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James B. Hoesterey

Globalization and Islamic Indigenization in Southeast Asian Muslim Communities

Emory University Atlanta, AS
jbhoesterey@emory.edu

Abstract

Islamic transmission always occurred in local contexts across the Indonesian archipelago, yet also intimately connected to global changes such as trade routes, political patronage of foreign scholars, and later the invention of the steamboat and opening of the Suez Canal. In this article I would like to explore what the late scholar and former Indonesian president, KH Abdurrahman Wahid, referred to as *pribumisasi Islam* – or, the "indigenization of Islam." Such an endeavor requires understanding diverse social contexts of transmission of Islamic concepts that, on occasion, are considered at odds with local custom and social institutions, while also understanding how the tremendous commensurability of Islam and local customs allowed Islam to spread across much of the archipelago relatively peacefully. The indigenization of Islam, however, is not simply a matter of the past. Indonesian Muslims today still must reconcile religious devotion with historical links and contemporary ritual practice in present-day Saudi Arabia, while also understanding themselves as citizen-believers in the modern, postcolonial nation-state of Indonesia. This article considers more recent historical formations of what contemporary Indonesians refer to as unique forms of "Indonesian Islam," variously described as "Islam of the Archipelago" (*Islam Nusantara*), "Progressive Islam" (*Islam Berkemajuan*), "Smiling Islam," and still many others. After considering local contexts contiguous with particular ethnic groups or political kingdoms, in the latter sections of the article I am more concerned

with how Indonesians – as citizens from diverse ethnic groups -- articulate and identify with a national, even exceptional, form of Indonesian Islam.

Keywords: Islam, Indonesia, Indigenization of Islam, Islam Nusantara, Globalization

Abstrak

Transmisi Islam selalu terjadi dalam konteks lokal di seluruh kepulauan Indonesia. Namun ia juga terkait erat dengan perubahan global, seperti jalur perdagangan, patronase politik ulama asing, dan kemudian penemuan kapal uap dan pembukaan Terusan Suez. Dalam artikel ini saya ingin mengeksplorasi apa yang disebut oleh seorang ulama dan mantan presiden Indonesia, KH Abdurahman Wahid sebagai pribumisasi Islam. Upaya semacam itu membutuhkan pemahaman konteks sosial yang beragam dari transmisi konsep-konsep Islam yang, kadang-kadang, dianggap bertentangan dengan adat dan institusi sosial setempat, sementara juga memahami bagaimana kesepadanan yang luar biasa antara Islam dan adat istiadat setempat yang memungkinkan Islam menyebar di sebagian besar di nusantara secara damai. Pribumi Islam, bagaimanapun, bukan hanya masalah masa lalu. Muslim Indonesia saat ini masih harus mendamaikan pengabdian agama dengan hubungan sejarah dan praktik ritual kontemporer di Arab Saudi saat ini, sementara juga memahami diri mereka sebagai warga negara yang percaya pada negara-bangsa modern pasca kolonial Indonesia. Artikel ini membahas formasi sejarah yang lebih baru dari apa yang oleh orang Indonesia kini disebut sebagai bentuk unik dari "Islam Indonesia", yang secara beragam digambarkan sebagai Islam Nusantara, Islam Progresif (Islam Berkemajuan), Islam Tersenyum, dan masih banyak lainnya. Setelah mempertimbangkan konteks lokal yang bersebelahan dengan kelompok etnis atau kerajaan politik tertentu, di bagian akhir artikel saya lebih memperhatikan bagaimana orang Indonesia, sebagai warga negara dari berbagai kelompok etnis, mengartikulasikan dan mengidentifikasi dengan bentuk nasionalisme, Islam Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Islam, Indonesia, Pribumisasi Islam, Islam Nusantara, Globalisasi

جيمس ب. هوستيري

إن عملية انتشار الإسلام في أرخبيل إندونيسيا مازالت مستمرّة في السياق المحلي. فهي متعلّقة أيضا بالتغيّرات العالمية، مثل الطرق التجارية، والرعاية السياسية للعلماء الأجانب، وأيضا اكتِشاف السفينة البخارية وافتتاح قناة السويس. في هذه الورقة، أودّ أن أسلّط الضوء على ما يُسمّى بمصطلح (بريبوميساسي إسلام)، أو تطبيق التعاليم الإسلامية بالتثاقف مع الثقافات والقيم المحلية، حسب ما ذكره العالم الإندونيسي الكبير والرئيس الإندونيسي الراحل الكياهي عبد الرحمن وحيد. فهذه المحاولة تحتاج الى فهم السياق الإجتماعي المتعدّد، والانتقال الفكري للمفاهيم الإسلامية التي قد يظنّه البعض أنها متصادمة مع التقاليد والمؤسسات الإجتماعية المحلية. ولكن في ناحية أخرى، هذه المحاولة أيضا نجحت في وضع الدين الإسلامي مع

التقاليد والقيم المحلية بشكل سوي حتى انتشر الإسلام بنجاح في أنحاء الأرخبيل الإندونيسي بسلام ووئام. فعملية (بريبوميساسي إسلام) ليست مجرد قضية الماضي التاريخي. فالمسلمون الإندونيسيون الآن مازالوا يحاولون على المصالحة بين العبودية الدينية مع العلاقة التاريخية والممارسة السياسية الدينية المعاصرة في المملكة العربية السعودية الآن، وفي نفس الوقت، كانوا يحاولون أيضا على فهم هويتهم كمواطنين للجمهورية الإندونيسية التي تؤمن بالقيم الوطنية الحديثة في عصر ما بعد الاستعمار. وهذا البحث يقوم بدراسة التشكيل التاريخي الجديد عما يسمى بظاهرة (الإسلام الإندونيسي) الفريدة، والتي يعبره بعض الإندونيسيين كالإسلام الأرخبيلي، والإسلام التقدّمي، والإسلام المبتسم، وغير ذلك من المصطلحات الأخرى. وبعد دراسة السياق المحلي، والمجموعة العرقية، و السلطات السياسية؛ ففي آخر الورقة أقوم أيضا بتحليل ميول الإندونيسيين كالمواطنين المتكوّنين من عدة المجموعات العرقية، تتعلّق بطريقة تعبيرهم عن الإسلام والوطنية معا.

الكلمات الإرشادية: الإسلام الإندونيسي، بريبوميساسي إسلام، إسلام الأرخبيل، العولمة

Introduction

For centuries, what is now commonly referred to in the Cold War-inflected English parlance as "Southeast Asia" has been connected to various regions of the world -- from the transmission of Islam from diverse places in the Middle East, South Asia, and China, to engagements with European colonialism and, more recently, post-independence foreign relations in various regional, multilateral, and global contexts. From the eighth century Muslim traders were traversing the ports of what is now called Southeast Asia, and by the turn of the fourteenth century there is evidence for indigenous Muslim communities.[1] Such economic, cultural, and religious exchange over the centuries has not, despite the warnings of some globalization theorists, led to a homogenization of Southeast Asia, much less a homogenization of Islamic ideas and practices. Rather than coming as a single, homogenous and authoritative source, the spread of Islam – and Muslim leaders -- across mainland and island Southeast Asia came from many directions and influences from Mecca and Medina to the Swahili Coast, Yemen, India, the Persian Gulf, Patani networks, and as far as China. Whereas some transmission of Islamic ideas from the Middle East (often led by Southeast Asians, or *Jawi*, pilgrims, scholars, and travelers who return home) have led to contentious debates and power struggles in particular moments and places, such as the struggle between "old" and "young" movements among Minangkabau in West Sumatra, more recently Southeast Asia – especially Muslim Southeast Asia – has experienced other forms of cultural influence and exchange with East Asian countries like Japan and Korea as

1 Feener 2019, "Islam in Southeast Asia to c. 1800," Oxford Research Encyclopedia. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.40

well as Western countries from the United States to former European colonial powers.[2] As a nation-state, Indonesia has also begun to come to terms with Chinese Muslims as part of the long histories of Islam and Muslims in the archipelago. Along the way, Southeast Asia's ethnic communities have retained a sense of cultural, national, and religious identities that are influenced, yet never entirely determined, by outside forces.

Islamic transmission always occurred in local contexts across the archipelago, yet also intimately connected to global changes such as trade routes, political patronage of foreign scholars, and later the invention of the steamboat and opening of the Suez Canal.[3] In this chapter I would like to explore what the late scholar and former Indonesian president, KH Abdurahman Wahid, referred to as *pribumisasi Islam* – or, the "indigenization of Islam."[4] Such an endeavor requires understanding diverse social contexts of transmission of Islamic concepts that, on occasion, are considered at odds with local custom and social institutions, while also understanding how the tremendous commensurability of Islam and local customs allowed Islam to spread across much of the archipelago relatively peacefully. Arguably the most classic example of this in the popular imagination of contemporary Indonesian Muslims are the stories of the nine saints (*walisongo*) who spread Islamic principles within the conceptual and cosmological frameworks of local Hindu-Buddhist and animist traditions.

The indigenization of Islam, however, is not simply a matter of the past. As I will explore in detail, Indonesian Muslims today still must reconcile religious devotion with historical links and contemporary ritual practice in present-day Saudi Arabia, while also understanding themselves as citizen-believers in the modern, postcolonial nation-state of Indonesia. To this end, I also consider more recent historical formations of what contemporary Indonesians refer to as unique forms of "Indonesian Islam," variously described in current parlance by a variety of religious leaders as "Islam of the Archipelago" (*Islam Nusantara*), "Progressive Islam" (*Islam Berkemajuan*), "Smiling Islam," and still many other descriptors. After considering local contexts contiguous with particular ethnic groups or political kingdoms, in the latter sections of the chapter I am more concerned with how Indonesians – as citizens from diverse ethnic groups -- articulate and identify with a national, even exceptional, form of Indonesian Islam.

Proponents of an Indonesian Islam maintain that Islam itself is one, and that they are decidedly *not* forming a new school of thought (*madhab*). Instead, they maintain the importance of diversity within the everyday realization of Islam's oneness. Drawing from the Qur'anic notion of Islam is a "blessing for all worlds," since the early 2000s the government of democratic Indonesia has strategically deployed Islamic theological reasoning to understand and to manage the multi-ethnic, multi-religious nation – with hundreds of

2 For Malaysia, see Michael G. Peletz, *Sharia Transformations: Cultural Politics and the Rebranding of an Islamic Judiciary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020). For the influence of K-Pop, see Ariel Heryanto, *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Screen Culture* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014).

3 Eric Tagliocozzo, *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). See also Chiara Formichi, *Islam and Asia: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

4 As a way to de-center the Arabic language in the study of Muslim life worlds, especially in the context of a chapter about centers and peripheries in Islamic globalization, I use the Indonesian translation and transliteration for both native Malay and Indonesian language words as well as for those Arabic words that have been imported and transliterated into the Indonesian national language which uses roman alphabet and does not use diacritical marks.

ethnic groups and different languages – that now represents the largest, Muslim-majority democracy in the world. Moreover, the idea of a "moderate" Indonesian Islam has also served as one of the pillars of Indonesian foreign policy and public diplomacy over the last two decades.[5] Indeed, despite the politicization of Islam during recent decades, the fact that nearly all variants of Islamic expression are indeed present in contemporary Indonesia is a testament to possible futures of Indonesia's democratic turn. Also, indicative of this growing indigenous sense of religious authority, some in Malaysia and Indonesia now wonder publicly about what they view as the *Arabisasi*, or "Arabization," of local customary tradition (*adat*). Building on the work of theorists of globalization, I will demonstrate how global transmissions can be multi-directional and counter-hegemonic. Whatever the position to other authoritative voices within Islam, what is clear is that Islam continues to serve as an ethical model of everyday life for the 250 million Southeast Asian Muslims who comprise approximately a quarter of all Muslims worldwide.

As theories of globalization have developed, scholars have increasingly recognized the multi-directional nature of globalization, as well as local resistance to various forms of global hegemonic (and purportedly homogenizing) capitalism. As a conceptual frame for this chapter -- for understanding integration, indigenization, and globalization – I find it useful to draw from a collection of scholars across the social sciences and humanities who think in terms of "global assemblages" – unique, multivalent, and multi-directional moments of economic, cultural, religious, and political currents that find traction (or don't) in decidedly local contexts.[6] With such an approach, we can begin to account for both specific local practices as well as broader regional and global transformations and flows of people, ideas, and capital. As the process of Islamization has been neither seamless nor singular, the concept of "global assemblages" affords an analytical lens to understand the multiple waves and transformations brought by the spread of Islam over the long course of history and wider sense of a global Islamic umma, whilst also attending to the very specific cultural contexts, civic organizations, and political contexts.

Power, Mobility, and Islam's longue durée in the Malay Archipelago

Historians have traced several links between the historical origins of Islam in Mecca and Medina and the varied faraway ports, places, and institutions in which Islam began to spread and eventually thrive in the Malay Archipelago.[7] Without the space to elaborate in great detail, it is worth noting that various theories have accounted for the early spread and socio-religious transformations related to the spread of Islam and its consolidation into

5 Delphine Alles, *Transnational Islamic Actors and Indonesia's Foreign Policy: Transcending the State* (London: Routledge, 2015).

6 Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (eds), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

7 Azyumardi Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia: Networks of Malay-Indonesian and Middle Eastern Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004) ; Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Eric Tagliocozzo, *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; Francis R. Bradley, *Forging Islamic Power and Place* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016); Ronnit Ricci, *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Martin van Bruinessen, "Origins and Development of the Sufi orders (tarekat) in Southeast Asia. *Studia Islamika* (Jakarta), 1, no. 1 (1994): 1-23.; R. Michael Feener and Michael F. Laffan, "Sufi Scents across the Indian Ocean: Yemeni Hagiography and the Earliest History of Southeast Asian Islam," *Archipel* 70, no. 1 (January 2005): p. 185-208.

myriad political and economic systems in Southeast Asia.[8] Unfortunately, strong historical evidence is lacking for the earlier centuries of contact and transmission. By the time one of Islam's more renowned traveling scholars, Ibn Battuta, spent time in the Malay Archipelago as part of his own voyages during the fourteenth century, there already had been centuries of uneven transmission in localized settings of port cities and, eventually, the court systems of various kingdoms and rulers.

The very global nature of Islam as coming from elsewhere resonates quite well with the contours of theories of political power across Southeast Asia that privilege what is perceived as "foreign."[9] As historian of religions Michael Feener reminds us, however, Islam in contemporary Indonesia came from multiple elsewheres and was transmitted in diverse settings across the archipelago. Whereas one can trace important connections to Mecca and Medina, some of the earliest textual evidence was written in Persian (which suggests genealogies to Shi'i thought, even if not explicitly so).[10] Whilst once Indonesian students in Cairo's Al-Azhar University helped forge a nationalist, anti-colonial spirit, more recently Indonesian diplomats, politicians, and journalists have trained their Egyptian friends in matters of democratization, de-militarization, and civil society. Indeed, from various religious and cultural trends one realizes Indonesians feel an increasing sense of confidence in Indonesian Islam. In what follows, I offer several brief case studies of the global transmission and local constitution – as well as contestation – of Islamic ideas about family law, customary inheritance, religious authority, and everyday practice of Islamic ethics.

The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam in the Malay Archipelago

One of the looming questions in the historiography of the spread of Islam among indigenous Malay communities of the archipelago concerns the role of Sufism, or *tasawuf*.[11] In what has become a classic article in the study of Islam in Southeast Asia, anthropologist-historian Martin van Bruinessen challenges earlier theories that make a strong case for the role of Sufism and tarekat networks in the spread of Islam. van Bruinessen cedes that the early centuries of Islamization across the archipelago most likely did happen around the same time as the growth of Sufism in the medieval period. van Bruinessen also acknowledges the role of various tarekat in the genealogies of religious authority and practice over the last few centuries. In particular van Bruinessen acknowledges the claims of A.C. Milner that "the cosmological and metaphysical doctrines of Ibn Arabi's Sufism could easily be assimilated to Indic and autochthonous mystical ideas prevalent in the region," but goes on to argue that the historical data does not support the thesis that Sufism played a vital role in the early centuries of Islamization, maintaining instead that, observing that "[i]t is only later in

8 Syed Farid Alatas, "Notes on Various Theories Regarding the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago," *The Muslim World* 75 (1985), p. 162-175.

9 Stanley J. Tambiah, "The Galactic Polity: The Structure of Traditional Kingdoms in Southeast Asia," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 293, no. 1 (July 1977): p. 69-97.

10 Feener, "Islam," 2019; for a review of several academic theories of the transmission of Islam, see also Siti Sarah Muwahidah, "For the Love of *Ahl al-Bayt*: Negotiating Shi'ism in Indonesia," *PhD diss.*, Emory University 2020. Muwahidah's recent dissertation provides an excellent historical analysis that reviews theories about the transmission and role of ostensibly Shi'i thought and practices as well as the more recent sectarianization in Indonesia that has ossified what had been more fluid divisions in Islamic thought, ritual, and practice.

11 Anthony H. Johns, "Islam in Southeast Asia: Reflections and New Directions," *Indonesia* 19 (1975), p. 33-55.

Javanese writings that we encounter a much stronger presence of mystical teachings. As for the Sufi orders, it appears that these did not find a mass following before the late 18th and 19th centuries."[12] This is not to say, however, that Sufi orders and non-tarekat-based mystical practices did not play important roles in more recent centuries, especially with respect to the anti-colonial struggle.

van Bruinessen -- in his important contribution published in the inaugural issue of what has become one of the most prominent Indonesian journals in Islamic studies -- does a masterful job recounting the various Sufi leaders whose ideas flourished in various parts of the archipelago. In particular, van Bruinessen examines the legacy of Hamzah Fansuri, famed Sufi poet whose work carried on Ibn Arabi's concept of the "oneness of being." Although Sufism, tarekat, and trade guilds may not have been the main structural drivers of the early periods of Islamization, van Bruinessen observes that such mystical ideas, as expressed in Fansuri's rhythmic poetic style (*sya'ir*), "easily lend themselves to a pantheistic interpretation."[13] In this respect, one can better comprehend the broader theological shifts from Indic and Hindu-Buddhist traditions into the profound monotheism of Islam.

To better understand these historical shifts with respect to Islam among the Javanese, the late eminent historian M.C. Ricklefs has argued that the very idea of Javanese Islam – stated as such a matter of fact through the work of Clifford Geertz and others -- does not actually have deep historical roots.[14] Ricklefs observes that it was only around the beginning of the eighteenth century that Javanese-speaking peoples on Java began to think of themselves as a singular ethnic entity defined also in terms of their adherence to Islam whilst also making concessions for local Javanese spirits and cosmology, what Ricklefs famously referred to as the "Mystic Synthesis."[15] As Indonesian travel to Mecca and Medina increased during the nineteenth century, some pilgrims and scholars returned espousing reformist beliefs acquired abroad and were eager to "purify" what they deemed as cultural practices with no basis in Islamic scripture. The following section provides a case study of reformist transformations in which a new generation of religious scholars staked claims on religious and political authority among the Muslim, yet also matrilineal, ethnic group of the Minangkabau in West Sumatra.

Muslims, Matriarchs, and Muhammadiyah

The Minangkabau people of West Sumatra speak with great pride about their unique combination of their religion of Islam and customary tradition of matriliny. As one Minangkabau couplets states, "Customary law depends on religious law, religious law is based on the Qur'an." As the historian Jeffrey Hadler so wonderfully demonstrated, for centuries each generation of Minangkabau have given their own meaning(s) to this couplet, often in conversation with religio-political conflict -- from the Padri Wars of the early nineteenth century, where Muslim clerics championing their version of shariah battled with the elder, traditionalist clerics and nobility who eventually solicited Dutch intervention to ensure victory, to the *Kaum Muda* reformist movement that sought to purify Islamic

12 van Bruinessen, "Origins ," p. 2.

13 van Bruinessen, "Origins," p. 3.

14 Ricklefs. Cf. Clifford Geertz. Religion of Java.

15 M.C. Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk, CT: Eastbridge, 2006);

practice from Sufism and customary traditions, or *adat*.[16]

For the Minangkabau, the rice fields and family "great house" (*rumah gadang*) are passed down to the daughters of the family. Minangkabau are also matrilocal, where the customary pattern (thought certainly with exceptions) is for the husband to move in with his wife's family. As Minangkabau sociologist Mochtar Naim described, by early adolescence young Minangkabau men would begin to sleep in the prayer house where they learned Qur'anic recitation in the evenings.[17] With no home or land of their own, young men were expected to venture away from the homeland – *merantau* – as a rite of passage to prove their worth, fulfill their moral and financial obligations to family and homeland, and eventually return home to marry. During the nineteenth century, many young Minangkabau men sought their fortunes in Mecca and Medina. Some, such as Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi, went on to become a well-known scholar in Mecca during late nineteenth-early twentieth century, and inspired many leaders of what would later become the reformist movement Muhammadiyah.

As renowned Minangkabau historian Taufik Abdullah has argued, the perceived incongruity between Islam and matrilineal inheritance was one of the concerns of young reformist Minangkabau men – *kaum muda* -- who had gone abroad to centers of Islamic learning in the Middle East, were inspired by the reformist thought of Muhammad Abduh and others, and later returned with a modernist paradigm, intent to "purify" local custom of its traditionalist and Sufi elements and institutions.[18] For this youth movement, Abdullah observes, "The purification and the rejection of *taqlid* were considered the first steps toward the rediscovery of the true ethics of Islam, which in the past had brought Muslims to the peak of civilization and temporal power. …As part of the conflict with the traditionalist, *Kaum Tua* religious scholars, the modernists began to attack traditional religious practices, such as the way to celebrate the Prophet's birthday."[19]

We must also recall that such reform movements were happening during the colonial and early nationalist and revolutionary period of the early twentieth-century that pitted not just colonial subjects against the Dutch, but also created religio-political cleavages between rival visions of Islam and against various strands of communist peasants who had their own plans for this nation-in-waiting. Somewhat to their own chagrin, the Dutch found themselves being pulled into religio-political contestations they had hoped to avoid. The reformist Muslim youth across the Dutch East Indies, a burgeoning but also varied and internally divided bunch, were decidedly anti-colonial in approach. Abdoel Muis, a prominent young reformist and Minangkabau literary figure, was also involved in the Dutch East Indies-wide voluntary organization-turned-political party *Sarekat Islam*, or "Islamic Union."

16 Jeffrey Hadler, *Muslims and Matriarchs: Cultural Resilience in Indonesia through Jihad and Colonialism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

17 Mochtar Naim, "Merantau: Causes and Effects of Minangkabau Voluntary Migration," *Institute of Southeast Asia Occasional Paper Series* no. 5 (May 1971): p. 1-19.

18 Taufik Abdullah, 1971. *School and Politics: The* Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, Southeast Asia Program. It is important to note, though beyond the scope of this chapter, that Taufik Abdullah – a Minangkabau historian trained at Cornell University – also challenged what he viewed as a Western infatuation with the supposed incommensurability between Islam and local custom. See Taufik Abdullah, 1966. "*Adat* and Islam: An Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau Society." *Indonesia* 2: p. 1-24.

19 Abdullah, "School," p. 14-15.

As Taufik Abdullah astutely recognizes, this historical moment witnessed the flourishing of voluntary organizations, a modern moment in which "the voluntary association was now seen as the best method for achieving economic and educational progress… [it] as idealized as the best instrument through which the objectives of its members could be advanced."[20] The young reformists set out to establish a network of schools and social institutions. By 1912, diverse reformist movements across the archipelago united under arguably the most important reformist organization in modern Indonesia – the nearly thirty million members who make up Muhammadiyah. Whereas Muhammadiyah was founded by Ahmad Dahlan in the Central Javanese royal court city of Yogyakarta, its founding must be understood amidst the broader emphasis on voluntary (often anti-colonial) associations of that time.

Over a century later, Muhammadiyah -- as an overarching, yet internally diverse organization -- continues to articulate both a reformist theology and social justice advocacy in terms of a broad network of thousands of schools, clinics, and hospitals. Further still, through *zakat* donations Muhammadiyah has become one of the largest providers of emergency and philanthropic donations.[21] Muhammadiyah has survived colonial, revolutionary, independence, authoritarian, and most recently democratic institutions, all the while maintaining its vision for progressive approaches and reformist ideology. During the latter years of Suharto's authoritarian New Order (1966-1998), Muhammadiyah opted to engage the regime for various reasons, among them was the ability to advance Islamic principles into state governance and civil society.[22] Suharto was famously known for his adherence to Javanese understandings of power, the cultivation of inner potency, and the management of rival factions. As his political leverage with the army and other powerful factions began to ebb during the last decade of his rule, however, Suharto emboldened some of the very same religious reformist leaders he had previously held in check, and by the early 1990s Suharto went on a symbolic hajj pilgrimage, added "Muhammad" to his name, and made possible the founding of the nation's first Islamic bank, newspaper, and intellectual organization.

In this respect, Muhammadiyah represents an institutional example of how Islamic factions can exist in both spaces of precarity and preference under authoritarian regimes, courting political favor as part of a broader vision to Islamize society, whilst also working to purify Islam from local custom. While this may seem paradoxical, Muhammadiyah provides an interesting historical example of a religious institution's capacity to make political accommodations to local power structures whilst also advocating for the erasure of local customs and cosmologies. As the New Order regime collapsed, and B.J. Habibie became President, Muhammadiyah intellectuals and clerics embraced the democratic experiment with great fervor. Rather than espousing the merits of an Islamic state, the central board of Muhammadiyah joined with international NGO The Asia Foundation to create civic education textbooks on democracy, pluralism, and civic society.[23] Importantly,

20 Abdullah, "School," p. 17.

21 Hilman Latief. "Marketising Piety through Charitable Work: Islamic Charities and the Islamisation of Middle Class Families in Indonesia," in *Religion and the Morality of the Market: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. Filippo Osella and Daromir Rudnyckyj (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 196-216.

22 Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 3-36.

23 Abdul Rozak, Wahdi Sayuti, and Andi Syafrani (eds), *Pendidikan Kewargaan: Demokrasi, Hak Asasi Manusia, dan Masyarakat Madani* [Civic Education: Democracy, Human Rights, and Civil Society] (Jakarta: Asia

these textbooks presented these concepts with Qur'anic referents and examples from the hadith tradition, thereby rejecting the notion that these principles were simply Western imports. To this day, Muhammadiyah's network of schools and civic institutions continue as an important bedrock of Indonesian civil society.

The theme chosen for Muhammadiyah's 2015 Congress (held every five years) was "Progressive Islam" – *Islam Berkemajuan* – a message that aspires to unite its own internal divisions representative of theological and political gradations of reformism. Whereas the reformist and traditionalists strands of Islam do indeed vie for religious authority, the national narrative about Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama is that they serve complementary roles as examples of what Islamic civil society might look like in a democratic, Muslim-majority nation. Importantly, Muhammadiyah intellectual leaders have formulated what some refer to as *fikih kebinekaan* -- a "jurisprudence of diversity" – as a way to reconcile Islamic jurisprudence, national citizenship, religious pluralism, and non-Muslim leadership.[24] While both NU and Muhammadiyah have been integral civil society organizations from the colonial period, their central boards have often taken different approaches and regional variation certainly exists. Tensions do remain regarding innovation and correct practice. As detailed below, the formation and subsequent religious and political activities of each organization reflect a broader competition for religious legitimacy and authority.

Nahdlatul Ulama and the Traditionalist Response

The reformist messages of Muslims returning home from study in the Middle East did not resonate equally across the archipelago. As we learned in the case of the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, existing networks of power and patronage contested reformist theological claims, and until today there is great diversity of Islamic practice and ideology even within a particular region. Traditionalist scholars who served as religious teachers in Islamic boarding schools maintained the importance of learning classical treatises on Islamic philosophy, theology, and law. In 1926 (fourteen years after the founding of Muhammadiyah), traditionalist clerics in the eastern Javanese city of Jombang founded what is now the world's largest Islamic organization – Nahdlatul Ulama, or "Revival of the Ulama." Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) articulated a classicalist-traditionalist response to reformist clerics that emphasized how Islamic ethics have historically shown great respect for local traditions as long as they did not explicitly conflict with Islamic teachings. NU leaders glorified the "nine saints" whose respect for local traditions was precisely the avenue for Islamization. The important NU cleric Abdurrahman Wahid later articulated this concept of localizing and indigenizing Islam with the now well-known phrase in Indonesia, *pribumisasi Islam*, "the indigenization of Islam."[25] Wahid's concept builds on a longer historical connection between Islam and nation, rooted in the anti-colonial efforts of Wahid's own grandfather Hasyim Asy'ari, who issued a fatwa proclaiming that "love

Foundation and Prenada Media, 2000 [2003]).

24 Wawan Gunawan Abd. Wahid, Muhammad Abdullah Darraz, and Ahmad Fuad Fanani, eds., *Fikih Kebinekaan: Pandangan Islam Indonesia tentang Umat, Kewargaan, dan Kepemimpinan Non-Muslim* [A Fiqh of Diversity: The Viewpoint of Indonesian Islam about the Muslim umma, Citizenship, and Non-Muslim Leadership], (Jakarta: Mizan, 2015).

25 KH Abdurrahman Wahid, "*Pribumisasi Islam*" in *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan*, eds. Muntaha Azhari and Abdul Mun'im Saleh. (Jakarta: P3M, 2015).

for one's homeland is part of one's faith."[26] In this section I explore how NU leaders in contemporary Indonesia leverage a form of classicalist, traditionalist Islam that seeks to both honor local practices that do not explicitly contradict Islam and to eradicate what they feel are extremist views of various strains of Salafist political Islam.

Well beyond Muhammadiyah reformist circles, the very notion of reformist Islam has broadened over the last several decades. Once authoritarian rule fell and new political parties began to flourish, an emerging amalgam of devout urban professionals that had been forming religious gatherings and prayer groups eventually founded the Islamic political party PKS, the Prosperity and Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*), modeled on the political Islam of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood.[27] Although global networks have long informed Islamic practices and ideologies in what we now call Indonesia, more recently traditionalist leaders invoke the term *Islam transnasional* (transnational Islam) to refer to what they describe as current impact of transnational political Islam and Islamic reformism – as manifest, for example, in Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia or other forms of Islamic practice endorsed by some monarchies of the Middle East -- that traditionalist leaders feel is incompatible with the cultural and historical context of the archipelago.

At the 2015 NU National Congress (*muktamar*), NU leaders and young intellectuals launched the concept of *Islam Nusantara*, or "Islam of the Archipelago" as a bulwark against what they feel to be the threat of various conservative, Salafist trends in the practice of Indonesian Islam (and its power within the mechanisms of the nation-state). [28] As the most recent iteration of the indigenization of Islam in Indonesia, NU leaders emphasize that this concept does not in any respect aim to offer a new *madhab*, and is fully within the purview of the Shafi'i school of Sunni thought. *Islam Nusantara* is not a typology, rather an affirmation of the very processes of localization that have occurred across the globe as people have converted to Islam and practiced the faith.

At the same time, however, the concept became the locus of great debate in Indonesia, especially on social media. As Saskia Schaefer astutely observes, "The term Islam Nusantara does not float in any non-political space, nor does it have only one meaning. It stands for a group of contemporary religious authorities who internally debate its exact meaning and externally take a stance against strict or "radical" interpretations of Islam."[29] Drawing on Goffman's notion of framing, Anthropologist Mark Woodward also contextualizes this concept within always-local political contexts, noting that "Islam Nusantara is a symbology created by leading NU *ulama* and academics that combines aspects of traditional Sunni Islam, including Sufism, Javanese and to a much lesser degree other Indonesian cultures in an attempt to counter Salafi-Wahhabi efforts to transform Indonesian Islam."[30]

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26 For a review of NU's understanding of this phrase, see https://www.nu.or.id/post/read/76064/hubbul-wathon-minal-iman-jargon-pertahankan-nkri.

27 Greg Fealy and Anthony Bubalo, *Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism, and Indonesia* (Sydney: Longueville Press, 2005).

28 Ahmad Sahal and Munawir Aziz, eds., *Islam Nusantara: Dari Ushul Fiqh Hingga Paham* Kebangsaan [From Fiqh to an Understanding of Nationhood] (Jakarta: Mizan Press, 2015).

29 Saskia Schaefer, 2021. "Islam Nusantara: The Conceptual Vocabulary of Indonesian Diversity." *Islam Nusantara: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 2: p. 1-16.

30 Mark Woodward, 2017. "Islam Nusantara: A Semantic and Symbolic Analysis" *Heritage of Islam Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage* 6 (2): p. 181-198.

Noting the flexibility implied in the concept of moderation, NU intellectual Ahmad Sahal notes – in a book launched as part of the 2015 NU congress -- that "NU and Muhammadiyah welcomed the [Indonesian] state ideology of *Pancasila* as a political system that not only does not contradict shariah, rather should be considered as an Islamic system in accordance with shariah."[31] In this book, editors solicited exegetical analysis from both traditionalist religious scholars *within* NU as well as others with more reformist affiliations with Muhammadiyah, such as Dr. Azyumardi Azra and Dr. Din Syamsuddin, who are trained historians who have studied the networks of Islamic scholarship and the development and adaptations of religious thought in the archipelago over the last several centuries. In this respect, NU leaders think of *Islam Nusantara* as a concept that Indonesia can promote on the global stage, not to be replicated elsewhere but instead as an exegetical commentary on the relationship between religion and homeland in Islamic theology and philosophy.[32]

Globalization, Mediation, and Market Islam

Whereas much analytical focus by historians and Islamicists has, understandably, privileged the role of religious scholars, pilgrims, and the development of Islamic institutions at the fore of academic inquiry, a deeper understanding of contemporary globalization and indigenization would also attend to the role of global capital, programs of economic liberalization, and cultural flows of pious fashion, pop culture, and digital mediation of religious authority and national citizen-believers.[33] These topics are seldom the focus of more conventional Islamic studies that are more often based in textualist approaches and Arabic or Persian language sources, yet a focus beyond the typical purview of Islamic studies – for example, from my discipline in Anthropology – can offer important vantage points to understand global flows and local understandings. In contemporary Indonesia, Muslims articulate, appropriate, and explicate various understandings of Muslim selves and the Islamic good life by drawing from diverse global influences, from what is understood as "Arab" dress and bodily decorum to the popularity of Korean soap operas and Western self-help psychology, each of which resonates with different dimensions of Islamic teachings and ritual practice as well as patterns of consumption and the pious aspirations of everyday life.

During Suharto's New Order regime, Islam was de-politicized and Islamic organizations were given leeway only insofar as they agreed to abandon any hope for an Islamic state and embrace the nationalist ideology. In this regard, Islam was permitted in terms of its cultural contributions to an Indonesian identity. In addition, national media was heavily censored by the state, and many Islamists found themselves sidelined, in exile, or behind bars. After the fall of Suharto in May of 1998, however, draconian media restrictions were lifted, television channels privatized and proliferated, and a new generation of Islamic programming emerged – from sermons and soap operas to preaching contests and *nasyid*

31 Ahmad Sahal, p. 24.

32 Equally important in this regard is the book by current grand mufti of Indonesia's national Istiqlal mosque, Nasaruddin Umar, *Islam Nusantara: Jalan Panjang Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia* [Islam Nusantara: The Long Road of Religious Moderation in Indonesia] (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2019).

33 Several scholars have published on the economic and cultural transformations of Islamic culture in Indonesia. For an especially illuminating collection, see Greg Fealy and Sally White, eds., *Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2008).

performances during Ramadhan. Arguably the most iconic of these new figures of religious authority during the hopeful early years of Indonesian independence was celebrity television preacher and self-help guru, K.H. Abdullah Gymnastiar, known popularly as Aa Gym, or "Elder brother Gym."[34]

In many respects, Gymnastiar was the perfect person for the time. With a youthful image, entrepreneurial spirit, and a knack for publicly performing piety, Gymnastiar appealed to the post-authoritarian spirit of political, cultural, and economic reform implicit in the slogan of newly-democratic Indonesia – *reformasi*. Gymnastiar's own life story -- of religious awakening, entrepreneurial struggle, filial piety, and eventual success – resonated with the aspirations and anxieties of middle-class Indonesians who sought both piety and prosperity. In the hopes that the Indonesian economy would no longer be controlled by cronyism, Indonesians admired Gymnastiar's trajectory from meatball seller to owner of a media and marketing empire.

During his popular Sunday afternoon television shows, Gymnastiar would often discuss his own family, especially highlighting his loving marriage and seven children. His public image as a loving husband and devoted family man made him especially popular among Indonesia's middle-class and middle-aged women who placed special value on contemporary ideas of romantic love, while also doing the emotional labor in the household.[35] Gymnastiar embodied a new ideal of soft Muslim masculinity and the open expression of male affection towards his wife. He was especially known for his how-to sermons about cultivating "harmonious families," or *keluarga sakinah*. In this respect, and as his nickname suggests, he was not just preacher, but also the symbolic older brother to whom one turned to for personal advice.

Gymnastiar was a preacher, self-help guru, and pop psychologist wrapped into a single figure of Islamic modernity. As self-help guru, Gymnastiar and his team of "trainers" led popular seminars on Islamic finance and entrepreneurial success through pious living and Islamic philanthropy. These training sessions were often a blend of Islamic sources with contemporary global discourses of popular psychology and human resources management. In such a reckoning, even the Prophet Muhammad was understood, in part, through his business and management acumen. Each week, hundreds of corporate trainees would visit his Islamic school, media studios, and training complex in Bandung, Daarut Tauhiid. His emphasis on personal comportment – discipline, hard work, punctuality – resonated with the global neoliberal discourses about individual autonomy and disciplined labor that were made popular during the liberalization of state-owned companies as part of the IMF financial bailout in 1998 prior to Suharto's downfall. As Daromir Rudnyckyj has astutely argued, however, Indonesians do not simply mimic the language of neoliberal economics.[36] Figures like Gymnastiar reflect the hybrid nature of a capitalist spirit blended with Islamic ethics. With respect to the running thread throughout this chapter, Gymnastiar's success is important insofar as it represents such a local, hybridization between Islamic ethics, global

34 For a more comprehensive analysis of Gymnastiar as a new figure of religious authority, see James Bourk Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

35 Regarding gender and emotional labor in Indonesia, see Carla Jones, "Whose Stress: Emotion Work in Middle Class Javanese Homes," *Ethnos* 69, no. 4 (2010): p. 509-528.

36 Daromir Rudnyckyj, "Market Islam in Indonesia," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 1 (2009): p. 182-200.

capitalism, and local socio-economic and political context.

Gymnastiar's eventual fall from grace also holds lessons for our understanding of the limits of Islamic discourse on contemporary understandings of romantic love and religious authority. Whereas Islam officially permits a man to marry up to four wives, Indonesian women have long sought to discredit polygyny whilst also offering a different Qur'anic exegesis that, while permissible, polygyny is discouraged. When Gymnastiar was at the pinnacle of his popularity in 2006, a scandal erupted when news leaked that Gymnastiar – who cast himself as the ideal, loving husband – had secretly married a second wife. By the next morning, it became the headlines of every major print, television, and digital news outlet. Feeling heartbroken and betrayed, his female followers staged public protests against what they felt was Gymnastiar's hypocrisy. Whereas some women explicitly challenged patriarchal readings of the Quran'ic passages about polygyny, most women made a different sort of theological argument, claiming instead that Gymnastiar's public performance of a harmonious household was insincere, *tidak ikhlas*. They accused him of publicly performing, even showing off his purported piety (*riya*). Within days, his popularity plummeted, his television contracts were not extended, and his business empire began to crumble.

Without formal religious education, Gymnastiar managed to garner religious authority by popularizing his personal story and framing himself as the embodiment of an everyday sort of piety. He did not claim to be a religious scholar in the same was as *ulama*. Instead, he appealed to the "how-to" dimension of leading a pious life. This sort of exemplary authority was further enabled by his masterful use of television media as well as the way he leveraged his celebrity status to further his economic and political aims. Nonetheless, his authority rested on his good name, on the veracity of the story he told about his own life, family, and business. When his second marriage seemingly discredited his public image – his name brand – he also lost his particular claims on religious authority, at least in the eyes of his female followers. For many of them, polygyny was unjust and perceived as a cultural import from the Middle East, incompatible with modern romantic love in Indonesia.[37] In this respect, the story of Gymnastiar's rise and fall provides an especially interesting vantage point to understand the circulation (and selective appropriation) of global discourses of economy, entrepreneurship, and ethics in which religious authority can also be understood in terms of popular culture and personal branding.

Islam, Public Diplomacy, and the Indonesian State

During the early years of post-authoritarian and democratic Indonesia, the state was also working to re-brand global narratives about both Islam and Indonesia. In fact, before Gymnastiar's fall from grace, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs would frequently bring foreign journalists, diplomats, and businesspeople to visit Daarut Tauhiid to witness a side of Islam beyond the security preoccupations of terrorists, bombs, and veils. Following Suharto's fall in May of 1998, various Western observers fretted about the imminent "balkanization" of Indonesia. In the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. as well as a 2002 bomb blast in Bali, Indonesian diplomats were keen to provide alternative narratives about

37 Suzanne Brenner, "Private Moralities in the Public Sphere: Democratization, Islam, and Gender in Indonesia," *American Anthropologist* 113, no. 3 (2011): p. 478-490.

Indonesia as proof that Islam was compatible with democracy and that Indonesia was the model for so-called "moderate Islam."

In 2001, Dr. Hasan Wirajuda became Minister of Foreign Affairs and launched a soft power program of "total diplomacy" in order to recast Indonesia's image on the global stage.[38] By 2002, Wirajuda founded the new Directorate of Public Diplomacy within the foreign ministry and devoted much time and effort to bringing Muslim leaders into the broader vision for foreign policy, soft power, and public diplomacy. To this end, Wirajuda invited key religious leaders from the main Islamic organizations in Indonesia (especially NU and Muhammadiyah) in order to collectively brainstorm how they might position Indonesia as the exemplary model of the Qur'anic injunction that the Prophet brought Islam as a "blessing for all worlds." Drawing on other Qur'anic passages (such as al-Hujrat 49:13), Indonesian diplomats and religious leaders also discussed inter-religious tolerance in Indonesia in the ethical terms of getting to know one another and respecting "people of the book." This monotheistic rendering of religious authenticity has long haunted religious politics of citizenship in Indonesia. It has been especially burdensome for non-Muslim religious minorities such as Buddhists and Hindus, but also for Muslim minority groups such as Shi'a and Ahmadiyyah communities.

Nonetheless, the Indonesian government proudly touted the success stories of democratization and religious moderation. To be sure, Indonesia stands today as the most convincing example of the mutual compatibility between Islam and democracy, standing against Samuel Huntington's thesis about civilizational conflict.[39] Indonesian diplomats also wanted to restore Indonesia's past role in global geopolitics when they served as host of the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung. To this end, in 2007 Wirajuda and other politicians and diplomats (including then-President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) founded the Bali Democracy Forum as a way to invite leaders and diplomats of Asia and Africa in order to share lessons from Indonesia's own experience of democratization. So, too, Indonesian leaders had certain regional, even "great power" aspirations that, they hoped, would invite foreign investment who had previously been concerned with political stability in Indonesia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched several other programs to pursue similar goals. With respect to assuaging Western fears about Muslim terrorist Others, Indonesia and the United States began cultural exchange programs in which Indonesian clerics would travel to America to learn about citizenship and democracy in action. Likewise, American diplomats and religious leaders toured Indonesia's Islamic schools and esteemed institutes of higher education to witness the very real strides Indonesia has made in the realm of higher education, especially among young women. As one diplomat recounted, Indonesia was very keen to promote a kind of Indonesian Islam consistent with Western notions of modernity, freedom, and women's rights (however neo-colonial some of those Western ideas might be).[40]

38 Interview with Dr. Wirajuda, December 9, 2016. Bali, Indonesia.

39 For a detailed historical account of Islam and democratization in modern Indonesia see Hefner, "Civil Islam," 2000.

40 Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Problem* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

As the Arab Uprising gained traction in 2010-2011, Indonesian leaders under the auspices of the Bali Democracy forum invited Egyptian and Tunisian journalists, politicians, and civil society leaders to gather in Indonesia to "share lessons" about Indonesia's relatively successful transition to (and consolidation of) democracy.[41] On several occasions in both Indonesia and Cairo, leaders met to discuss topics ranging from drafting constitutions to gracefully removing the military from political power. Clearly, Egypt had since gone in a different direction under military leadership and the Tunisian case remains fragile, with room for optimism. Whatever the global effects of such soft power, cultural diplomacy, these diplomatic efforts illustrate yet another example of how "Indonesian" Islam is articulated and understood vis-à-vis global and local political currents. In this case, the indigenization of Islam in Indonesia is both local and global, and the integration of religion into public diplomacy demonstrates how Islam itself becomes a focal point by which Indonesians connect with co-religionists in other countries, yet also distinguish their understanding and practice of Islam from that of the political contexts of countries in the Middle East.

What is important is the way in which Indonesian Muslims articulate multiple understandings and iterations of an "Indonesian Islam" – even if only as soft power discourses of diplomacy with no single corresponding demographic, theological, or sociological referent. More recently other Indonesian diplomats, such as Dr. A.M Fachir, have pursued new avenues for cultural diplomacy. During his illustrious career, Fachir served as Director General of Public Diplomacy; Indonesian Ambassador to Egypt (during the Arab Uprising); Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (during an especially tense era of bilateral relations overshadowed by alleged abuse of Indonesian migrant workers); and, eventually serving as Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs (2014-2019). Important to note is that Fachir was trained as a youth in the modern Islamic school Gontor (where students must become fluent in both Arabic and English), then at university in Arabic literature (with thesis written in Arabic), and for his doctoral dissertation became a specialist on the historical relationship between Egypt and Indonesia during the twentieth century, especially as Indonesian Muslims in Cairo developed nationalist, anti-colonial sentiments.[42] All to say, his understanding of "Indonesian" Islam was constructed vis-à-vis academic learning and lived experiences traveling to and working in the Middle East. His time as ambassador to both Egypt and Saudi Arabia provided the opportunity to see the social injustices of these countries, and thus even though Fachir had great admiration for Islamic literature and arts in the Middle East, he did not hold some utopian vision of the current nation-state that reigns over Muslim holy lands nor its more recent centers of learning such as Al-Azhar University in Cairo.[43]

Despite his global outlook, Fachir did not find himself orienting his understanding of Islam to the cultural moorings of various cultures across the Middle East. Indeed, Fachir's diplomatic efforts reflect a certain pride in "Indonesian Islam," especially insofar as it reflects

41 Hassan J. Wirajuda, "Seeds of Democracy in Egypt: Sharing is Caring," *Strategic Review* 1, no. 1 (2011): p. 147-158.

42 The information about Dr. Fachir is based in multiple interviews with the author between 2014-2019.

43 This is not to say that Saudi Arabian public diplomacy programs and educational scholarships did not play an important role in particular strands of political and reformist Islam in Indonesia. For a more extensive discussion of Saudi soft power strategies of religious diplomacy, see Peter Mandaville and Shadi Hamid, "Islam as Statecraft: How Governments Use Religion in Foreign Policy," *Brookings Institution* (November 2018).

what he, and many Muslim leaders, believe to be the key Islamic notion of moderation. In the world of Indonesian public diplomacy, leaders have embraced the English language of "moderate Islam" when dealing with their Western counterparts. However, with co-religionists of the Middle East, Indonesian diplomats and religious leaders prefer to evoke more explicitly Islamic-Indonesian language of *wasatiyah*. In terms of promoting Indonesia as a model example of inter-religious dialogue, harmony, and tolerance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a book titled, "A Jewel from Heaven: A Portrait of Religious Life in Indonesia" (*Permata dari Surga: Potret Kehidupan Beragama di Indonesia*). In his forward, then-Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Fachir recalled the backstory of the book based on conversations with Muslim intellectual leaders at the progressive State Islamic University in Ciputat, where Fachir touted Indonesia's leading role in promoting inter-faith dialogue and religious exchange and suggested the need to promote the Indonesian model of inter-religious life in a country that is neither secular nor Islamic:

> Despite all of these intense efforts, we still lacked an explicit vision for how to position ourselves as a model society that champions dialogue and tolerance. …We agreed to create a book that could provide a portrait of how the world's largest religions came to our archipelago and adapted peacefully; how they created new civilizations and cultural traditions among diverse, plural groups of inhabitants; how these religions gave birth to local wisdom and ensured harmony among inhabitants of different faiths. … [This book] not only makes us proud to show religious life in Indonesia to other countries around the globe, but also continues to give us awareness and the spirit and strength to preserve tolerance and religious dialogue and empower local wisdom across the archipelago whose traditions are at risk of eroding due to globalization.[44]

As Fachir notes, this book is at once outward looking – to show the world how Indonesia has managed religious dialogue in the public square – while also directed inward as a reminder for Indonesians to take pride in the global historical currents that brought Islam to Southeast Asia, and has been embraced as an ethical compass in the contemporary push for democracy, equal rights, and a particular vision of religious coexistence, if not outright freedom.

One final case of public diplomacy provides yet another example of how Indonesian public diplomacy reaffirms an increasing and occasionally strident confidence in an "Indonesian Islam" vis-à-vis the co-called "centers" of Islamic authority and influence in Mecca, Medina, and Cairo. While serving as presidential spokesperson for Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Dr. Dino Patti Djalal (who would later go on to become Ambassador to the United States and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs) had the idea to invite all of the ambassadors in Jakarta – especially those from the Middle East – for a special presidential screening of the new blockbuster Indonesian film, "Verses of Love" (*Ayat Ayat Cinta*), based on a popular novel that tells the story of Fahri, an Indonesian student in Cairo who embodies and exemplifies everyday Islamic virtue and ethical comportment, in stark contradistinction to the Egyptian men in the film whose moral failings include corruption,

44 This is my English translation based on the 2016 Indonesian book published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Al Busyra Basnur et. al. (eds), *Permata dari Surga: Potret Kehidupan Beragama di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Islamic State University-Syarif Hidayatullah, 2016): p. iii-iv.

incest, and domestic violence. In the public imagination of contemporary Indonesia, dueling strains of Arabization and indigenization vie for public legitimacy and political authority. For Indonesian diplomats eager to showcase Indonesian arts and religion on the global stage, this film encapsulates the newfound pride in Indonesian Islam and is based on the increasingly popular notion that Indonesians themselves best exemplify the best of everyday ethics in the Islamic tradition. Djalal referred to the film as the Indonesian "antidote" to the bigotry and xenophobia espoused in anti-Islamic films in the West. [45] Once again, globalization brings some new ideas and experiences, yet indigenous Muslims of the archipelago refigure these influences to articulate Islamic practices, theologies, and philosophies distinct to their particular religio-political context.

Similar affectations of increasing Indonesian pride in an Indonesian style of Islam – regardless of which nomenclature one prefers -- whose global outlook is to provide an exemplary model for other non-liberal Muslim-majority nation-states whose claims to religious authority and authenticity are not always matched by an adherence to Islamic ethics or democratic principles. This is especially so with regard to the public diplomacy efforts of NU over the last decade. Whereas our discussion above was from the vantage point of how the foreign ministry south to leverage Indonesian Islam as a soft, business-friendly export, it is important to note that organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah have for a long time maintained their own networks of international relations and, more recently, have prioritized public diplomacy and the promotion of Indonesian Islam. It is in this spirit, in May of 2016, that NU General Chair KH Dr. Said Agil Siraj and other NU leaders held an "International Summit for Moderate Islamic Leaders," or ISOMIL.[46] Building on the momentum of NU's 2015 national congressional theme of "Islam Nusantara," NU's central board wanted to showcase this concept to other Muslim leaders across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. With the financial support of various religious leaders and state agencies (such as the National Commission for the Eradication of Terrorism, BNPT), NU invited (and paid for) over thirty religious leaders from Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Yemen, Turkey, Egypt, and elsewhere. Over the course of two days, these Islamic leaders were introduced to concepts such as Abdurrahman Wahid's notion of the "indigenization of Islam," the anti-colonial fatwa from NU's founder that "love for homeland is a part of faith," and, of course, *Islam Nusantara* as a model of cultural-religious integration that nonetheless maintains the sanctity of a unified Islam.

NU General Chair KH Said Agil Siraj was one of the Indonesians who earned his undergraduate, masters, and doctoral degrees with the help of Saudi scholarships (part of Saudi Arabia's own religious diplomacy efforts from the 1970s until today). Likely to the chagrin of his benefactors, Siraj remained committed to an NU-based understanding of religion and was especially committed to the idea that Sufi orders played a decisive role in the "moderate" nature of Islam in Indonesia. Further still, contrary to many academic accounts of political Islam in Indonesia, Siraj understood recent religious violence in Indonesia (especially that which was targeted at state institutions) to be the byproduct of an "Islam *transnasional*" that he and many others among traditionalist circles believe has

45 These comments were recorded for the special DVD distribution of the film.

46 See Juri Ardiantoro and Munawir Aziz, eds. *Islam Nusantara: Inspirasi Peradaban Dunia* [Islam Nusantara: An Inspiration for World Civilization] (PBNU: Jakarta, 2016).

infiltrated an otherwise peaceful and moderate *Islam Nusantara*.[47] To better grasp Siraj's sentiments, consider these remarks from his opening address, delivered with great flare in Arabic:

> Respected guests, the President of Indonesia Bapak Joko Widodo (who did not attend). …Esteemed guests, allow me to take this opportunity to welcome our international guest *ulama* to your "second home." We hope that our international guests will feel comfortable and happy and that you will enjoy your time in Indonesia. Respected guests, religion and nationalism represent two factors that have brought the nation of Indonesia together. Together, they are important pillars that nurtured along the existence of Indonesia and nourished the continuity of the history and civilization of the Indonesian people. …Colonialism used every means and device possible to separate Islam and nationalism. Even to this moment, the strength of aggressors still takes the form of fracturing the people into conflicting ethnic groups. …Today our people [Indonesians] are experiencing several ominous crises: political, economic, social, and environmental that threaten the existence of our people and their future. Even more, this backdrop of crises has been taken advantage of by false voices here and there with various propaganda to split religion from nationalism, with the potential of dividing the people. This propaganda is supported by foreign powers that continuously strive to separate the two [religion and nationalism]. We greatly need to rethink matters and return to strengthening the pillars of religion and nationalism. . .. On account of this, in this address I will attempt in this speech to focus on the thinking of a leader who has already poured his strength to safeguard religion and nationalism on account of his deep awareness of the urgency of them both. . .. This was one of the pioneers of reform in Indonesia, KH Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari, who played an important role in safeguarding the relationship between religion and nationalism.

Siraj related the story of Asy'ari's life and the founding of NU as a way to build the theological basis for a form of nation-state somewhere between Islam and the secular. He promoted the notion of Indonesian exceptionalism as an alternative vision for the social and political ills of the Middle East. Recounting very particular histories of the rise of secular nationalism in the Middle East, Siraj continued:

> KH Hasyim Asy'ari serves as an exemplary model of one who sensed the poisons of colonialism in this context [separating religion and nationalism] and to confront this before it became a dangerous and growing threat. In the majority of Muslim and Arab countries, for example, there has already been a polarization between religion and nationalism such that we see religious experts who typically have a weak nationalist spirit, and nationalist who frequently do not have a strong commitment to religion. For example,

47 Here, I should pause to note that scholars have noted the historical shifts of Southeast Asian constructions of Arab "others" that are less than flattering, and I do not intend to perpetuate such notions in this analysis. Arguably the most detailed analysis is Sumit K. Mandal, *Becoming Arab: Creole Histories and Modern Identity in the Malay World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

> Michael Aflaq (1910-1989) . . . who successfully produced young cadre who would later become leaders in the Middle East, such as: Abdul Karim Qasim and Hafez al-Asad in Syria, Hasan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Habib Burghibah in Tunisia, Jamal Abdun Nasser of Egypt, Muhammad Qadafi in Libya, and others. All of them are leaders who succeeded in freeing their countries from colonial powers, even though they felt religion was not important for confronting colonial powers. . .. KH Hasyim Asy'ari invited the Indonesian people to be resolutely committed to Islam as a way to safeguard the people and homeland. In this way Islam contributes to sustaining feelings of togetherness among the Indonesian people. . .. Let us compare the realities between Indonesia and the Middle East, where the differences of opinion concerning religion and nationalism drove Egyptian president Jamal Abdun Nasser to execute *ulama* of the Muslim Brotherhood in the city center of Cairo. . .. *Alhamdulillah* such events did not occur in Indonesia,[48] on account of presence of NU, founded by KH Hasyim Asy'ari who proved/showed that religious leaders can simultaneously be those who struggle for the nation, as was also the case with other *ulama* leaders such as KH Ahmad Dahlan, KH Agus Salim, Abdul Halim, Abdurrahman Baswedan and others who were both religious and nationalist leaders. *This* is the characteristic of Islam in Indonesia (*Inilah karakteristik Islam di Indonesia*) that we call "Islam Nusantara"—Islam with an ironclad positive interaction with nationalism. Concerning this, KH Hasyim Asy'ari held the viewpoint that whoever was killed defending their homeland would die a martyr, and vice versa that the blood of whoever defended the colonists would be *halal*, even though they are not a *kafir* (unbeliever). . .. the time has come to transfer these principles and concepts to the wider Muslim world so that the causes of conflict and division can be wiped out. We see in Afghanistan, for example, the spirit of nationalism has vanished among Muslims, and so too in Somalia, Iraq, and Syria. . .. With the rise of ISIS in some of our nations we can still see that the ranks of Muslims and Muslim nations in the Middle East is still fragile and weak on account of the failure of Muslims to understand their religion in one respect, and their nationalism in the other. My respected guests, allow me to take advantage of this opportunity to speak briefly about Indonesia's experience integrating religion and nationalism.

After these blunt comments, Siraj reviewed the principles of Indonesia's nationalist ideology of Pancasila (five pillars that begins with the belief in one, almighty God), and then shared a story about Abdurrahman Wahid's meeting with a Saudi delegation led by Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz bin Baz. Upon being asked about Pancasila, Wahid explained that NU gladly accepted this philosophy which, rather than marginalizing Islam, "actually fertilized the people with Islamic values. This was not based on political force, rather

48 Siradj once again elucidates a curious revisionist history that ignores the role of Darul Islam during the anti-colonial struggle and their Islamist vision at that time (and still some to this day) for a future, independent Indonesia. Although below Siraj mentions Muhammadiyah founder Ahmad Dahlan among the national heroes, his origin story of Indonesia's purported exceptionalism, told to an audience of foreign religious scholars, is decidedly a story about NU exceptionalism. See Chiara Formichi, *Islam and the Making of Nation: Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam in 20th Century Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

according to NU is rooted in a comprehensive understanding of *kemaslahatan*." In this latter sentence, Siraj invokes the Indonesian language version of the Islamic concept of mutual benefit and value for each other – the common good.

As an Indonesian Muslim leader, Siraj is a personal example of the global flows of people and ideas in the contemporary age. These travels have both strengthened his commitment to Islam, but also nurtured a desire to bring Islamic ethics in alignment with national ideologies. Trained in the theological debates of Muslim scholars in the Medieval period, Siraj nonetheless privileges Indonesian articulations of Islamic ideas, devotion, and practice as national citizens. Such an example raises commonly held assumptions about where, exactly, are the centres and peripheries in the Muslim world? In the next section, I bring the multiple historical and ethnographic threads of this chapter into a more cohesive analytical framework to better understand globalization, indigenization, and the historical transformations of religious authority.

Conclusion

Chiara Formichi's magisterial book, *Islam and Asia*, provides an important and nuanced analysis of centuries of Islamic transmission across Asia and the development of Muslim networks in a range of political contexts, from post city kingdoms and sultanates to colonialism and the fomenting of nationalist sentiment.[49] Perhaps more important is Formichi's effort to tell the stories of Islam in Asia as a way to de-center academic understandings of Islam and the tendency to conflate Islam with the Middle East, even while the majority of Muslims live in Asia. Whereas the Western academic study of Islam often privileges the notion of the holy lands as the obvious historical center, and generations of philologists have privileged the texts of (mostly male) Muslim scholarship, fine-grained historical and ethnographic analyses of the Indonesian case(s) suggests that scholars might, instead, think in terms of multiple centers and peripheries.

Perhaps the simultaneous joy and frustration of studying Islamic history in Southeast Asia is the paucity of evidence necessary to tell a more comprehensive story. With respect to the study of contemporary Indonesia, and perhaps due to the legacy of Clifford Geertz's seminal work on Javanese religion,[50] the gaze of Western scholarship has more often fallen on the histories and peoples of Java and Sumatra, with much less attention to some of the important Muslim networks linking eastern Indonesia to centers of Islamic authority from Mecca and Medina to the Patani area of southern Thailand as well as multiple historical links with Muslim Philippines and even China. To be sure, the present chapter's emphasis on elites in Java and Sumatra does not redress this particular imbalance.

My foremost aim in this chapter has been to offer multiple glimpses into processes of Islamization and indigenization in different geographic regions, political contexts, and theological debates. In some ways, the struggle between religio-political factions and the contestations of religious authority are nothing new and have followed similar trends elsewhere, from Malaysia to Mali. I have sought to consider globalization and indigenization not only as scholars understand it (through concepts such as "global assemblages"), but also as contemporary Indonesians imagine them. Whilst acknowledging the heterogenous

49 Formichi, "Islam and Asia," 2020.

50 Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976).

nature of Islamic practice and understandings in Indonesia, this chapter has also illuminated current trends in public piety in a global context in which Indonesians are increasingly asserting their own religious authority and authenticity vis-à-vis religious clerics and monarchies in the Middle East and North Africa. From religious education and state formation to pop culture and public diplomacy, this chapter has traced such developments in contemporary Southeast Asia.

Similar to proponents of *Islam Nusantara* who proclaim the legitimacy and authority of Indonesian Islam (however defined), I offer these stories from the so-called "periphery" of the Islamic world to demonstrate the multi-directional nature of global flows of knowledge and power, as a reminder that there are multiple centers of culture, religion, and capital. Whether in the twelfth century or the modern era, Muslims of the Malay archipelago have drawn from multiple, varied sources of theology, philosophy, and forms of political participation. These efforts have been inspired, but not defined, by Islamic values and virtues. Indonesians feel at once part of a global umma, but their increasing confidence in Indonesian Islam might also be understood as a broader awakening regarding how some co-religionists view Indonesia as on the periphery and, thus, peripheral. As Martin van Bruinessen has lamented, despite the intellectual rigor of Indonesia's Muslim scholars, "the Arab world has shown a remarkable lack of interest in Asia in general, let alone in the social and cultural forms of Islam in Southeast Asia."[51] As a nation that has for centuries adapted Islamic principles with local customs, however, the global assemblage that is "Indonesian Islam" will certainly deserve more attention and respect in the future, from Muslims and Islamicists alike.

51 Martin van Bruinessen, "Indonesian Muslims and their Place in the Larger World of Islam," in *Indonesia Rising: The Repositioning of Asia's Third Giant* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 2012): p. 117-40.

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4. Full name(s) of the author(s) must be stated, along with his/her/their institution and complete e-mail address;
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[2]Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani: Fenomena Tarekat Syattariyah Lokal,* (Yogyakarta: LkiS, 2013), p. 164.

[3]Syam, *Tarekat Petani*, p. 173.

[4]Ubaidillah Achmad dan Yuliyatun Tajuddin, *Suluk Kiai Cebolek Dalam Konflik Keberagamaan dan Kearifan Lokal,* (Jakarta: Prenada, 2014), p. 140.

[5]Nur Syam, *Tarekat Petani,* p. 99.

[6]M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah*, vol. 14 (Bandung: Lentera Hati, 2013), p. 167.

[7]Deny Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People: Tradition of Maulidan in the Kanoman Kraton," *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences 4,* no. 1 (January-June 2012): p.12.

[8]Hamdani, "Cultural System of Cirebonese People," p. 14.

[9]Deny Hamdani, "Raison de'etre of Islam Nusantara," *The Jakarta Post,* 06 Agustus 2015, p. 5.

[10]Azyumardi Azra, "Islam di "Negeri Bawah Angin" dalam Masa Perdagangan," *Studia Islamika 3,* no. 2 (1996): h. 191-221, review buku Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

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