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Sumanto Al Qurtuby

Kirsten E. Schulze. *Contesting Indonesia: Islamist, Separatist, and Communal Violence since 1945*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2024.

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of Philippine history and its literary heritage and can easily be studied on its own. Together with its Spanish-language counterpart, *El desafío de la modernidad en la literatura hispanofilipina (1885–1935)* (The challenge of modernity in Hispano-Filipino literature [1885–1935]), also edited by Gasquet and Ortuño Casanova but published by Brill, it becomes essential reading for anyone interested in a critical study of Philippine literature written in Spanish and how it participates in the history of the Philippines.

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Contesting Indonesia: Islamist, Separatist, and Communal Violence since 1945

KIRSTEN E. SCHULZE

Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2024.

Many academic publications—in English and Indonesian—have discussed the issue of postindependence violence in Indonesia. However, with a few exceptions, none focuses on the study of violence and its link to the ideas of national belonging as well as imagination and contestation over the Indonesian state. Previous studies have generally examined violence in a fragmented manner, with scholars treating cases of violence along separate themes with different academic debates that do not necessarily speak to each other. This is what makes *Contesting Indonesia* noteworthy and distinctive not only for its depth of content and robust argument but also for its conceptual/theoretical framework and solid methodological approach. For example, the author, Kirsten Schulze, does not use only the existing (secondary) literature but also draws upon fieldwork, oral narratives, and a range of written primary sources as well as direct interviews with 474 diverse informants (scholars, peace activists, actors of violence, etc.) spanning over more than twenty years. Schulze genuinely and luminously connects, “synthesizes,” and repackages varied existing academic works on violence in postindependence Indonesia into a single theme: the contest for the state’s national imaginary and belonging.

To back this notion, Schulze draws upon the concepts and theories of several leading scholars, including the “imagined community” of Benedict Anderson, the “invented tradition” of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, and the ideas of belonging from Ernest Gellner and other noted scholars. She also includes select cases of postindependence violence: Islamist violence (i.e., Darul Islam and Jemaah Islamiyah), secessionist revolts (i.e., East Timor and Aceh), and interreligious conflicts (i.e., Christian-Muslim communal violence in Poso and Ambon). As the author rightly

notes, not all violent conflicts in the country relate to the notions of Indonesia's national imaginary and belonging. Schulze writes, "It is interested in *where* the violence is located, not just in a geographic sense but above all in a conceptual sense." Accordingly, it is imperative to examine "Islamist, separatist, and communal violence in relation to the notion of the national imaginary as well as in relation to the concept of belonging, asking *what is Indonesia?* and *what does it mean to be Indonesian?*" [italics in original]" (p. 4).

The book is divided into six chapters. The first two explore violence committed by two Islamist groups in Indonesia: Darul Islam (DI) rebellions from 1947 to 1965 and Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) violent jihadism or terrorism from 1993 to 2009. Chapter 1 examines four cases of DI revolts in various locations: West Java (led by Sekarmadji Marijan Kartosoewirjo), Aceh (led by Daud Beureueh), South Sulawesi (led by Abdul Kahar Muzzakar), and South Kalimantan (led by Ibnu Hadjar). The author has chosen these four cases perhaps because they are the most popular ones, though DI-related rebellions are not limited to these four; one other is Amir Fatah's rebellion in Central Java. The chapter scrutinizes the causes, goals, ideological underpinnings, and evolution of DI rebellions, arguing that the primary roots of DI uprisings "lie in Islam having been part and parcel of Indonesian nationalism" (p. 25) in the early twentieth century. The use of the man-made philosophy of Pancasila (meaning "five precepts")—rather than God (Allah)-made laws (Islamic Sharia)—as the state ideology and the foundational concept of the newly established country of Indonesia was at the heart of DI (and later JI) revolts. Although these rebellions were centered in DI, each had local variations with respect to the factors, principles, approaches, and rationales of their contest over the Indonesian state and struggle against President Sukarno's rule. For example, while Kartosoewirjo conceptualized Indonesia as an Islamic state, Ibnu Hadjar preferred an Islamic kingdom (of South Kalimantan, run by the Islamic State of Indonesia) and Muzzakar envisioned an Islamic Republic of Indonesia Eastern Section (pp. 47–51).

Chapter 2 studies JI's historical dynamics, membership variations, and ideological foundations as well as the narratives and Islamist national imaginaries set forth by its main founders: Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir. It also examines President Suharto's anti-Islamist policies that directly affected Islamist activists, including JI members. Even though JI evolved out of the DI religious and political movement, and indeed, JI shares some fundamental aspects with DI (e.g., opposition to the Indonesian state, the state ideology, and the Constitution and a desire to replace them with Islamic forms of state, governance, and laws), these two Islamist groups have some differences. For example, unlike DI, which is more locally based, JI is more Salafi, militant, and international, endorsing local, regional, and global jihad for the sake of Islam (p. 81). Also, while Kartosoewirjo's source of inspiration and imagination was Muhammad's Islamic state of Madinah, the JI founders' bases of inspiration (and imaginary) for their Islamic state concepts were more varied—including the Qur'an, Hadith, the practice of Muhammad's companions, and the way Muslims lived before the end of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 (p. 73). Some JI key members also

envisioned establishing an Islamic caliphate beyond Indonesia.

The following two chapters deal with separatist violence in East Timor (Chapter 3) and Aceh (Chapter 4). Chapter 3 discusses the violence that occurred from the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in December 1975 to the post-referendum in September 1999. It also analyzes competing narratives of the violence and the competing national imaginaries (between the Indonesian government and FRETILIN—the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) as well as Jakarta’s attempt at “Indonesianizing” East Timorese and integrating East Timor into the Indonesian state, which ultimately failed. Schulze argues that both the decision to integrate East Timor and the decision to have a referendum on independence during President Habibie’s administration (1998–99) were “underwritten by Indonesia’s national imaginary” (p. 85), though the two decisions had different forms of imagination. Chapter 4 discusses the root causes of the prolonged conflict between the Indonesian Army and the separatist group Free Aceh Movement (GAM), strategies of combat developed by the army (including kidnapping, torture, and killing), as well as the political and economic grievances of Acehnese. The chapter also investigates the emergence of GAM and its narratives on conflict and national imaginaries. It shows that the Aceh secessionist violence was deeply rooted in the Indonesian state’s unitary and “secular” pluralist character, which left little room for Aceh’s more Islamic identity (p. 123).

The remaining two chapters are about the interreligious violence between Christians and Muslims in Poso and Ambon. Chapter 5 is devoted to the study of the Poso sectarian violence from 1998 to 2007, examining its root causes, phases, and dynamics, from small-scale urban riots to massive communal disturbances; uneasy Christian-Muslim relations before and during the violence; the combatants and their goals, strategies, and national imaginaries; in-migration of various ethnoreligious communities to Poso; Islamization processes; and the opportunity structure for change due to political transitions that could provide rationales and foundations for the eruption of violence. The chapter shows that the Poso violence was triggered by “the shift of the Indonesian national imaginary in a more Islamic direction in the late New Order” (p. 156), together with demographic changes on the ground due to an influx of Muslim migrant groups that Poso’s Christians saw as an existential peril (p. 187). It also demonstrates that the organized violent conflict from 2000 to 2007 was backed by “misaligned national imaginaries between Jakarta and Poso” (p. 156).

Chapter 6 discusses the Ambon violence, examining its root causes, phases, and developments, as well as the place of Ambon and its populace (Ambonese) in the Indonesian national imaginary. Schulze argues that the Ambon chaos was driven by multiple factors, including the shifting demographic composition and power balance between Ambon’s Christian and Muslim communities resulting from the state-imposed transmigration policies, the corrosion of local customary laws (*adat*), and the increasing level of education of Ambonese Muslims (p. 225), all of which affected the region’s economic, political, and social dynamics. The Ambon havoc was rooted also

in the changing of the Indonesian national imaginary from a “secular” to a more Islamic tone during the late Suharto’s rule, which created fears and worries among Ambonese Christians (p. 190). The Ambon violence is read through “filters of history” in which lengthy collective historical memories (e.g., different experiences between Muslims and Christians during colonial times) also played active roles. This chapter also discusses competing ideas of national imaginaries and belonging among varied actors: native Ambonese Christians and Muslims, foreign combatants (e.g., jihadists from Java), as well as the central and local governments.

A few reflections might be useful for further discussion. If violence erupts in “peripheral” areas—geographically, ideologically, religiously, ethnically, or developmentally—as the author argues (pp. 5–6), why do all regions on the “edge” in this archipelagic country not experience massive violence? Why does violence take place only in a few peripheral regions? Why do all those who embrace a “peripheral” ideology not engage in violent behaviors? I wonder also why the book does not discuss Communist violence. Communists, like the other groups discussed in this volume (Islamists, separatists, jihadists, Christian fighters, etc.), also committed a sequence of killings, terrorist activities, and revolts targeting the government and various Muslim groups (e.g., the Kanigoro incident) after independence, which resulted in massive reprisal raids in 1948 (the Madiun unrest) and 1965–66 (the anti-Communist campaign) as well as challenged the national imaginary and belonging. It is surprising that the book does not investigate the renewed communal violence that broke out in various locations in Ambon between 2010 and 2011. As for the Ambon conflict, it is significant to underline the roles played by two Ambonese/Malukan Muslim military generals (Suaidi Marasabessy and Rustam Kastor) who were vital in the deployment and mobilization of the military forces, making the Christian-Muslim sectarian violence in Ambon/Maluku more vicious and massive than in Poso. This means that the role of an agency is crucial in determining the degrees or levels of violence in society. Lastly, although the idea of the contention over the national imaginary and belonging among varied state and non-state actors is valid, the question remains: who actually engaged in this contest—was it the grassroots (e.g., ordinary people or civil servants) or a few elite members within the government/authorities (e.g., high-ranking bureaucrats and military commanders) and non-state institutions (leaders of Islamist, separatist, and religious organizations)? Do ordinary people really care about the forms of the Indonesian government?

Notwithstanding these small questions, this book is undeniably valuable and stimulating. Readers will benefit from its rich ethnographic, historical, and primary data and sources on Indonesia’s varied violence since independence, as well as from the author’s thought-provoking analyses and arguments on the violence and its links to the contestation over the country’s national imaginary and belonging.

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