially those staged by Islamic groups, in institutionalizing religion remains underexplored. I define religious mobilization as a relatively organized movement that involves utilizing—or, sometimes, exploiting—religious identity to rally people for religious or other causes that may appear but are not necessarily religious in nature. Within this context, the role of religious authority in mobilizations can be quite significant. Some scholars[2] have paid particular attention to the Islamic movements in understanding the relationship between the state and Islam, as well as the subsequent institutionalization of religion. However, the impact of religious mobilizations and their influence on religious-related regulations is an area that needs further scholarly attention.

Against this backdrop, this article offers a novel perspective for understanding the institutionalization of Islam in Indonesia, including where this is manifested in the law, by integrating patterns of Islamic mobilization, the interests of political and religious elites, their internal conflicts, and the responses from authorities as collective factors that facilitate the process. It is argued here that religious mobilizations can serve as effective socio-political forces when they align with the interests of the ruling elite. As a collective action, religious mobilizations involving large masses justify the narrative of ensuring public order or being state matters that elites can exploit for their own objectives, including dealing with their internal conflicts. When these mobilizations fail to align with the interests of the ruling elites or do not pose a significant threat to those interests, religious mobilizations tend to diminish or even disappear. Meanwhile, when mobilizations align with the interests of those in power, they are more likely to result in the institutionalization of religious concerns.

This argument is put forward by analysing the key historical events—particularly related to Islamic mobilizations, power contests, and the state responses manifested in policies and regulations—spanning from the late colonial era to early independence. Religious mobilizations did exist earlier than this (for example, during the nineteenth-century portion of the Aceh War) and, to some extent, affected Dutch policies in the colonies. However, I focus on the beginning of the twentieth century, as this period marked the proliferation of anti-colonial movements employing various ideological streams. Specific-

2 See, for example, Shiraishi 1990; Benda 1958; Noer 1980; Elson 2009; Formichi 2012.

ally, this period is divided into three phases, which feature early mobilizations, especially against blasphemy (1901–1942); the accommodation of Islam during the Japanese occupation (1942–1945); and the contestations among the various ideological groups that resulted in the issuance of the blasphemy law (1945–1965).

Literature studies in this area are triangulated with findings from digital newspaper archives to understand how predominant actors in the past responded to certain religious issues and mobilizations. The newspapers analysed for this study were selected editions of *Djawi Hisworo*, *Oetoesan Hindia*, *Neratja*, *Soeara Asia*, *Asia Raya*, and *Harian Rakjat*, published between the 1910s and the 1960s. I also analysed unpublished materials from the National Library of Australia's Indonesian collections in the form of manuscripts under the headings of 'Indonesian nationalist movement' and 'Documents and notes on the 1965 Indonesian revolution, 1965–1967' to provide additional context during this specific period. Although certain data utilized in this research may also be recognized from prior studies on a similar subject, this article offers a new interpretation of crucial phases in the Indonesian history of institutionalizing Islam.

Most of the events discussed in this study took place in Java. Those that took place elsewhere were selected for analysis because they are critical to understanding religious mobilization. A study by Reid (1975) on religious mobilizations and elite contests during the early Japanese occupation in northern Sumatra, for example, is a case in point. However, I limit my analysis to events that highlight the more critical factors that influenced the law and political regulations concerning religion, which resonate with the situation in the Indonesian democratic context when religious mobilizations have resurfaced as a powerful tool in electoral contests.

This article is divided into four sections that illustrate the trajectory of mobilization and power contests involving Islamic groups. The first section discusses religious mobilizations during the early *pergerakan* (nationalist movement) era, particularly after the Dutch Ethical Policy was officially declared in 1901. This period saw attempts by Indonesian nationalists to engage the wider masses and advance anti-colonial narratives, sometimes by bringing together diverse ideologies. Islamic mobilizations in 1918 are also discussed here to provide insights into the dynamics and differing perspectives among the various factions in the *pergerakan* era.

The second section investigates blasphemy narratives during the Japanese occupation in 1942–1945, or when the institutionalization of religions took place. The third section highlights the 'contestation period', during which nationalists, communists, Islamists, and the military competed intensely for

political and economic resources. This struggle was exemplified by the first regulation, introduced in 1965, to criminalize defamation of religion, a law that was influenced by the tensions between Islamists and communists. The final section presents a brief discussion on contemporary instances of Islamic mobilization, such as the Ahok case, in relation to the institutionalization of Islam and the perceived threat to political pluralism, reflecting the historical understanding outlined earlier.

2 Religious Affairs in the Late Colonial Period: The Early Mobilization Phase

2.1 *The Ethical Policy and Regulations on Religious Affairs*

The implementation of the Ethical Policy in the Dutch East Indies played a significant role in the emergence of a new middle class who actively engaged with anti-colonial ideas and nationalist movements. This period can be seen as a foundational phase of mobilization, setting the stage for greater social and political change. Although the main narrative was opposition to colonialism, the movements were influenced by various ideologies, including liberalism, leftism, and Islam. Islamic movements had previously engaged in resistance of colonialism, which raised concerns for the Dutch colonial authorities. After the Dutch experience in the Aceh War in the late nineteenth century, which had resulted in significant losses for them, providing responses to Islamic affairs was also anticipated to address the spread of pan-Islamism ideas. According to Tagliacozzo (2000:100), 'the dangers of pan-Islamism as a movement were taken extremely seriously by the Dutch'. However, Benda (1958:10–1) argues that the representatives of the colonial government 'were not so much concerned with religious conquest as with commercial gains'.

Differing views on the Dutch response to Islamic affairs might explain why the colonial authorities treated such affairs selectively. The pilgrimage of Indigenous Muslims to Mecca (hajj), for example, was one of the Dutch colonial concerns. The Dutch authorities monopolized the transport services for the Muslim pilgrims in an attempt to prevent the potential transmission of 'subversive politics between pan-Islamic and anti-colonial movements in the Middle East and political agitators and groups such as PKI in Southeast Asia' (Alexanderson 2014:1025). From 1912 to 1913, the Dutch colonial government was also cautious about the expansion of the Sarekat Islam (SI, Association of Islam), a mass organization based on Islamic identity. While the Dutch never explicitly banned this organization, Governor General Idenburg did not affirm its legality (Shiraishi 1990).

After the Ethical Policy was declared by Queen Wilhelmina in 1901, the Indigenous middle class had more access to Western education, which contributed to the emergence of Indigenous political activism, including among those with Islamic influence. The role of the Ethical Policy in fostering a new middle class that engaged with Western ideas is a topic open to debate. Sidel (2021:124), for example, suggested that such activism resulted in mass mobilizations influenced by major international conflicts, such as the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars as well as the First and Second World Wars, which spurred the growth of nationalist movements. The political consciousness at the end of the nineteenth century, according to Tagliacozzo (2000:100), added concerns over potential threats to the Dutch, likening the situation to 'a kettle on a slow boil'. With a main narrative of anti-colonialism, native organizations that embraced their Islamic identity, such as the SI, held a significant place and fostered a sense of unity among the people.

The colonial authorities' approach to Islamic groups was profoundly shaped by the insights and guidance of their advisor, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857–1936), who played a key role in the Ethical Policy in the East Indies. The goals of Hurgronje, an Orientalist who was highly influenced by his fieldwork in the Aceh region, were the 'suppression of religiously mobilized resistance' and the 'political integration of the colonies' (Jung 2010:292). Hurgronje's advice indicated that Islamic movements could be considered a threat and should be taken seriously when intersecting with the colonial authorities' political and economic interests. However, Van Krieken (2022:267) argues that this stance changed a year before Hurgronje travelled to Mecca in 1884, stating that 'the authorities could prevent the hajjis from becoming declared enemies of Dutch rule only by adopting a benevolent attitude towards the pilgrims'. Hurgronje's suggestion that the colonial authorities not intervene in the religious matters of the Indigenous could partly reflect liberal values and be related to the Ethical Policy. According to Jung (2010:291), Hurgronje's thoughts and actions represent 'a European intellectual oriented toward secular and liberal values [and] "the colonial habitus" of European superiority and the historical context of the imperial struggle for power' in terms of foreign policy.

Some studies have documented that the rebellions during colonial times were often a response to high taxes, poverty, and injustice, with religious leaders at the forefront of these movements. One example was a notable revolt in Cilegon, Banten, in 1888 that shocked the colonial authorities. This revolt had a significant impact on the colonial government's strict oversight of traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The government also issued a decree in 1905 stating that an ulama could not teach Islamic education without written

permission from a regent or *wedana* (district chief) (Williams 1990:86). This case partly shaped prevailing perceptions of the religious character of particular societies in Java. The dominant narratives linked the 1888 revolt to Hajis and their connection to Mecca. This also raised suspicions about Muslim leaders, leading to some being hunted, arrested, interrogated, and even exiled (Kartodirdjo 2015).

While later Hurgronje tended to disagree with associating the revolt with Mecca as a symbol of pan-Islamism, he still referred to those who led the rebellion as 'mystical fanatics' (Van Dijk 2022:337). Meanwhile, Van Krieken (2022:267) wrote: 'The revolt had not been the result of a Meccan conspiracy, but of the situation in Banten itself, a region with a long tradition of resistance and a deep-rooted hatred of kaffirs, so that there was always enough fuel for a good fire.' Such a tendency also influenced the colonial authorities when drafting regulations on religious affairs.

In the colony of the East Indies, the Dutch did not apply the same policy on religious issues as in their homeland. For example, the offence of blasphemy was introduced in the Criminal Code of the Dutch metropole in 1932. Under Article 147(1) of the Criminal Code, anyone who uttered blasphemous expressions could be punished for up to three months or with a fine of up to €3,800.[3] The anti-religious propaganda from communists in the Netherlands was considered a persistent problem at the time and has been cited as the main reason for this provision's existence (Janssen 2017:619).

This provision, however, was never included in the *Wetboek van Strafrecht voor Nederlandsche Indië* (WvS, Criminal Code for the Dutch East Indies). While a hate speech article—originally from the British-India Penal Code—appeared in the WvS (later becoming Article 156), this was not the case for the blasphemy article. In the Netherlands, the blasphemy offence was specifically aimed at protecting Christianity as the then-majority religion. As cited in its explanatory memorandum, the situations in the Netherlands and the East Indies were not comparable, since the latter had a 'large religious diversity' and, therefore, the Dutch minister of justice rejected a suggestion to include blasphemy in the colonial penal code (Janssen 2017:621, 632). Thus, there were no blasphemy provisions inserted in the code, despite the occurrence of several notable blasphemy-related cases which catalysed large-scale religious mobilizations, such as the *Djawi Hisworo* affair, as explained in the following subsection. Even after the Dutch had officially left the colony, there was no provision on blasphemy in the code nor any recorded official effort to punish so-called

3 This provision was formally abolished in 2014.

blasphemers until 1965, about two decades after the independence of the state of Indonesia was declared.

2.2 *Tjokroaminoto and the War against Blasphemy*

In 1918, large-scale Islamic mobilizations took place in response to blasphemy accusations involving high-profile figures associated with the nationalist movement (*pergerakan*). The accused blasphemers were Djojodikoro, an author, and Martodharsono, the editor of a Surakarta-based newspaper, *Djawi Hisworo*, which published content in both Malay and Javanese. In a column named 'Percakapan antara Marto dan Djojo' (A dialogue between Marto and Djojo) published on 11 January 1918, they wrote statements that some Muslim communities considered to be mocking the Muslim Prophet Muhammad. They cited part of a controversial manuscript containing the Javanese belief teachings, *Suluk Gatoloco*, which was anonymously published in 1889 (Drewes 1966).[4] The central figure in the poem states that he went to opium dens as a 'faithful imitation of the Prophet Muhammad' (Anderson 1981:110).

Interestingly, the initial outcry after the alleged blasphemous publication of *Djawi Hisworo* (hereafter the *Djawi Hisworo* affair) did not originate from Surakarta, the city where the newspaper was published, but rather from Surabaya, East Java, which is over 200 kilometres away. The prominent figure who played a significant role in mobilizing people protesting about the *Djawi Hisworo* affair was Hadji Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto (1882–1934, best known as Tjokroaminoto). With his charisma and influence as the leader of the SI, then-largest societal organization in the Dutch East Indies, Tjokroaminoto mobilized more than 150,000 people to demand legal action from the colonial authorities to punish the accused blasphemers.

The son of a *wedana* in East Java, Tjokroaminoto obtained a Western education from the Opleidingsschool voor Inlandsche Ambtenaren (OSVIA, Training School for Native Civil Servants), which prepared candidates for native bureaucratic positions. He started on his political path after several jobs, from working as an engineer in a sugar factory and being a journalist, to leading the Surabaya-based newspaper *Oetoesan Hindia*. His political views and activism were amplified after Tjokroaminoto took over the SI in 1912, as a rebranding of

4 As summarized by Anderson (1981:110), 'a major part of the *Suluk* consists of an extremely abrasive polemic against what the anonymous author clearly viewed as narrow-minded, superficial, formalistic, "Arab" Islamic orthodoxy'. However, the *Suluk*, published in 1889, did not spark any recorded protests, most likely because of the very small number of 'native' readers of printed material, the lack of an organization capable of organizing protests, and the fact that 'orthodox' Islam had not yet become politically established (Anderson 1981:110).

the association of Muslim traders, Sarekat Dagang Islam. Proposing a relative egalitarianism compared to the 'modern' associations established by Javanese aristocrats such as Budi Utomo, the SI was a 'great folk movement which linked Islamic revival with anti-colonialism' (Henley 1996; see also Elson 2009). As noted by Elson (2012:317), it was Agus Salim who provided the Islamic input to the political character of the SI.

Tjokroaminoto, as the SI leader, was widely known for his anti-feudal and anti-colonial views and is today still given various honorific titles. Besides being a national hero, declared by President Sukarno in 1961, Tjokroaminoto was also dubbed the teacher of the nation (*guru bangsa*) and the Javanese king without a crown (*raja Jawa tanpa mahkota*; in Dutch, 'De Ongekroonde van Java'), illustrating his considerable personal magnetism. He has also been depicted as a noble character in some Indonesian films, including a biopic in 2015. While Tjokroaminoto's public image in Indonesia is mostly associated with heroism, his role in the 1918 religious mobilizations perhaps presents a different side to him. Leading mass mobilizations after the public outcry over *Djawi Hisworo*, Tjokroaminoto was a pragmatic politician who recognized the importance of momentum.

At least three groups of political elites were involved in the *Djawi Hisworo* affair: first, the Tjokroaminoto faction, which was supported by the Islamic Orthodox group (*kaum putihan*, literally: the white [Muslim] group); second, the Dutch colonial and the Surakarta palace authorities; and third, Tjokroaminoto's political opponents in the SI, particularly the leftist element in the organization. Tjokroaminoto leveraged the outcry to advocate for the Islamic cause, mobilizing Arab Hadramis and devout Muslim traders, raising funds, and reviving the dormant SI.

Tjokroaminoto's *Oetoesan Hindia* was the primary instrument in countering *Djawi Hisworo*. *Oetoesan Hindia* capitalized on the *Djawi Hisworo* affair by amplifying the narrative of defending Islam and demanding that the authorities—the palace of Surakarta and the Dutch colonial government—punish the blasphemers. *Djawi Hisworo*, in turn, countered *Oetoesan Hindia*'s propaganda. In a defensive article titled 'Serangan heibat' (An immense attack), published on 4 February 1918, Martodharsono denied the blasphemy accusation and clarified that what he meant by '*Rasul*' was not the Prophet Muhammad. Martodharsono, known to be close to the SI's Semarang faction, which was dominated by the left, was then in the midst of tension with the central SI.[5]

In examining these conflicting narratives, it is essential to recognize the background of *Oetoesan Hindia* as a newspaper with a strong affiliation to

5 'Serangan heibat', *Djawi Hisworo*, 4-2-1918.

Arab Hadrami traders in Surabaya and known for its criticism of the colonial authorities (see Mobini-Kesheh 1999). Established in 1912 following tense conflicts between Arab and Chinese traders, *Oetoesan Hindia* arose from the Arab traders' need to have their own newspaper, after having previously relied on the Chinese community to promote their businesses (Shiraishi 1990:52). Arab traders merged their capital with the native Muslim Surabaya traders for this purpose. By 1913, Tjokroaminoto had full control of *Oetoesan Hindia*, transforming it from an Arab traders' newspaper into the main propaganda arm of the SI, including by making demands for the authorities to punish *Djawi Hisworo*'s author Djojodikoro and its editor Martodharsono (Shiraishi 1990:106–7).

As the leader of a militia called Tentara Kandjeng Nabi Muhammad (TKNM, Army of the Lord Prophet Muhammad), Tjokroaminoto successfully mobilized a large number of Muslims and raised a huge amount of money to support their campaign for the prosecution of Djojodikoro and Martodharsono. Through rallies in 42 locations in Java and Sumatra, Tjokroaminoto gathered more than 150,000 people and raised more than 10,000 guilders (Shiraishi 1990:107). He leveraged the outcry to advocate for the Islamic cause, mobilizing Arab Hadramis and devout Muslim traders, raising funds, and reviving the dormant SI.

Tjokroaminoto also took advantage of the *Djawi Hisworo* affair to ignite social mobilizations to consolidate his supremacy in the SI leadership (Shiraishi 1990:106; Anderson 1981:110; Drewes 1966:314–5). He targeted his former Surakartan rivals, Martodharsono, Samanhoedi, and Sosrokoernio (Shiraishi 1990:106; Anderson 1981:110). According to Drewes (1966:315), Tjokroaminoto 'wanted to square accounts with Martodharsono, the ready advocate of the refractory Surakarta branch of the SI'. His efforts to mobilize the Muslim masses against *Djawi Hisworo* helped Tjokroaminoto to consolidate power within the SI, but his demands were ignored by the Dutch authorities and the Surakarta palace. The Dutch dismissed the demand to prosecute Djojodikoro and Martodarsono (Drewes 1966:313). Similarly, the Surakarta palace did not take any stance on the *Djawi Hisworo* affair. Thus, these mobilizations demonstrated that 'the government did not care about Islam' (Shiraishi 1990:106).

It should be noted that internal conflicts within the SI must be carefully considered in understanding this case. The *Djawi Hisworo* affair occurred at the same time as Tjokroaminoto was receiving criticism from the leftist faction of the SI, including its prominent leader, Semaoen. The latter was a younger SI member who actively challenged Tjokroaminoto's decisions to support and send SI representation to the Dutch-established advisory body, the Volksraad (People's Council). The leftist faction of the SI—most of whom were unionists who had also joined the PKI's embryonic organization, the Indische Sociaal Democratische Vereeniging (ISDV, Indies Social Democratic Association)—

had criticized the money management of the SI, raising suspicions that Tjokroaminoto had mishandled the organization's funds (Shiraishi 1990; Mobini-Kesheh 1999).

The rise and fall of the relationship between the SI and its leftist faction—most of whom were also PKI leaders—was intense, shaped by power contests in both organizations. This dynamic was also evident earlier in 1918, when most SI leftists joined the ISDV, which was founded by Dutch unionist Henk Sneevliet in 1914. The native leaders in the ISDV 'devoted particular attention to developing relations with the Sarekat Islam, to which they also belonged' (McVey 2006:36–7). At that time, there were no strong public narratives that claimed that Islam was not compatible with communism. Even Tjokroaminoto formulated his own approach 'to reconciling Islam and Marxist ideas' (Hongxuan 2023:88). However, this reconciliation was not solely driven by ideological reasons. Power struggles transformed the fluidity of ideological streams and created a sharp distinction between the Islamists and the communists. These dynamics also highlight Tjokroaminoto's varying approaches to Islam and leftist narratives.

Tjokroaminoto publicly discredited the communists at the 1922 Kongres Al-Islam (Al-Islam Congress), a meeting that sought to gather various native Muslim groups, from traditionalists to modernists. The congress, led by Tjokroaminoto and Agus Salim in Cirebon, West Java, gathered various Muslim organizations in 'an effort to strengthen Islam and to resolve disputes among Muslims'.[6] His speech in the congress emphasized Islam as the religion and basis of the SI, and therefore, communists were not suitable as members of the SI because they 'do not believe in God and do not confess the religion of Islam' (Shiraishi 1990:237). The congress successfully elevated Tjokroaminoto's reputation. It restored his popularity, which had previously declined due to allegations of corruption within the SI and the 'subversive' case of Afdeling B, 'a secret organization of Sarekat Islam which was preparing an uprising against the Dutch' in Garut, West Java (McVey and Semaun 1966:57).

On the other hand, Tjokroaminoto also found the need to re-establish his power in the SI by investing his efforts in introducing the concept of 'Islam and socialism', first published in the *Soeara Boemipoetra* newspaper in 1922. In this article, he seemingly strove to align Islam with socialism and, in some parts, with Marxist concepts, regardless of some inaccuracies in his argument. For example, Tjokroaminoto (1963:16) claimed that the Prophet Muhammad (570–632 AD) 'never forgot to pay attention to [problems of] labour, industry, and capital'. Tjokroaminoto (1963:16) also wrote that 'the land gave as much and

6 'Kepada Al Islam Congres jang dihadakan di Tjirebon', *Oetoesan Hindia*, 6-11-1922.

as wide a job as possible to workers in the Prophet Muhammad's era, and as explained above, the land was owned by the state during the Islamic rule'.

His attention to Islamic narratives was also evident at the first congress of Al-Islam in Cirebon, West Java, which, as stated by Shiraishi (1990:237), signified 'the emergence of Tjokroaminoto' as a leader within the Muslim community. As mentioned, Tjokroaminoto used the congress to express his hostility towards communism by referring to a communist as an atheist or as being anti-religion. In fact, Tjokroaminoto was not the only figure in the SI who spread these narratives of communism as being anti-religion. Fachrudin, a founder of Muhammadiyah—a modernist Islamic organization whose members were dominated by Muslim traders—also stated that communism was equal to atheism (Shiraishi 1990). As well as promoting modern Muslim education, Muhammadiyah's missions are to remove Islamic rituals and teachings of superstition, heresy, or deviant practices (*takhayul, bid'ah, khurafat*).

However, the golden era of the SI in gaining political power among Muslims gradually diminished. In 1919, the SI had 2.5 million members and the organization transitioned into a political party in 1920. By 1929, its popularity was lagging behind that of the Partai Nasional Indonesia (PNI, Indonesian National Party). Following the death of Tjokroaminoto in 1934, the SI, as a political party, splintered into various factions, with the internal conflicts between Agus Salim and Tjokroaminoto's brother, Abikoesno Tjokrosoejoso, intensifying.

3 Islam under the Japanese Military Occupation (1942–1945): The Accommodation Phase

Although the occupation by the military of Greater Japan, also known as Dai Nippon, in the East Indies was relatively brief, it had a significant impact on the institutionalization of religion, which was exemplified by the accommodation phase. While the struggles of the elites in the East Indies during the late Dutch colonial era continued in this period, the Japanese authorities left a legacy of centralizing authority in order to control religion, which was not present during the Dutch colonial era.

As discussed in many academic works,[7] privileges and concessions were granted to Islamic leaders, and some of these left legacies that continue in contemporary Indonesia. The Japanese authorities also instrumentalized religious narratives to serve its agendas in the Pacific War. While this interest later

7 Benda 1958:201; Reid 1975:49; Shiraishi 1990; Jenkins 2009:39; Ropi 2017.

bolstered the presence of Islam in public, it is important to note that Islamic organizations, despite being the most prominent social movements, did not have a coherent political channel.

Japan took a more insistent approach in dealing with Islamic affairs compared to the pragmatic approach of the Dutch colonial authorities—the latter was described by Benda (1958:107) as being 'quasi neutrality'. The Dutch had already started to establish some institutions, for example, by organizing the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca, or hajj, as well as by establishing religious tribunals (*priesterraaden*) for Java and Madura in 1882 and a consultative body for Islamic law scholars called the Raad Oelama for Aceh in 1919 (Feener 2013). Although religious affairs were a concern for the Dutch colonial authorities, what distinguished the situation then from the legacy left by the Japanese was the latter's emphasis on greater religious mobilization and intense propaganda, which indicated a move towards the institutionalization of religion.

The Japanese army's (Gunseikanbu) accommodation of the Islamic community in the East Indies as part of their strategy to maintain power was not new. Japan's interest in Islam dated back to the 1920s, as observed by Benda (1958:103) in his study of Islamic studies and periodicals on Islamic problems. In 1933 and 1935, for example, the Japanese colonial authorities invited Muslim students and educators from the Middle East and various Asian countries to visit Japan (Benda 1958:103).

Japan's early success in the Pacific War at the end of 1941, which forced the Dutch authorities in the East Indies to surrender on 9 March 1942, did not prevent them from preparing forces in anticipation of possible counterattacks from Allied powers. Following this, Japan established civilian militias, mostly comprised of young people, including the Heiho (auxiliary soldiers), Seinandan (military assistants), Keibodan (police assistants), and Pembela Tanah Air (PETA, Defenders of the Land). Japan also established social organizations which received less military training, such as the Jawa Hokokai and its youth wing, Suishintai (Barisan Pelopor, Pioneer Brigade), as well as the Fujinkai (Women's Association), all of which aimed to support Japanese forces' preparation for the Pacific War. Some of these militias had Islamic social bases, such as PETA, with its Muhammadiyah members, and Heiho, which many Muhammadiyah pupils in the Yogyakarta region joined (Benda 1958:139, 252). Benda (1958) also noted that PETA had a great number of *kiai* (Islamic figures) as officers, emphasizing an Islamic dimension to the existence of the PETA armies.[8]

8 Jenkins (2009:47), however, challenged this statement, stating that Benda was working from 'incomplete data' and that 'the Islamic factor should not be exaggerated'.

Japan's efforts to take Islamic groups seriously and sustain their support by mobilizing religious narratives were also evident in the bureaucracy. The Japanese authorities, for example, established an Office of Religious Affairs (Syumubu) in March 1942, not long after their arrival in the East Indies. This office was not only tasked with handling administrative matters but also with controlling Muslim leaders and managing propaganda among the Muslim community. The authorities also replaced a federal organization for Islamic groups, the Majelis Islam A'la Indonesia (MIAI, Supreme Islamic Council of Indonesia), which was founded in 1937 by leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, Awakening of the Ulama [Islamic scholars]) and Muhammadiyah. The replacement organization was called Masyumi (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia), which later, in November 1945, became a political party. According to Benda (1955:356), Masyumi then took over the provision of training courses for village teachers from Syumubu and, more importantly, appointed key members of Masyumi to executive positions in this office. Japan also formed Hizbu'llah, or the army of Allah, not just as a reserve force for PETA but more specifically as 'the army of Masjumi' (Benda 1958:179).

The Japanese also made efforts to engage with Islamic communities through various channels. Islamic affairs were regularly featured in the propaganda newspapers *Asia Raya*, published in Jakarta, and *Soeara Asia*, published in Surabaya. For example, stories about ceremonies to celebrate Maulud, the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, were published in the newspaper for a couple of days in March 1944.[9] Events involving NU and Muhammadiyah—now the two largest Muslim organizations—often appeared in the headlines.

Japan utilized Islamic narratives to mobilize Indigenous Muslims, framing their efforts in the Pacific as a 'holy war' against Western allies. A news piece published in *Asia Raya* on 1 January 1944 on the speech of Syumubu advisor Mas Mansoer, for example, used the title 'Perang Asia Timoer Raja, perang Sabilallah!' (The Great East Asian War, a holy war!).[10] Another article, published on 8 March 1944, was entitled 'Orang Islam haroes mendjadi perdjoerit' (Muslims must become soldiers). It quoted a speech from the commander (Daidanco) of PETA, M Kasman Singodimedjo, who said that 'Muslims must work together with Dai Nippon' to fight Western imperialism.

9 For example, 'Maulidnja Nabi Moehammad lahirnja semangat-perdjoangan Islam', *Asia Raya*, 6-3-1944; 'Orang Islam haroes mendjadi perdjoerit oentoek membela agama, noesa dan bangsa (rapat besar dilapangan Ikada)', *Asia Raya*, 8-3-1944; 'Perajaan Maulid Nabi dalam mesdjid Kwitang', *Asia Raya*, 24-3-1944.

10 'Perang Asia Timoer Raja, perang Sabilallah!', *Asia Raya*, 1-1-1944.

Benda (1958:109) noted that the goal of the occupation was to redirect the Islamic movements on Java into new avenues. The Japanese military provided 'concessions' to Muslim leaders, including through several appointments as officials in their various institutions. These concessions emerged from a combination of Japanese policies directed at the native officials or *priyayi* (the Javanese noble class holding significant bureaucratic positions) and the escalating significance of the Islamic movement, particularly in light of the approaching Western Allied invasion (Benda 1958:109). With these concessions, Japan's military also successfully established mass bases in rural areas. The prominent focus on grass-roots engagement was established during the first seven months of 1943, with the political importance of Islam beginning to emerge following Japan's concessions in the latter half of the year (Benda 1958:132).

Most scholars have also paid attention to how Japan's alliance with Islamic political forces isolated anti-colonial movements from those based on Islam and non-religious nationalist movements.[11] The Japanese government's support for Islamic interests was evident in various areas of education and bureaucracy, although few changes were noticeable in the development of regulations. There was a less fundamental shift in law-making during the Japanese occupation. In response to legal issues, Japan's authorities mainly referred to Osamu Seirei—laws issued directly by the army commander. The judicial institutions were restructured to consist of courts managed by the military administration, while their names were also changed to Japanese and some legal procedures were modified.[12] Meanwhile, some existing regulations inherited from the Dutch colonial period, such as the Criminal Code remained substantially unchanged.

Japan also lacked specific regulations for responding to outcries related to religion, including Islam, which they had a relatively significant interest in. Although Muslim leaders were incorporated into bureaucratic structures, this inclusion did not necessarily imply that their interests were reflected in the regulations produced. While there were some Osamu Seirei passed related to maintaining order (for example, Osamu Seirei No. 2 of 1942, which included provisions that banned '*menjiarkan kabar angin dan omong kosong*' or 'spreading rumours and fake news'),[13] Japan's military obsessions with public order were also resolved by deploying its coercive power and optimizing propa-

11 See, for example, Benda 1958:201 and Jenkins 2009:39; see also Reid 1975:49.

12 See Osamu Seirei, 14/1942 tentang Peratoeran Pengadilan Balatentara Dai Nippon.

13 Osamu Seirei, 2/1942, Article 11, tentang Menjiarkan Kabar Angin dan Omong Kosong.

ganda. The latter was, again, often undertaken by emphasizing Japan's so-called respect for Islam.

To give an example, Japan instrumentalized blasphemy narratives to discredit an anti-colonial movement led by Kiai Zainal Moestafa, a Muslim teacher in Tasikmalaya, West Java, who was also a member of the traditional Islamic organization NU. On 8 March 1944, the newspaper *Asia Raya* published a statement from the military authorities entitled 'Keriboetan di daerah Tasikmalaja' (A riot in Tasikmalaya), stating that the *kiai* had 'adopted a deviant belief about religion [...], he had fallen into a state of mind that had gone astray and called himself a saint of Allah following the command of the Prophet Muhammad'. The Japanese authorities also used the phrase '*agama Islam jang asli*' or 'the original Islam', a narrative that promoted the idea of religious purification, and, therefore, conformed to orthodoxy. Although the Tasikmalaya incident did not result in the issuance of a regulation on blasphemy, the statement of the Japanese authorities can be regarded as a bureaucratic response to religious matters.

In the same month as the Tasikmalaya incident, the Japanese continued to campaign for the role of *ulama* (Islamic scholar), which was supposed to support the Japanese mission of establishing 'the glorious country and Greater Asia nations'.[14] The newspaper stated that in a meeting with *penghulu* (Islamic marriage registrars) in Kediri, East Java, the Shuuchookan or Syutyokan (the equivalent to a Resident in the Dutch colonial administration) had emphasized that the obligations of *ulama* were to 'enlighten the people and explain the aims and objectives of the current war' (*menginsafkan rakjat dan menerangkan tentang maksoed dan toedjoean peperangan sekarang ini*).

The three and a half years of occupation illustrate how the Japanese authorities effectively exploited Islamic narratives in various ways. Japan utilized these narratives to address local turmoil and their global interests against the Western allies. Meanwhile, the apparent institutionalization of religion did not signify the strengthening of Islam as an autonomous political force that could operate independently from the political authorities with which it was aligned.

4 Early Independence up to 1965: The Contestation Phase

While the late Dutch colonial period and Japan's occupation provide good case studies to understand religious mobilizations, the early period of independence reveals important insights into a significant struggle for power and, thus,

14 'Kewadjiban kaoem Oelama', *Asia Raya*, 23-3-1944.

a phase of intensified contestation. This contestation was marked not only by ideological conflicts over the formation of the state but also by competition for political and economic resources, including that involving the military as a significant political force in the new Indonesia (see Crouch 2007). This section focuses on one notable aspect of such competition, specifically related to the regulation of religion.

The 1960s were marked by intense conflicts between nationalists, Islamic groups, and communists, who competed for political power and the distribution of wealth, including control over agrarian resources. Ideological divisions can be traced back to the early nationalist movements of the 1920s and these resurfaced in 1945 during the debates over the state philosophy of Pancasila, particularly concerning the first principle of 'Belief in one God' (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*), which limits the right to have no religion. However, as mentioned, this section focuses on the ideological divisions that became more pronounced in the 1950s and 1960s as access to political and economic power opened up to various groups in the relatively new republic (see Feith 2007).

The offence of religious defamation, as introduced in the Presidential Determination of 1965, re-emphasized the early narrative that portrayed communists as anti-religion. This time, an NU figure, Saifuddin Zuhri, the then minister of religious affairs, played a significant role. Some works suggest that he was the initiator of the 1965 determination (Mujiburrahman 2008:101–23; Ghofur 1998:233). Instead of being proposed as a bill in parliament, the determination was issued directly by President Sukarno during the period when state power was centralized, illustrating his authoritarian rule.

Under this determination, narratives from major Islamic groups, such as the NU and Muhammadiyah, which claimed that communism was inherently anti-religious, became a legal justification. Accordingly, the predominant legal conversations also aligned with these narratives, supporting the idea of protecting 'religious feeling' and, consequently, public order (see, for example, Adji 1981).

The connection between religious and legal narratives in this matter, however, is still underexplored, especially within the context of the tensions between the communist and the Islamic groups concerning the distribution of agrarian property in the 1960s. Intending to eliminate the landowner class and reduce the number of landless peasants, the communist agenda of land reform faced significant challenges, leading to numerous local violent conflicts around 1964 in various regions, particularly on Java, Bali, and Sumatra. In these conflicts, many *kiai* affiliated with the NU, who were also landlords, were regarded as 'the most formidable obstruction to land reform' (Utrecht 1969:84).

The land reform programme of the 1960s was viewed as creating a strong bond between the PKI and Sukarno, along with his Indonesian National Party

(PNI). This situation prompted some concerns among NU leaders. In his autobiography, Zuhri (1987:526) conveyed serious concerns regarding the PKI's efforts to establish a closer relationship with Sukarno. Although this autobiography was published in 1987, when Soeharto's regime had completely eliminated the PKI, the tensions between the communists and the NU were already public knowledge. Zuhri (1987:526) said:

> The PKI always sought refuge in Bung Karno, both as the president and as an individual. So whenever someone attacked Bung Karno—whether in his capacity as president or as an individual—the PKI would respond by defending him vigorously. The PKI would not be true to itself if it did not incite people and stoke conflicts, enabling it to combat its enemies through the hands of Bung Karno.[15]

In this context, it is no exaggeration to say that the close ties between Sukarno and the PKI also compelled Islamic groups, especially the NU, to preserve their alliance with Sukarno. Several events show that the NU made efforts to maintain its alliance with Sukarno in various ways. On 22 September 1964, the State Institute for Islamic Studies (Institut Agama Islam Negeri, now Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta), where Zuhri was also a professor, awarded Sukarno an honorary doctorate in the field of *da'wah* (Islamic propagation). According to Zuhri, the proposer of the honorary doctorate, the title was awarded based on the president's profound 'understanding, strong feelings, and expertise in *ushuluddin* (principles of religion), particularly within the Islamic *da'wah*, and capability to effectively carry it out' (Zuhri 1987:513–4).[16] However, it is reasonable to question Sukarno's motivation for engaging with Islam. Fogg (2019:142), for example, noted that 'the gamut of religious faces he put forth made him rather like a human Rorschach test—everyone saw what they wanted to see as regards Sukarno's religious affiliation'.

While land reform in the 1960s created intense grass-roots conflicts, it is important to note that Zuhri, as a minister in Sukarno's cabinet, managed his relationship with the PKI in a diplomatic and safe manner. In a written speech

15 Bung Karno is a nickname for Sukarno. Original quote: 'PKI senantiasa berlindung kepada Bung Karno, baik sebagai Presiden maupun selaku pribadi. Maka siapa pun yang menyerang Bung Karno (baik selaku presiden maupun selaku pribadi) PKI "nimbrung" balik menyerang. PKI bukan PKI jika tidak "mengipas-ngipas" dan membakar-bakar, agar dengan itu PKI dapat menghancurkan musuh-musuhnya melalui tangan Bung Karno.'

16 Original quote: 'Bung Karno memiliki pengertian, perasaan dan keahlian yang sungguh-sungguh tinggi mutunya dalam lapangan ilmu Ushuluddin bidang da'wah Islamiyah serta mampu melaksanakannya.'

for the PKI's 45th anniversary, Zuhri acknowledged how the PKI, under the leadership of Aidit, Lukman, and Njoto, had successfully organized the party to be consistently on the path of Marxist ideology. He also praised the PKI as 'a cadre party and mass party'.[17]

As a politician and an Islamic figure, however, Zuhri adopted a different approach. In his autobiography, he repeatedly mentioned the PKI as being a party that celebrated atheism (Zuhri 1987:516, 518). He also mentioned an incident in Bangkuning, Surabaya, where the PKI's youth and women's organizations, Pemuda Rakyat (The People's Youth) and Gerakan Wanita Indonesia (Gerwani, The Indonesian Women's Movement), trampled the mosque floor and sang *Genjer-genjer*, a popular song about peasant hardship that is associated with communism (Zuhri 1987:509). It is worth noting that there is little academic literature on, or news coverage of, the alleged Bangkuning incident, unlike a similar incident in Kanigoro, East Java, which was more widely documented.

The incident in Kanigoro was a faith-based conflict between the NU and the communists, which occurred in the period leading up to the issuance of the 1965 determination. In the small village of Kanigoro, East Java—which was one of the social bases of the PKI's affiliated organizations, the Pemuda Rakyat and Barisan Tani Indonesia (BTI, The Peasants Front of Indonesia)—tensions rose and resulted in a violent incident. The communists were involved in an altercation with members of Pelajar Islam Indonesia (PII, The Islamic Students Association) at a local mosque. Members of Pemuda Rakyat and the BTI were rumoured to have trampled on the Islamic holy book, the Quran, during the attack. The PKI denied allegations of insulting Islam and accused former Masyumi party members of being 'the masterminds' behind the incident.[18] In the later regime of Soeharto, this incident was further commodified to demonize communism and leftist movements.[19]

17 'Menteri agama S. Zuhri: Kampanje2 anti-PKI hanja tambah kompak barisan PKI', *Harian Rakjat*, 21-5-1965.

18 'Team PB Front Nasional: Biang "peristiwa Kanigoro" tokoh ex-Masjumi & subversi', *Harian Rakjat*, 11-2-1965.

19 In addition to the massacres, violence, and discrimination aimed at purging communists and their families or affiliates, Soeharto's regime also used various forms of propaganda. In a state-funded film, *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (The betrayal of G30S/PKI), a depiction of PKI members trampling the Quran in Kanigoro served as the opening scene, emphasizing how anti-religious the PKI was. For decades, this film indoctrinated the public in justifying Soeharto's purge of communists, which had been achieved through the killings of PKI members or individuals accused of supporting communism. See Cribb 2002; Roosa 2006; Farid 2005; McGregor 2009; Pohlman 2013; Hearman 2018; Melvin 2018.

Other evidence of intense conflicts based on strong religious sentiment, which used the narrative of the PKI as anti-religious, also appeared in cultural spheres. Some NU *kiai*, as cited by Ricklefs (2012) and McGregor (2009), claimed that the PKI had insulted the Islamic faith through their traditional *ludruk* theatre performance, *Matine Gusti Allah* (The death of God).

As mentioned, the anti-communist narrative produced in this period was more intense than it had been during the early days of the nationalist movement. However, intense conflicts, especially between the communists and the Islamists, did not necessarily develop. This was not just because what Hongxuan (2023:277) called an 'adaptive approach' was no longer in place but more so because of the dynamics of contestation. The late colonial period in Indonesia, extending into the first decade of independence, was characterized by mobilization efforts aimed at engaging the masses, which thereby facilitated the emergence of compromising ideologies. The 1960s, meanwhile, saw a significant shift in political movements and marked notable divisions in their ideological frameworks. Islam continued to grow as a strong social movement and showed signs of reaching state power, partly due to the role of the Kementerian Agama (Ministry of Religious Affairs). Yet, this development did not automatically transform socially based Islamic groups into ones that wielded significant political power. Religious narratives were, however, able to spread far and wide and fuel mobilizations.

5 Contextualizing the History

When the notorious blasphemy case of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) erupted and led to huge mass protests that gained national and international attention in 2016–2017, a great deal of focus was placed on the legal aspects of the case and its implications for democratic politics. The prevailing narrative suggested that the rise of Islamic radicalism would lead to the further institutionalization of Islam, thus posing a threat to political pluralism and potentially undermining democracy.[20] As this article has shown, large-scale religious mobilizations are not a new phenomenon, and they have historically been intertwined with power contests that have shaped the extent to which such mobilizations translate into state policies and regulations.

20 For this case, see Greg Fealy (2016), 'Bigger than Ahok: Explaining the 2 December mass rally', *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 7-12-2016. https://indonesiaatmelbourne.unimelb.edu.au/bigger-than-ahok-explaining-jakartas-2-december-mass-rally/ (accessed 2-2-2025); Lindsey and Pausacker 2016; Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018; Hadiz 2018; Tyson 2021; Peterson 2022.

Almost a century before the Ahok case, the *Djawi Hisworo* affair of 1918 demonstrated how religious mobilization could serve as an instrument for political manoeuvring. Tjokroaminoto, the leader of the SI, played a pivotal leadership role in mobilizing people to protest about the blasphemy accusation. This is comparable to the role played by Rizieq Shihab as the leader of the Aksi Bela Islam (Action to Defend Islam) demonstrations that took place ahead of the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. While the Ahok case was taken to court because its prosecution aligned with the interests of the contending political elites, the *Djawi Hisworo* affair, in contrast, did not attract colonial interest and was never prosecuted. However, both cases share a similarity in that the respective religious mobilizations failed to forge a cohesive political force to allow them to influence state policy and further institutionalize Islam. This was despite the substantial numbers of supporters involved at the time. This limitation, arising from the lack of a coherent social base, ultimately restricted the ability of the respective mobilizations to achieve an outcome beyond the imprisonment of the accused blasphemer, as seen in the Ahok case. Prior to Ahok, other cases had exhibited similar patterns of religious mobilization, and these had translated into policies and institutionalization that resembled those of the past. For example, the accommodation of Islamic groups, which has shaped the governance of religious affairs in Indonesia, is a legacy that persisted into the democratic period. From 1942 to 1945, the Japanese authorities implemented a policy of accommodating Islam, which somewhat resembled what occurred in Indonesia under both Soeharto (in the 1990s) and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2004–2014) (Van Bruinessen 2013).

As mentioned above, during the mid 1960s, Islamic groups were among the civilian militias mobilized by the military to help Soeharto rise to power by annihilating the communists. Islamic mobilizations did not end in 1965, and the state's response to Islamic demands also fluctuated during the New Order, depending on the extent to which Soeharto found Muslims useful in bolstering his political legitimacy. The authoritarian regime employed a strategy that combined both accommodation and repression towards Islamic groups (A'yun 2021).

Meanwhile, the events that unfolded in post-1998 Indonesia, especially under President Yudhoyono's administration, displayed a consistent tendency to favour Islam in public as a strategic political back-up. His presidency marked a period when the institutionalization of Islam intensified (see Van Bruinessen 2013; Künkler and Stepan 2013; Bourchier 2019). During President Yudhoyono's tenure, the number of regulations based on Islam, including those enacted at the regional level, also significantly increased. As noted by Bourchier (2019:15), Yudhoyono conceded power and legitimacy to Islamic political forces and went

'further than any previous president to empower conservative Muslim interests and integrate them into his administration'.

All these contemporary events indicate a broad picture of the dynamic between Islamic mobilizations and the institutionalization of religion. Such mobilizations frequently served as instruments used by religious figures to forge alliances with the ruling elites in pursuit of their interests. Religious mobilizations in electoral contexts are also evident in other religions[21] and are not necessarily unique to Islam. Reflecting on the case of Italian Catholic bishops in the post-war era, for example, Pulejo (2023:1500) indicated two key factors that enabled religious mobilizations: 'ideological congruence and organizational capacity'. He believes the former to be a necessary condition, while the latter involves the development of political networks and the establishment of effective campaign resources (Pulejo 2023:1500). Although the initial motivations behind religious mobilizations were rooted in a sacred cause, they often concluded with a political pragmatism shaped by the interests of the ruling elites.

6 Conclusion

The ways in which the state controls religion are evident in Indonesia, formerly the Dutch East Indies, particularly in terms of how state authorities respond to religious mobilizations, especially from Islamic groups. The history of religious mobilizations in various periods in the country illustrates how the elites' interests determine whether these mobilizations evolve into significant social forces that are capable of influencing state institutions, especially with regard to religious matters. It is argued here that religious mobilizations tend to diminish, or even disappear completely, when they fail to align with the interests of the ruling elites. Conversely, when mobilizations correspond with the interests of those in power, the institutionalization of religion likely takes place. By analysing three crucial phases of Islamic mobilization in Indonesia's post-Ethical Policy era, this article provides a chronology of past events to contextualize those settings that made it possible for the concerns of such mobilizations to result in the institutionalization of Islam.

In the 1920s, as part of the first phase, various groups contributed to the emergence of modern political movements. The potential alliance between Islamists and leftists, as seen in the Sarekat Islam case, arose from the need for consolidation among groups that, despite their differing political and eco-

21 See, for example, Kalyvas 2003; Hamayotsu 2011; Jaffrelot 2013; Pulejo 2023.

nomic interests, were united by shared narratives centred on anti-colonial causes. This early mobilization phase, however, did not result in a strong alliance among these groups, despite their shared cause of opposing colonialism. Although Islamic groups continued to be monitored by the colonial authorities, there was no strong enforcement in response to religious issues that did not pose a direct political or economic threat to Dutch interests, as can be observed from the *Djawi Hisworo* affair.

In the second phase, the Japanese military authorities seemed to largely accommodate Islamic groups, as it considered Islam a significant social entity. It also institutionalized the religion through the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Nonetheless, this institutionalization, as part of the strategy to control Islamic groups, did not necessarily empower Muslims as a significant political force. The privileges and concessions granted by the colonial government only benefited the leaders of Islamic groups.

The institutionalization of religion within the state, as observed in the 1960s in Indonesia, represents the third phase and created greater opportunities for political and religious elites to contest power and material resources. The year 1965 can be seen as significant in terms of the contests among elites that made possible the enactment of the highly contentious Presidential Determination 1 of 1965. This determination was linked to earlier phases in the development of Islamic nationalist movements, during which mobilizations were significant. Meanwhile, the Japanese army's accommodation of Islamic groups contributed to a legacy of sectarian responses from the state.

These intertwined relationships between Islamic mobilizations, state accommodations (or adoptions) of Islamic groups, and elite contests are evident in Indonesia's contemporary democratic context. These relationships were predominantly motivated by political and economic factors, rather than by any pursuit of holy purposes. Understanding the historical traces of Islamic mobilizations across these three phases, as described in this article, helps us to understand such factors and how they are manifested.

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