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Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia

Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas

Sumanto Al Qurtuby

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Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia

Maluku in eastern Indonesia is the home to Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics who had for the most part been living peaceably since the sixteenth century. In 1999, brutal conflicts broke out between local Christians and Muslims, and escalated into large-scale communal violence once the *Laskar Jihad*, a Java-based armed jihadist Islamic paramilitary group, sent several thousand fighters to Maluku. As a result of this escalated violence, the previously stable Maluku became the site of devastating interreligious wars.

This book focuses on the interreligious violence and conciliation in this region. It examines factors underlying the interreligious violence as well as those shaping post-conflict peace and citizenship in Maluku. The author shows that religion—both Islam and Christianity—was indeed central and played an ambiguous role in the conflict settings of Maluku, whether in preserving and aggravating the Christian–Muslim conflict, or supporting or improving peace and reconciliation.

Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork and interviews as well as historical and comparative research on religious identities, this book is of interest to Indonesia specialists, as well as academics with an interest in anthropology, religious conflict, peace and conflict studies.

Sumanto Al Qurtuby is Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology in the Department of General Studies at the King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia. He holds a PhD from Boston University. His research interests include the study of Muslim politics and cultures, and the role religion plays in conflict, violence, peace, and public affairs.

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To his loving memory, this book is dedicated.

Abbreviations and glossary

ABS	*Ambonsche Burger school* (European school set up in Ambon in the 1850s and 1860s for children of Ambonese burgers).
adat	System of mores or customary law; custom; tradition.
AMGPM	*Angkatan Muda Gereja Protestan Maluku* (Youth Organization of the Moluccan Protestant Church).
Agas	Group of child Christian militias (derived from name of a small-type of mosquito).
Alhilal	Ambonese Arab-sponsored Islamic institutions of learning across the Moluccas. It has some 200 *madrasahs* (Islamic schools) and one university (*Universitas Alhilal* in Ambon city).
Alifuru	Generic term for hill tribes in Maluku, especially from Seram Island, traditionally having derogatory connotations of someone bad-mannered, uncultured, and uncivilized; the term is also used locally to indicate that part of the population that has adhered to the indigenous cultures, resisting the influences of both Islam and Christianity.
anak negeri	Lit. "son of *negeri*" (village); refers to a sort of indigenous people; used by Ambonese/Malukans as identity marker of their native status, to differentiate themselves from migrants.
anak dagang	Lit. "son of trade"; term used by Ambonese for migrants or outsiders, particularly from Sulawesi, who came to Ambon to do business.
aroha	Derived from *roh* (spirit), refers to spirits of ancestors and spirit of Prophet Muhammad. In Hatuhaha, Haruku Island, *aroha* is also called *manian* or *perayaan gaharu*, a celebration involving burning of aloes-wood incense.
Bahasa tanah	Indigenous language(s) of the Ambonese island.
baileo/baileu	Ambonese traditional village meeting hall; village council house; center of community and *adat* religion.
baku bae	Traditional mechanism of conflict resolution and reconciliation in Ambon and Central Maluku; restoration after quarrel.

Baku Bae	*Gerakan Baku Bae* (Baku Bae Movement).
batu pamali	Ambonese term for a sacred offering stone.
BBM	Abbreviation for "Buton, Bugis, Makassar" (three of the major ethnic groups from South and Southeast Sulawesi known for their inter-island trading and settlement outside their homeland. The term is common not only in Ambon/Maluku but also in other parts of eastern Indonesia, including Papua).
BIMM	*Badan Imarat Muslim Maluku* (Council for Moluccan Muslims).
BPS	*Badan Pusat Statistik* (Central Bureau of Statistics).
Brimob	*Brigadir Mobil* (Mobile Brigade).
Bupati	Head of regency (*kabupaten*).
Burger	Group of Ambonese or Eurasians known as free citizens (*orang bebas* or *merdeka*). In return for services rendered to Dutch East Indies Company (VOC), these groups—and their descendents—were declared to be free citizens, namely, free from compulsory services for VOC and obligations of the spice monopoly. The Burger settlement in Ambon city is now called Mardika, derived from the Dutch *Mardijkers* (lit. "free people").
cakalele	Maluku's traditional war dance involving a sword and shield.
Camat	Head of *kecamatan* (sub-regency).
Coker	Stands for *cowok keren* (handsome youths); refers to a group of Christian gangs led by Berty Loupatty (based in Kudamati of Ambon city).
CSO	Civil society association.
DPR	*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (Indonesian Legislative Assembly).
DPRD	*Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah* (Indonesian parliament at provincial and regional level).
fam or *mata rumah*	Collection of number of clan groups (ranging from 15 to 25), organized on the patrilineal-patrilocal principle.
FKM	*Front Kedaulatan Maluku* (Moluccan Sovereignty Front).
GKPB	*Gereja Kristus Perjanjian Baru* (New Covenant Church of Christ).
GPM	*Gereja Protestan Maluku* (Moluccan Protestant Church).
IAIN	*Institute Agama Islam Negeri* (State Institute of Islamic Studies).
ICMI	*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals).
Indische Kerk	State Church of the Indies.
inlander	Dutch term for native.
jemaat	Smallest unit of Protestant congregation.

kabong	Ambonese term for garden.
kabupaten	Administrative district or regency.
kampung burger	Burger village.
kapata	Traditional greeting formulas and shorthand histories consisting of, generally, old songs in which episodes of the past are told; Ambonese traditional sung verse.
kapitang	Ambonese term for *adat* war leader (i.e., "captain").
kepala soa	Head of *soa* (i.e., collection of kin-groups).
kecamatan	Administrative sub-regency.
kewang	Ambonese term for head of land/sea affairs.
klasis	Unit of Protestant congregation at district/regional level.
KNIL	*Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* (Royal Netherlands East Indies Army).
KOMPAK	*Komite Aksi Penanggulangan Akibat Krisis* (Crisis Management Committee).
kompeni	Indonesian/Malay term for Dutch colonials.
Kopassus	*Komando Pasukan Khusus* (Special Forces Command).
Kudaputih	Faction of Christian fighters in Ambon led by Agus Wattimena.
langgar	Prayer house.
Laskar Jihad	Java-based Islamic paramilitary group (founded in early 2000) led by Ja'far Umar Thalib responsible for the Maluku wars (the group is now inactive).
Linggis	Group of Muslim child fighters during the Maluku conflict.
madrasah	Islamic school.
midras	Ambonese term for *madrasah* (Islamic institution of learning).
marinyo	Ambonese term for a *soa* messenger (an *adat* official who broadcasts information and announcements from *raja* to people in *negeri*/village).
mata rumah	Exogamous patrilineal clan (household, patrilineage).
MUI	*Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (Indonesian Ulamas Council).
negeri	Ambonese term for village or, more precisely, "*adat* village" (in Indonesian/Malay the term equals *negara*, "state").
negeri lama	Ambonese term for "old village," i.e., the original settlements.
NGO	Nongovernmental organization.
NU	*Nahdlatul Ulama* (Indonesian Islamic movement).
Nunusaku	Name of the legendary mountain in Seram (largest island in Maluku) and source of the three rivers (Eti, Tala, and Sapalewa). It is traditionally regarded as the beginning and the end, namely the source and the destiny of life.
Nusa Ina	Ambonese term for "mother land" or Island of Seram.
oom	Term of address for older man in Ambon; it originally meant "older Ambonese soldier."

orang kaya	Lit. "wealthy man"; Ambonese title for headman in the hierarchy established under Dutch; does not really imply "rich person" as in standard Indonesian/Malay, but is simply a title granted by Dutch at village level, like *raja* or *patih* (at present, such a title no longer exists in Ambon).
Panglima	Commander, military or paramilitary.
Pancasila	Indonesian national ideology consisting of five basic principles (*panca*, "five," *sila*, "foundation"), namely the belief in one God, humanity that is just and civilized, the unity of Indonesia, democracy guided by the wisdom of representative deliberation, and social justice for all Indonesians.
Parkindo	*Partai Kristen Indonesia* (Indonesian Protestant Party).
Pasukan Jihad	Ambonese/Moluccan (including North Moluccan) Islamic militia groups during the Maluku wars.
pastor	Priest (for Catholics).
patasiwa/patalima	Lit. "division of nine" (*patasiwa*), "division of five" (*patalima*); alliance system on Seram Island dividing island into two parts corresponding roughly to west and east Seram, respectively; found in various forms throughout central and southeast Maluku.
PDIP	*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan* (Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle).
pela	Traditional inter-village (sometimes inter-clan) relationship. A common term in Ambon, *pela* refers to traditional ceremonial bonds of friendship and mutual obligation established between two or more villages often encompassing both Christian and Muslim villages in a single alliance. It is conceived of as an enduring and inviolable brotherhood, an alliance that has to be renewed regularly through important ceremonies and solemn oaths.
pela-gandong	Relations beyond the village level based on genealogical ties.
pemuda	Youth.
pemekaran	Lit. "blossoming"; subdivision of administrative region, such as province or district into two or more smaller ones.
pendeta	Reverend or priest (for Protestant).
Perda	*Peraturan Daerah* (Regional Regulation), issued by regional governments.
pesantren	Islamic boarding school.
PKI	*Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party).
PNI	*Partai Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian Nationalist Party).
Poltek	*Politeknik* (college in Ambon).
putra daerah	Lit. "son of the region" (i.e., native people).

raja	Ambonese term for "village head" (Indonesian term for "king"); traditional village leader in Ambon and Central Maluku; highest ranked indigenous headman under the Dutch system.
reformasi	(Political-economic) reformation.
RMS	*Republik Maluku Selatan* (Republic of South Moluccas, Ambon-based secessionist movement in 1950).
Salam-Sarane	Ambonese traditional terms for Islam and Christianity.
saniri	Traditional village council in Ambon area.
SARA	*Suku, agama, ras, antar-golongan* (tribal, religious, racial, and intergroup relations).
Satgas	*Satuan Tugas* (Security Taskforce).
Sinode	Synod.
soa	Kin-group consisting of a number of *mata rumah*; a subdivision of village consisting of collection of families led by *kepala soa* (head of soa).
STOVIL	*School tot Opleiding van Inlandsleeranen* (religious school for the natives established by Dutch).
tenggara	Lit. "Southeast." In Maluku, term means "people from southeast Maluku" or "southerners."
TNI	*Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian Armed Forces).
tete-nene moyang	Ambonese term for ancestors (of Ambonese people).
Tete Manis	Lit. "Sweet Grandfather"; the everyday term for referring to God parallels the *Tete Lanite* used in indigenous religions in Maluku.
tuagama	Ambonese term for a church caretaker.
UKIM	*Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku* (Ambon-based Christian university, linked to Moluccan Protestant Church).
uli	Traditional village federation found on Ambon-Lease Islands (e.g., Uli Hatuhaha in Haruku Island of Central Maluku).
Unpatti	*Universitas Pattimura* (Ambon's main public university).
Upu Lanite	Lit. "Lord of Heaven," the deity who descended from the sky to mate with the goddess *Tapele* ("Earth") creating all life prior to withdrawing into the sky again.
Volksraad	Peoples' Council during Dutch colonial rule.
VOC	*Vereenigde Oost-Indeische Compagnie* (Dutch East Indies Company).
walikota	Mayor.
wijkmeester	Head of kampung burger or *burgerkampoeng.*
Yon Gab	*Batalion Gabungan* (Joint Battalion).

Contents

Introduction

Indonesia's new chapter of modern-day history began in May 1998. In this month, this archipelagic country witnessed a dramatic and historic event: the downfall of the Suharto-led New Order dictatorial regime that had been in power for over 32 years. The long-ruling Suharto (1966–1998) was toppled by an alliance of secular Muslims and non-Muslims, middle-class societies, democracy activists, students, and some political elites, following the economic crises that hit the world's largest Muslim country (about 88 percent of a roughly 240-million population embracing Islam) beginning in late 1997 (see, for example, Hefner 2000; Mujani 2003). In the beginning, the process of post-Suharto transition went peacefully. Unlike other undemocratic countries that commonly turned to deadly violence after a revolution has taken place, Indonesia's political transformation, at least at first, remained relatively peaceful. The country thus had been widely featured as a Muslim nation that was successful in handling the political shift from an authoritarian military regime to a democratic civilian government.

This nice picture of peaceful and nonviolent "transition toward democracy," however, was soon shattered by widespread outbursts of deadly sectarian conflicts and vicious ethno-religious communal violence in the months following Suharto's overthrow. These events raised suspicions that Suharto and his followers were behind the violence. The intergroup violent conflicts occurred not only in Java's main towns and places but also in "outer Indonesia," including the districts of Sambas, Sampit, Poso, Bima, Ambon, Halmahera, Ternate, and Tobelo, among others. The violence resulted in the displacement of some 1.5 million refugees, the deliberate destruction of urban and suburban areas, thousands of casualties, and a plague of criminality and public lynching (see, for example, Aragon 2001; Aspinal 2008; Hedman 2008; Hefner 2005a; Nordholt and van Klinken 2007; Pannell 2003; van Klinken 2007).

Religiously inspired anti-pluralist actions, vigilante attacks, Islamist terrorism, and the rise of uncivilized civilian groupings or paramilitary groups, whether ethnically, regionally, or religiously based, have also dominated the scene of Indonesian politics and cultures since the reformation "opened the door" for this nation. Martin van Bruinessen (2013) characterizes these new trends of the post-New Order's era the "conservative turn," typified by the

growth of radical Islamic organizations and hardline Muslims that have caused inter- and intra-religious clashes, and numerous incidents of religious intolerance and intimidation in the name of Islam. The cases have included, but are not limited to, attacks against churches, a synagogue, Sufi groups, followers of Ahmadiyyah, local sects, and minority Shiite Muslims. The extremist Muslim groups not only targeted non-Muslims and religious minorities but also certain groups of Muslims having ideas and practicing sorts of Islam different from those of Islamic radicals. A number of research and advocacy centers, such as the Setara Institute for Peace and Democracy (Jakarta) and the Institute for Social and Religious Studies (Semarang), have well documented cases of religious intolerance and religious freedom violations in contemporary Indonesia.

Of all the violent conflicts to erupt in Indonesia after 1998, the religious violence in Ambon, one of the country's largest urban centers, according to Gerry van Klinken (2007: 88), was the most appalling in terms of the scale of the death and destruction (ICG 2000a, 2000b). It was also among the most complex in term of actors involved in the conflict, phases of violence, and motives behind the tragedy (Bohm 2002, 2005). Apart from the 1975 and 1999 savage military onslaughts in East Timor (now Timor-Leste), the violence in the Moluccas, particularly in the Ambon city of Maluku as well as North Maluku from 1999 to 2005, was the most shocking violence seen in Indonesian history since the anti-communist pogroms of 1965/1966 (cf. Colombijn and Lindblad 2002; Coppel 2006; Kingsbury 2005).

The vicious violence between Christians and Muslims from various ethnic groups on Ambon Island and the Moluccas in general began on January 19, 1999. The initially small quarrels turned into deadly large-scale communal violence once Java-based armed jihadist Islamic paramilitary groups, especially the *Laskar Jihad* ("holy war" militias), with the support of some elite members of military and police, sent several thousand fighters to Ambon, the provincial capital of Maluku, in mid-2000 (ICG 2001; Noorhaidi 2005). As a result of this escalating violence, the previously relatively peaceful Maluku became the site of devastating interreligious conflicts. Indeed, notwithstanding Maluku's history of separatist resistance to Jakarta and Indonesian nation-state since the proclamation of the *Republik Maluku Selatan* (RMS, Republic of South Moluccas) in 1950 (Bouman 1960), Maluku had a reputation during the New Order for enjoying relatively harmonious relations between Protestant, Muslim, and Catholic communities (Aragon 2000; Duncan 1998; Mujiburrahman 2006). Most experts and scholars of Indonesian society thus were baffled when a minor traffic incident in January 1999, between two young men of different religion and ethnicity from the regions of Batumerah and Mardika (both in Ambon city), triggered a string of bloody incidents between Christians and Muslims, spilling over from Ambon city to the corners of the Moluccan island.

The post-Suharto communal riots differ from previous forms that had broken out across the country in their nature, forms, patterns, and causes. Unlike the deadly violent conflicts in Aceh, Timor-Leste, and Papua, for instance, which are deeply rooted in the prolonged issues of regionalism, socio-political injustice,