ISLAM and POLITICS in INDONESIA

THE MASYUMI PARTY BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND INTEGRALISM

RÉMY MADINIER

Translated by Jeremy Desmond

Islam and Politics in Indonesia

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Author's Note

Since the 1970s, the term "Islamist" has taken on a pejorative connotation, as it has come to encompass all radicals, including those who are ready to use violence to impose their vision of Islam's role in society. This was not, however, the original acceptation of this term, which merely referred to Muslims who wished to see their religion play a role in public life, thus meaning that it could quite readily be applied in relation to Masyumi's leaders.

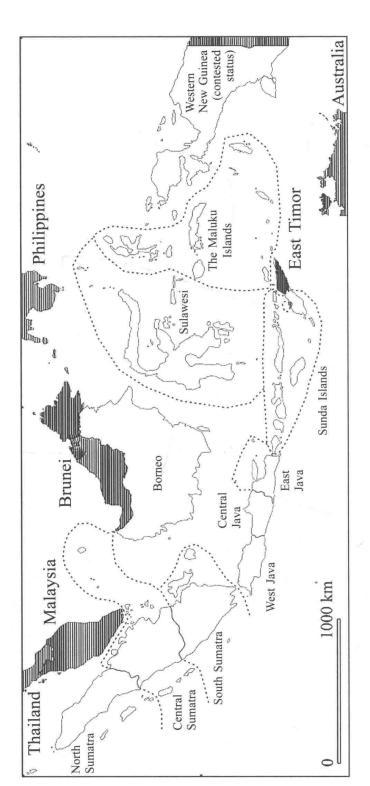
I have used, for convenience' sake, the term "modernist" and "reformist" interchangeably with relation to Islam, except in cases where it might lead to confusion. The two movements are very similar, although reformism, unlike its modernist counterpart, includes the proponents of Wahhabi fundamentalism.

I have often referred to the secular nationalists simply as "nationalists", in contrast to the representatives of political Islam. It should not be forgotten however that the latter were also nationalists insofar as they also supported the struggle for national independence.

Since independence, Indonesian spelling has undergone two reforms. The first one, in 1947, replaced "oe" by "u", while the second, in 1972, changed "dj" into "j", "tj" into "c", "sj" into "sy" and "ch" into "kh". I have respected these new rules when using terms in Indonesian, except for quotations. For proper nouns, I have used the most common spelling; there is no general rule concerning people's names: certain Indonesians have adapted their names, others have not (Sukarno, for example, is still often written Soekarno). Arabic terms are written here according to their Indonesian transcription, which is sometimes slightly different to that used in English.

All quotations from the Koran come from the Saheeh International version published in 1997 by Abul-Qasim Publishing House.

Rémy Madinier Lyon, 2015



Map 0.1 The Ten Provinces of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, August 1950.

1 The maps used in this book were drawn up by Frederic Durand, to whom I am most grateful.

Introduction

At its height, the Masyumi Party, with a membership of tens of millions, was without doubt the largest Islamic party in the world. It represented the most comprehensive attempt to reconcile Islam and democracy, for a movement of this size at least, yet its history is not without a certain number of inconsistencies and contradictions. It was founded in 1945 with the intention of rapidly establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia, but was eventually banned in 1960 for having resolutely defended a universal model of parliamentary democracy.

A Contextualised Approach to the Relation between Islam and Politics

Although the leaders of Masyumi were the champions of a humanist tradition within the Muslim reform movement which came to prominence during the first decades of the 20th century, they also contributed, from the late 1960s onwards, to the radicalisation which led to the party's original message being lost. What is initially most striking about these party leaders is the unexpected compromises they made, but also their constant wavering between an ambitious programme of secularisation and an overcautious tendency to emphasise the importance of religion. These apparent contradictions require one to examine the movement closely through a contextualised study of the links between Islam and politics.

The history of Masyumi contradicts the short-sighted essentialist perception of the relationship between Islam and politics which is based on the premise that Islam knows no separation between the temporal and the spiritual, and which, as a result, "reduces the study of Muslim

societies to a study of their theology." Indeed, it is surprising to notice to what extent the Western perspective on Islam today is willing to let itself be limited to a narrow vision of a militant and insular Islam, despite many repeated warnings from specialists in the field.² This seems to be leading to the formation of a strange "holy alliance which unites the most outspoken form of Islam to the most stereotypical form of Orientalism resulting in a version of Islam being posited that is historically inaccurate, ideologically loaded and intellectually dubious."3 Contrary to what is claimed by a whole body of work which is both imprecise and deliberately polemical, the concept of Islam as din wa dawl (religion and state) is neither a monolithic programme nor a historically incontrovertible fact. 4 Going beyond these facile generalisations and understanding the link between Islam and politics from a genuinely historical perspective involves painstaking work. It requires original research examining a specific place and time, based on an exhaustive study of local sources. Such research must go beyond a literal and lazy interpretation of koranic norms and be founded upon a critical analysis of the concrete experience of those who invoked those norms within a political context. Various studies have already adopted this approach to show that the compromises which were reached in different parts of the Muslim world between divine commands and human realities were clearly both historically determined and transient.⁵ An eminently

¹ Burhan Ghalioun, *Islam et politique. La modernité trahie* (Paris: La Découverte, "Textes à l'appui/islam et société", 1997), p. 9.

² Robert Hefner contends that Islamism is too often seen through the prism of the transformation it underwent in the 1970s, influenced by a new generation of activists. These activists sometimes received their religious instruction outside of traditional educational circuits, and they based their authority not on any exhaustive knowledge of sacred texts, but rather on their ability to propose simple and accessible interpretations justifying their political activity. See Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvatich, eds., *Islam in an Era of Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), Introduction.

³ Ghassan Salamé, *Maghreb-Machreq-Monde arabe*, September 1990, quoted by François Burgat, *L'islamisme en face*, 2002 (1st ed., 1995), p. 17. A good example of this interpretation can be found in Anne-Marie Delcambre, *L'Islam des interdits* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2003).

⁴ See, for example, the pamphlet written by Jean-Claude Barreau, *De l'islam en général et de la modernité en particulier* (Paris: Pré aux Clercs, 1991).

⁵ Concerning works written in French on this topic, the reader can refer in particular to those written by Olivier Carré, François Burgat, Marc Gaborieau, Olivier Roy, Gilles Kepel, Jean-Louis Triaud and Malika Zeghal, cited in the bibliography.

useful distinction has also been established between the religion of Islam, founded by Mohammad, and Islam as it manifests itself in various societies or civilisations.6

A Complex and Little-Known History with a Disputed Heritage

The Indonesian case presents a particular interest in the greater historical scheme of things for two main reasons. The first is the speed and diversity of the changes proposed by Masyumi. These transformations were, in equal measure, contradictory and essential, and they took place over the course of almost a single generation (those who came to power after independence). They thus allow one to grasp within the space of a lifetime the important issues which have dominated the Muslim world since the middle of the 19th century. Such a historical study allows an analysis of the political, religious, cultural and social mechanisms at play in Indonesia at a time when it was faced with an essential choice between, on the one hand, a Western-inspired Muslim democracy, and on the other, a form of Islam integralism which is partially responsible for the renewed growth in fundamentalism witnessed by the country over the past 20 years. The surprising discovery that there could coexist within a single group, and sometimes even within a single leader, two apparently contradictory positions leads one to the conclusion that, as far as Indonesia is concerned at least, the idea of a clear and unambiguous border between secularism and religion needs to be revised.

The history of Masyumi reveals the scope of its secularisation project. It extended to the very heart of activist Islam, and mirrored the first of the five principles of Indonesia's national ideology (Pancasila) which asserted the belief in a single God, thus establishing a link rather than an opposition between secularism and religion. It also suggests that if one is prepared to examine how the norms of Islam were actually implemented in public life, the simple juxtaposition between secular modernism on the one hand, and activist Islam on the other, simply disappears. In other words, contrary to what has sometimes been

⁶ Translator's note: This distinction is rendered more concisely in French by using "islam" to refer to the former and "Islams" to refer to the latter. Such uses of the word are not possible in English, however.

affirmed, a whole range of positions exists on the spectrum of ideas which goes from Mustapha Kemal to Rachid Rida.⁷

The second reason why this historical study of Masyumi is important lies in the fact that it concerns a form of Islam which is not only peripheral and Asian, but also atypical. Avoiding the Arabo-Muslim paradigm which dominates the field of Islamic studies enables us to bring to the analysis of political Islam a perspective which can no longer be avoided today, given the demographic reality of the Muslim world. More than half of the global Muslim population lives today in Asia, and the Indonesian archipelago—which has the largest Muslim population in the world-contains almost as many Muslims as the whole of the Arab world.8 The importance of this so-called peripheral Islam, far from its original homeland, offers one a broader perspective on the Muslim religion.9 In addition, links can be established here with the vast question of Westernisation dealt with by Denys Lombard, who rightly points out the extent of Islam's role in that process. 10 In short then, since the first decade of the 20th century, Indonesia has been the backdrop to a delicately balanced conjunction of two value systems with universal pretensions—Islam and European-inspired political modernism-both of which came from outside Indonesia and have so often found their legitimacy challenged in the archipelago.

⁷ An example of this binary opposition can be found in Martine Gozlan, *Pour Comprendre l'intégrisme islamiste* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995). On the other hand, Shamsil A.B. should be commended for his attempt to classify political Islam into different categories, going from the "global mindset" of the Muslim Brotherhood or Mawdudi to the "rooted practice" inspired by the mode of government used in the Malay kingdoms where a ruler does not base his Islamic legitimacy on his own expertise but rather on a circle of "bhramic" *ulamas*. Shamsul A.B., "Islam Embedded: 'Moderate' Political Islam and Governance in the Malay World", in *Islam in Southeast Asia, Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. K.S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), pp. 103–20.

⁸ Anne-Laure Dupont, Atlas de l'islam dans le monde. Lieux, pratiques et idéologie (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2005).

⁹ As the valuable collection of texts on Islam edited by Greg Fealy and Virginia Hooker demonstrates, *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Source-book* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006).

¹⁰ Denys Lombard, Le carrefour javanais, vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions de l'EHESS, 1990).

This sometimes complicated balance between modernism and Islam has remained at the heart of divisive moments in recent Indonesian history¹¹ and the importance of Masyumi's role in the debates on this question during the 1950s and 60s means that the party has occupied an important place in the country's historical narrative.¹² The first of these divisive periods occurred at the beginning of the 1970s and centred on the figure of Nurcholish Madjid; a second one took place in the 1990s focussed on the actions of the minister for justice of the day, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, who was president of a party claiming its heritage from Masyumi.¹³

These disputes thrived on a fairly widespread ignorance within the country of the historical details of the Masyumi party. Few scholarly works have examined this topic, which no doubt partly explains why the field of Islamic studies has for so long lacked a comparative study exploring the relations between religion and politics in Indonesia. Outside the classic studies dealing with the history of Indonesia since independence—notably the three scholarly tomes written by George Kahin, Benedict Anderson and Herbert Feith¹⁴—a good number of authors have touched on the history of Masyumi. However, only six authors have made a genuine contribution to establishing the modernist party's history. Four of those were either party members or sympathisers. Harun Nasution, in 1965, devoted his MA thesis at McGill University to examining the question of an Islamic state in Masyumi's ideology; Muhammad Asyari in his thesis at the same university in 1976 looked at the role of the *ulama* within Masyumi in the period 1945-52; Deliar Noer initially wrote an MA thesis in 1960 at Cornell University

¹¹ For further analysis of these issues, see Rémy Madinier and Andrée Feillard, *The End of Innocence: Indonesian Islam and the Temptations of Radicalism* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2011).

¹² This issue was analysed by Greg Fealy and Bernard Platzdasch, "The Masyumi Legacy: Between Islamist Idealism and Political Exigency", *Studia Islamika* 12, 1 (2005): 73–99.

¹³ See infra. Epilogue.

¹⁴ George MacTurnan Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1952); Benedict R.O'G Anderson, Java in a Time of Revolution, Occupation and Resistance, 1944–1946 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961); Herbert Feith, The Decline of the Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962).

on the history of Masyumi up to 1957, before developing his work further in 1987 in a book entitled *Islam on the National Stage*; finally, Yusril Ihza Mahendra, mentioned above, attempted in his 1993 doctoral thesis to establish a comparison between Masyumi and Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan.¹⁵

All of this research was carried out conscientiously, in particular Deliar Noer's, and unlike the hagiographies written about certain Masuyumi leaders, these studies were factually accurate. Nonetheless, their authors' involvement in the historical events they were writing about made it difficult for them to possess a sufficiently critical perspective on their subject matter. There were two consequences to this, which at first sight appear to be contradictory. The first of these no doubt owes to the authors' concern not to be accused of writing an account justifying the party and its policies. This preoccupation was exacerbated by the very dim view taken of Masyumi by the New Order authorities, which too often led the authors to focus on a minute description of the facts and thus fail entirely to develop any analysis. The embarrassing question of Darul Islam—a dissident fundamentalist movement which emerged from circles close to Masyumi-was thus only dealt with summarily, as were the internal party conflicts. The second consequence stems from the first and concerns the false impression of ideological and political coherence that one gets from the writings of Masyumi's leaders, and which shroud, it seems to me, a major aspect of the party's history. They lead one to believe that the party's aspiration to found an Islamic state made perfect sense to its leaders and so does not need to be expounded upon. On the contrary, however, this aspiration corresponds to an ill-defined, multi-faceted project which abounded with contradictions.

The diversity of the various branches within Masyumi have been examined by B.J. Boland, Allan A. Samson and Luthfi Assyaukanie in their respective books on the question of political Islam in Indonesia, but as they study the entire spectrum of Islamic movements, they do not look in depth at the modernist party. Boland studies the period from 1945 to the 1970s and only devotes a few dozen pages to

¹⁵ Yusril Ihza Mahendra, "Modernisme dan Fundamentalisme dalam Politik Islam: satu Kajian Perbandingan kes Parti Masyumi di Indonesia dan Jama'at-i-Islami di Pakistan (1940–1960)", PhD diss., Kuala Lumpur University, 1993. [Translator's note: translations of all titles in Indonesian can be found in the bibliography.]

Masyumi. Samson writes on the New Order era and proposes a useful distinction between "constitutionalist Islamists" and "Sharia-minded Islamists" within the party, though he does not detect how these two opposing points of view were in fact intertwined. Assyaukanie's work astutely identifies Masyumi as the model of a "democratic Islamic state", which he distinguishes both from a "democratic religious state" and a "democratic liberal state". However, his book only contains about a dozen pages on the history of the party. 16 Finally, we should mention the work of Robert Hefner, Greg Fealy, Bernard Platzdasch and Masdar Hilmy, who have undoubtedly contributed to a better understanding of the movements which emerged from Masyumi; their research, however is mainly focussed on the party's contemporary legacy rather than an analysis of its doctrine and its activity in the 1950s. 17

A Religious, Political, Social and Cultural History

The history of Indonesia's Muslim intellectuals and of the political doctrines they elaborated is a field of research which has been progressively expanded both by native scholars and by foreign academics. Masyumi, through its leading figures, contributed to the construction of an Islamic political doctrine, but it was above all a political party constantly confronted with events. It is for this reason that the chapters which follow will be founded upon the party's political history, which has up until now been poorly understood. An exhaustive analysis of the party's main press organs (notably the daily newspaper, Abadi, and magazines such as Hikmah, Suara and Partai Masyumi), its archives and the writings of its leaders will allow us to better follow in Chapter 2 the party's establishment in the throes of the country's revolution. Chapter 3 will then look at its gradual identification with Indonesia's fragile

¹⁶ B.J. Boland, The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982); Allan Arnold Samson, "Islam and Politics in Indonesia", PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1972; Luthfi Assyaukanie, Islam and the Secular State in Indonesia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009). ¹⁷ Robert W. Hefner, Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Fealy and Platzdasch, "The Masyumi Legacy"; Bernard Platzdasch, Islamism in Indonesia: Politics in the Emerging Democracy (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009); Masdar Hilmy, Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia, Piety and Pragmatism (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010).

parliamentary democracy, which, as we shall see in Chapter 4, ultimately led to its prohibition and decline. Although our study of the party's history accords considerable importance to this political aspect, it is essential to explore other approaches also, notably those looking at the intellectual and social backgrounds of its leaders, which will be examined in Chapter 1. These leaders were the scions of a vast reformist movement which reached Indonesia at the beginning of the last century, but also the products of a new education system set up by the Dutch colonial administration a few years later. This multi-layered approach is a necessary prerequisite to examining Masyumi's dual goal of not only founding an Islamic state, which will be looked at in Chapter 5, but also of establishing an Islamic society, which we shall examine in Chapter 6.

Masyumi's programme was indeed a two-pronged one, but while its political aspect was largely documented and elaborated through party programmes and the political writings of its leaders, its social facet was never comprehensively formulated and thus needs to be inferred from its political activity. By adopting an approach towards primary sources that goes beyond the mere study of official documents and looks also at Masyumi's reaction to events, I wish to show to what extent the latter was constitutive of the party's identity and hence of its political and social programme for Indonesia. This detailed analysis has allowed me to highlight certain inconsistencies in the party's doctrine. Some of these are an inherent part of a classical phenomenon in politics whereby a party's programme is at a certain remove from the events which gave birth to it;18 other inconsistencies can be found in the disparity between what Masyumi actually achieved and what its programme aspired to accomplish. To go beyond these inevitable contradictions, one has to apprehend the social make-up of the "Masyumi family"; the dearth of relevant primary material in this area makes it necessary to contrive other means which will allow us to shed light on the question indirectly. Although it is far from giving us the whole picture, this approach does enable us at least to appreciate the gap between the ideal of a society based on a rigorist interpretation of Islam and a reality which was more fallible, more Indonesian and, in short, more human.

¹⁸ Cf. Serge Berstein, "Les partis", in Pour une histoire politique, ed. René Rémond (Paris: Seuil, 1996 [1st ed. 1988]), pp. 49-84.

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