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substantial eruptions of anti-imperial social movements. He also notes that periods of interimperial rivalry have been dangerous because the great powers use force to preempt each other in the noncore and against each other in great world wars among those contending for global power. *Patterns of Empire* is fascinating and enlightening reading that expands our comprehension of world history and has important implications for the current global situation.

The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia, 1900–1942. By Deliar Noer. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973. Pp. xi+390.

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One way or another, we all mistake our own history for universal history. What varies is only the location and the nature of the mistake. And correction does not avail. For if we remove, one by one, the omissions and commissions inherent in any particular standpoint of interpretation, nothing remains but a jumbled recitation of facts. It is the interests of men that give organization to the histories they write, and it is the particularities of their thinking that color the threads they trace through the past.

In the European concept of universal history it was perhaps inevitable that one such mistake would be the devout inference, drawn in exhaustion after 150 years of wars between Catholics and Protestants, that religion would vanish in the chill light of reason. This inference ignored the mystical qualities of reason itself, which would eventually flower in the quasi-theology of high energy physics and the secular soteriology of 20th-century medicine. But it also ignored widespread religious revival across the world, both Christian and non-Christian, during both the 19th and 20th centuries.

Nowhere was this revival more evident than in Islam, where religion often coupled with nationalism to help demolish the commercial empires of the Western metropolis. In his twenties, journalist Deliar Noer became the field research director of a project on the Islamic revival in Indonesia. Originally his Ph.D. thesis, the work here reviewed covers the first four decades of the 20th century. It tells its story from the inside, for Noer was a lifelong Muslim activist.

Deliar Noer was born in 1926 at Medan, in North Sumatra. His father was a minor government official whose service posting had removed him from his roots in Bukittinggi, one of the cradles of Muslim modernism in Indonesia. Noer was 16 when the Japanese invaded and threw out the Dutch, thereby inaugurating a short-lived regime whose desperate vicissitudes forced it to open numerous opportunities for both Muslim modernism and Indonesian nationalism. But early in the transition period after the

* Another review from 2051 to share with *AJS* readers.—*Ed.*

Japanese defeat, Noer's family was arrested by Japanese military units, and his father was killed.

Noer served with the Republican government during its exile in Singapore, learning English and beginning his collegiate education. In the 1950s, he worked for a news agency and was active in the Muslim Students' Association, through which he met the central figures of contemporary Muslim political activism: Vice President Mohammad Hatta, of whom he would later write a biography, and Mohammad Natsir, the leader of Masjumi, the common front organization for Muslim political parties. At their recommendation Noer became the lead Indonesian research assistant for George Kahin, a Cornell University professor much interested in the modernist movement. Assembling a research team, Noer interviewed dozens of aging Muslim leaders and tracked down thousands of documents and historical details. He also received his undergraduate degree, and the delighted Kahin recruited him to Cornell, where he wrote a book-length master's thesis on the Masjumi and the Ph.D. dissertation whose book version is reviewed here.

Noer's later career was marked by resolute political stands. The Sukarno and Suharto regimes, aiming to manage religion for state purposes, could not stomach Noer's vocal support for a primarily Islamic polity. He spent only three years on the law faculty of the University of North Sumatra before being fired for anti-Marxism. He then worked for a Jakarta research organization, moving to the politics department of the University of Indonesia after the military coup of Suharto. But his activities in Muslim political parties made him persona non grata, and his support of student protests against the regime led the government to revoke his right to teach. He fled to Australia in 1975, where he taught at various universities until 1987. Eventually he returned to Indonesia as head of a research institute on Islamic society begun by Natsir and other old friends. With the overthrow of Suharto in 1998, he became active in the new Islamic political parties but had little success. Disillusioned with politics and even with Muslim parties and politicians, Noer died in 2008.

That the story Noer tells in *The Modernist Muslim Movement* has many complexities is to be expected in an archipelago that is full of peoples, languages, and ethnicities, that had absorbed Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, and that had attracted numerous and various imperialisms. The hundreds of islands were themselves diverse. More than three times the size of Java, Sumatra by contrast had only one-tenth its population, and many of the lesser islands were even more sparsely populated. Indeed, Noer begins his story underscoring the wide cultural range of Indonesia: "Although Java has a railroad system, motor cars, television and aircraft, much of the interior of West Irian has not progressed beyond the Stone Age" (p. 1).

At first reading, the book seems buried under such complexities. There are organizations created, transformed, renamed, merged, and banned. There are arguments between Islamic modernists and traditionalists, and between

different Islamic modernists, and between different Islamic traditionalists. There are reconciliations and coalitions that disintegrate only later to reconstitute as new alliances and collaborations. The acronyms and nicknames are dizzying. Noer mentions a PAI, a PKI, a PII, a PMI, and a PNI. Some organizations have nicknames as well as acronyms (PMI is Permi; both are short for Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia), but others have acronyms only (PKI is simply the communists) and still others have nicknames only (Persatuan Islam is Persis). Organizations that appear briefly can resurface later in new guise. Budi Utomo, a 1908 Javanese proto-nationalist organization, eventually reappears as a constituent of Parindra, the major religiously neutral nationalist organization of the 1930s, which arose in 1933 from the reunification of Budi Utomo with its own splinter group, the Surabaya Study Club (1924). At other times, lengthy minor disputes traverse both years and chapters. Djamiat Chair, a 1905 Jakarta organization that drew heavily on wealthy Arabs and focused on education, long warred with its splinter group Als-Irsjad (founded 1913) over the issue of whether *Sajids* (male descendants of Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet) should receive special status. Still feuding in 1932, the groups sought a binding judgment on this question from—of all people—the Dutch (p. 68; the Dutch decided against the special claims of the *Sajids*).

Noer kindly provides the reader with a detailed glossary covering these many organizations as well as basic Islamic and Indonesian concepts. But the ramified details of his story are so overwhelming that the book sometimes reads like a dictionary or encyclopedia, in which the reader cannot know the meaning of one word without tracing it through a long path of other words that eventually leads back to where he started. Yet underneath the details, the book's underlying organization is very clear. An introduction presents the basic ideas of Islamic modernism and the basic nature of Islam in Indonesia. Two long chapters then review the development of the modernist Muslim movement: the first studying its political and social aspects, the second its political embodiments. A fourth chapter considers the Dutch reaction to Muslim modernism, and a fifth considers relations between Muslim modernism and its traditionalist opponents, as well as between these two Muslim groups on the one hand and the religiously neutral nationalist movement on the other.

As is obvious, this sectoral design privileges analysis over chronology, which unfortunately guarantees that the Dutch, the traditionalists, the religiously neutral nationalists, and even the modernist political party (Sarekat Islam) appear many times before the respective chapters that introduce them; after all, evolving Muslim modernism reacted to those other actors from its very beginning. But a chronological account would have paid a worse price in analytic disorganization. The book thus well illustrates the problem of analyzing a complexly interwoven religious and political ecology—there is no sensible place to start. As a result, it should be read twice. A first reading accustoms the reader to the vocabulary and the characters, while a second reveals the swirling and fateful encounters of the various actors.

Not only is Noer's underlying design simple and clear, his theoretical dispositions are also quite straightforward. The book rests on three central distinctions. The first is the distinction of modernists and traditionalists. Taking their lead from Muhammad Abduh and others, the Muslim modernists sought to purge Islam of the accretions of years: of magic and mysticism, of legal traditions that postdate the four *madzahib*, of practices adopted from animism or Hinduism. At the same time, however, the modernists sought to adjust Islam to the modern world. This necessitated freeing the individual from the constraint of *taqlid*, that is, treating the rules (*fatwa*) of religious leaders (*ulama*) as definitive. As in the Christians' Protestant Reformation, it was thought necessary to "open the gate of *idjtihad*," to allow the individual to seek personal guidance in the Quran and *Hadits*. (All Arabic and Indonesian words are here romanized following Noer's practice, although many have changed since, and some were not stable in Noer's time.)

A second crucial distinction is between the religious and the political. Colonial Indonesian society had two non-Dutch elites. In Java, the *kijaji* were the religious elites—the *ulama* and other religious teachers. (*Sjech* was the comparable title in Sumatra, although interisland differences in the religious elites meant that the terms were not exactly equivalent.) The *prijaji* were the political elites, who by the turn of the 20th century were largely co-opted into Dutch indirect rule. (On Sumatra, the political elites were the *adat* princes, who figure in Noer's story only when they support the traditional inheritance of sister's child against the modernists' insistence on inheritance by the deceased's own children.)

The importance of the religion/politics separation is twofold. First, Islamic modernist organizations typically favored one or the other. It is thus crucial to know that Sarekat Islam was a principally political organization while Muhammadiyah was a principally religious one. But second, the modernists rejected on principle any clear distinction between politics and religion, because they felt that Islam did not allow that distinction. This second principle meant a continuous pressure operated to draw the religious groups into politics and the political ones into religion. But at the same time the two sides fought with each other almost continuously. Typically, the religious groups accused the political ones of being excessively worldly and compromising, while the political groups accused the religious ones of taking subsidies from the Dutch (see, e.g., pp. 235–37). Indeed, particular groups would routinely ban their members from joining other organizations disapproved for their religious practices, political alliances, or collaboration with (or excessive opposition to) the Dutch imperialists.

Noer's version of the religious/political distinction leaves one important group on the sidelines—the communists and, more generally, the organized workers, and beyond them the larger economy. We do hear that Sarekat Islam emerged in reaction to Chinese presence in the batik trade. We also hear that Sarekat Islam endured internal fights over socialism and that its major figures were involved in the pawnshop employees' union. We hear

that the modernist schooling organization Sumatera Thawalib was torn by conflicts over communism in the 1920s. But since the communists were, in Noer's view, unrelentingly hostile to Islam, they simply vanish when not immediately active in the story. Yet they were, in some sense, the other "religion" of Indonesia: the secular religion of communism.

Not only the communists but also the *abangan*—the nominal Muslims—to a large extent disappear from Noer's account. They appear briefly in the book's introduction, then equally briefly in the conclusion, where they are considered to be religiously neutral—in effect, nonreligious. But as Noer knew well (he had written of this in his master's paper) most modernist proposals for the new Indonesian constitution in the 1940s would include a constitutional requirement that all Indonesian Muslims—nominal as well as faithful—obey the *sjari'ah* (law of Islam). If the *abangan* foresaw this, surely their reaction to modernism was consequential.

The third central distinction in the book is that between Indonesian and Dutch. On this question, Noer has a distinct view. For him, Islam must be central to any conception of Indonesian nationality. He also feels that Christianity is central to the national identity of the imperialists, although it is not clear which of these two centrality judgments comes first in his logic nor whether there is a causal/historical as well as a logical relation between the two.

Noer generally makes this religious claim to the exclusion of other bases of nationality. In part this reflects the reality of the archipelagian ecologies. Islam was the most pervasive cultural system across the islands, although that too was in part a new creation—of the Dutch, in fact, whose increasingly uniform and Christianizing colonial policies did much to create both cross-island nationalism and a stronger Islam. But one still feels in Noer a specifically Muslim vision. For example, he spends little time on the traditional power elite—the Javanese *prijaji* and Sumatran *adat* chiefs, taking it for granted that their co-optation by the Dutch made them irrelevant to a new national identity. But he thereby overlooks the fact that they also tended to be only marginally Muslim and that this coincidence to some extent delegitimated nominal allegiance to Islam as a basis for national identity, leaving the national identity field open to the modernists. In this regard, it is also interesting that Noer mentions only in a footnote the already famous *prijaji* Raden Adjeng Kartini, whose feminist opposition to (Islamic) polygamy and support for women's rights had already made her a heroine of the secular nationalists by the time Noer was writing. Nor do we hear much about the Chinese, even though anti-Chinese sentiment lay at the foundations of organizations like Sarekat Islam.

As for the Dutch, Noer judges them to a considerable extent in their own terms. He notes frankly that modernist religious organizations learned much from Christian missionaries, borrowing such tactics as orphanages, clinics, scouting, and modern social welfare programs. But Christianity and Islam are not for Noer equivalent enterprises, any more than they were for the Christian missionaries. When Noer tells us that the Dutch government was

“prejudiced against Islam,” his judgment rests on the Dutch failure to meet their own secular (not religious) standards. Western secular law seems to imply a religious toleration that the Dutch do not practice. But Noer’s discussion of the Sukarno/Natsir debate (pp. 275–95) seems to imply that he would expect an Islamic government to promote Islam in the same ways the Dutch favored the Christians: reserving jobs, promulgating religion in the schools, and so on. Here he—or rather Natsir, to whom Noer carefully gives the last word—judges Islam by the eternal standards it sets itself. (One cannot say “eternal religious standards” because for the modernists there were no separate “religious standards,” but only comprehensive rules for all of life.) By those standards, it is the believer’s duty to promulgate the faith; faith and state should not be separate, and hence practices like reserved jobs, religious education in school, and so on follow from faith itself.

The same issue is joined over the question of whether nationalism can be separate from Islam, a question that divided modernists deeply. The Permi position was that “our basis is Islam and *kebangsaan* [secular nationalism]. Islam and *kebangsaan* do not contradict each other, but are like the right leg and the left leg” (p. 263). By contrast, Hadji Rasul and others argued that Islam “is already complete, sufficient in itself, and does not need any additional attributes” (p. 264). When Rasul argued that “Islam is tolerant: *kebangsaan* is not” (p. 264), he seemed to mean that “tolerance towards the other” is defined as “whatever Islam commands towards the other” (or, from the outsider’s point of view, “tolerance” is simply defined as “whatever Islam chooses to do”). He does not mean that tolerance has some independent definition which, as it happens, is met by the behavior of the institutions of Islam as we observe them in the real world. The definition of tolerance must flow from Islam itself. Like the Christian missionaries, modernists genuinely believed their faith. It had no standard but itself.

The debate between the modernist Natsir and the nationalist Sukarno is therefore the crux toward which the entire book leads. On the one hand we have Sukarno’s explicitly liberal and abstract approach to government through toleration of observed differences, and on the other we have Natsir’s Islamic and substantive approach to government through a foundation in first—that is, Islamic—principles.

Sukarno: How do you realize your ideals [about this unity] in a country in which you uphold democracy and in which part of its population are non-Muslims, as in Turkey, India, and Indonesia in which millions of people are Christians or embrace another religion, and in which the intellectuals in general do not entertain Islamic thoughts. (P. 285; bracketed phrase in original.)

Natsir: All this [routine governmental tasks like traffic rules and foreign exchange] can certainly not and need not be arranged in Allah’s revelation which has an eternal value and is unchangeable. For all this is concerned with questions which are subject to change according to the demand of time and place. . . . What Islam regulates are those things which are not subject to change. Questions which are concerned with the principles for administering a society, and which will not be changed as long as man remains man . . . (P. 290; ellipses in original; bracketed interpolation added.)

Sukarno admired the regime of Kemal Ataturk in Turkey and quoted with approval the Young Turk ideologist Ziya Gökalp, an apostle of Turkish secular nationalism. But Natsir thought the example of Turkey pernicious: "They had the power to introduce reforms in the spiritual life of the people, to combat superstitions, polytheism, and *tarekat*—to purify Islam, but they did not do it" (p. 292). The book leads, ineluctably, to this clarion debate over what it means to be an Islamic nation. And of course both reader and writer know the sequel—that Sukarno won, but that Indonesian national identity would continue to evolve, and at times disintegrate, up to the very present.

The *Modern Muslim Movement* is a spectacular success. It combines profound historical sensitivity, immensely diligent archival and oral historical work, and a quiet but firm commitment to Islam. It is difficult to read, but the reward is great.