Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution

The history of the Indonesian Revolution has been dominated by depictions of grassroots fighters and elite politicians who thought of it as a nationalistic or class-based war. In this major new study, Kevin W. Fogg rethinks the Indonesian Revolution (1945–1949) as an Islamic struggle, in which pious Muslims, who made up almost half the population, fought and organized in religious ways. Muslims fighting on the ground were convinced by their leaders’ proclamations that they were fighting for a holy cause. In the political sphere, however, national leaders failed to write Islam into Indonesia’s founding documents – but did create revolutionary precedents that continue to impact the country to this day. This study of a war of decolonization in the world’s most populous Muslim country points to the ways in which Islam has functioned as a revolutionary ideology in the modern era.

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Indonesia’s Islamic Revolution

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Acknowledgments

This book has grown out of my doctoral dissertation at Yale, and so the first individuals to thank are the members of my committee there: Peter C. Perdue, Abbas Amanat, Tony Day, and especially my advisor Ben Kiernan. Additional thanks for the many people who helped me through the doctorate can be found in the dissertation, but special mention is due to Zane Curtis-Olsen, Nathan Kurz, Faizah Zakaria, and Leslie Theibert, who remained friends and supports during my transition from Yale to Oxford.

The writing of this book took place while I was employed by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. Many colleagues and visitors were helpful in sharpening my thinking, but special thanks go to Adeel Malik and Michael Feener as great supporters. I am also honored to hold a position in the Oxford Faculty of History and to be affiliated with Brasenose College; the duties and privileges associated with those posts have made this book much slower in coming but also much better in quality. I appreciate the encouragement of James McDougall, Faisal Devji, John Darwin, Jamie Belich, and the late Jan-Georg Deutsch in the faculty, and Rowena Archer, Alan Strathern, Abigail Green, and John Bowers in college. The effect of Brasenose dinners on my waistline and ego had better go unmentioned.

The different parts of the research that created this book were sponsored by a Fulbright Grant from the US Department of State, a Fulbright-Hays Grant from the US Department of Education, a British Academy Small Grant, and support from my fantastic counterparts at Universitas Islam Negeri-Syarif Hidayatullah in Jakarta, including LP2M and PPIM at that institution. In particular, my thanks to Usep Abdul Matin, Azyumardi Azra, Komaruddin Hidayat, Yeni Ratna, Arskal Salim, Saiful Umam, and all my colleagues at PPIM for making my connection with the university not only possible but enjoyable. I am also very grateful to the UIN-IAIN-STAIN network across Indonesia for facilitating my fieldwork in various parts of the archipelago; a longer list of key individuals can be found in my dissertation.
A surprisingly large portion of this book was written while on retreats with Ana Raquel Minian and Agung Seth Setiadha. Thanks to each of you for knowing when to push and when to distract me. Jody LaPorte kept me honest in finishing off the final bits. Claudio Sopranzetti, Petra Mahy, and Khin Mar Mar Kyi were helpful in reading and giving feedback on chapters; Jeremy Menchik was kind enough to go through the whole book and sharpen key ideas. Bruce B. Lawrence has been a tireless advocate for me since the beginning of my academic career and for this book since I first described the idea to him. Matthew J. Walton deserves special mention for not only reading more versions of more parts of the book than anyone else, but also (alongside Abby, Soren, and Auden Vogus) occasionally housing me, feeding me, and making fun of me when needed during the years that this book came into existence.

My editor at Cambridge, Lucy Rhymer, was patient both with me and with the anonymous readers whose suggestions improved the manuscript, which in the end was good for all. Chapter 12 overlaps significantly with an article that appeared previously in *Studia Islamika*, and Chapter 13 has been presented previously in *Al-Jāmi‘ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, but both have been rewritten entirely for this book. Mads O’Brien crafted the map especially for this volume. The National Archive of the Republic of Indonesia has graciously agreed to allow an image from their collection to be reproduced here.

In Indonesia, no matter how good the research has been, I would not have made it through without the kindness, generosity, and hospitality of friends who see me as more than a researcher. Lisa Sri Dwiwiana and Ali Akbar and their family have been all too good to me in Padang. Most of all, though, the Siburian family in Jakarta (and extended family spread throughout the country) have taken me in as one of their own, for which I am so grateful. The late Lydia and Victor Siburian took me in when I knew almost nothing of the country and made a home for me in Cinere. Wanda and Nelda Siburian and their families have been more wonderful to me than I deserve.

Wherever I am in the world, I am grateful for the love and support of my family back in Virginia. They have put up with more than they should have during the writing and reviews of this book, and the Fogg clan’s attention to religious narratives in history and questions of religion and government inspired the whole project to begin with. I dedicate this book to my family, even if it is too far a field for their interests, because it could not have come into existence without them.

Despite the generous help of the many people listed, many faults remain in this book. I recognize these as shortcomings on my part – please do not ascribe them to anyone else. The best way to address them here is in the Indonesian way: *mohon maaf sebesar-besarnya*.
A Note on Indonesian Names

Indonesian naming conventions are varied across the archipelago and rather difficult to navigate for those who are not accustomed to them. The names in this book are especially difficult because of spelling reforms that have been implemented in the Indonesian language, one of which took place during the period under study and not all of which were adopted into Indonesian personal names.

As a rule, all the place names presented in this book will be given according to the administrative usage in Indonesia as of 2019.

For personal and institutional names, the book will strive for the twin goals of consistency and compliance with the individual or institution’s preference. Thus, H. O. S. Tjokroaminoto and Mohamad Roem will follow older spelling conventions, but Sukarno (who was notably ambivalent about the vowels used in his name) will follow modern spelling. For those whose preferred spelling changed with the reforms of the 1940s, such as M. Arsjad Th. Loebis/Lubis, the updated version will be used in the text, although the Bibliography will list authors as they appear on the publication.

Although most Indonesians do not have surnames, the footnotes and bibliography default to listing individuals by the final of their names, as is common usage in international publications on Indonesian topics. The only exceptions are those where the name cannot be sensibly reordered, such as Abu Hanifah. In the text, where individuals were more commonly known by a part of their name other than the final part (e.g., “Sjafruddin” for Sjafruddin Prawiranegara), that will be used.
Map 1 A political map of Indonesia, showing the 2019 provincial boundaries and key cities discussed in this text. Note that the Indonesian portion of the island of Papua (the current provinces of Papua and West Papua) was generally not involved in the revolution, and this territory did not become independent with the rest of Indonesia in 1949. The author expresses his appreciation to Mads O’Brien for producing this map.