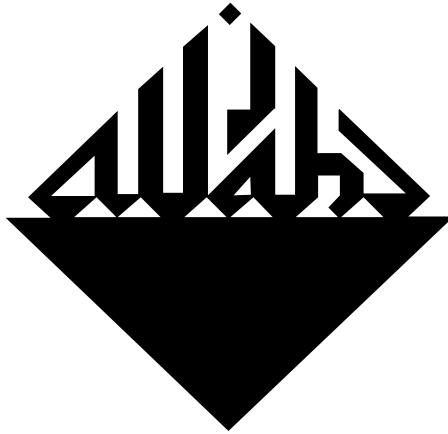


STUDIA ISLAMIKA

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Ali Munhanif

Islam, Ethnicity and Secession: Forms of Cultural Mobilization in Aceh Rebellions

Abstract: *This article explains the appeal of two different remarkable forms of cultural mobilization within the Aceh secessionist movement. The first form is the emergence of the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion in the 1950s; and the second is the rise of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) during the 1980s and 1990s. Recent trends in Aceh's political dynamics pose a striking puzzle as to how the institutional arrangements created by the government of Aceh have complicated the political dimensions of GAM. Some institutions have shaped new patterns of Aceh-Jakarta relations, but others represent a revitalization of the previous Aceh-Islamic state rebellion under DI/TII. What are the likely causes for the re-emergence of Islam coming to the center stage of Aceh politics? This article argues that the primary forces that have driven these variations in the two periods of rebellion were the interaction between the institutional design of the nation-state and the considerable opportunity for cultural mobilization at a particular institutional juncture. Secessionist ideologies such as those in Aceh are shaped and mediated by the institutional context in which they manifest.*

Keywords: Aceh-Indonesia, Secession, DI/TII and GAM, Cultural Identity.

Abstrak: Artikel ini menjelaskan dua bentuk yang mengemuka dari mobilisasi identitas kultural dalam gerakan separatisme Aceh. Pertama adalah munculnya Darul Islam (DI) pada dasawarsa 1950an; dan yang kedua adalah munculnya Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) pada 1980an dan 1990an. Kecenderungan umum dari dinamika politik di Aceh dewasa ini memunculkan sejumlah pertanyaan terkait dengan adanya lembaga-lembaga baru dalam pemerintahan daerah di Aceh, yang memperumit dimensi-dimensi politik GAM. Beberapa lembaga itu memang membentuk pola baru hubungan Aceh-Jakarta, tetapi yang lain tampak menjadi revitalisasi dari agenda pemberontakan Aceh sebelumnya, yakni DI/TII. Apa penyebab dari munculnya kembali Islam masuk di panggung politik Aceh? Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa faktor utama yang mendorong terjadinya variasi dari dua episode pemberontakan Aceh adalah interaksi antara desain kelembagaan negara-bangsa Indonesia dan peluang yang tersedia untuk mobilisasi kultural pada suatu titik pembangunan institusi tertentu. Ideologi kaum separatis seperti di Aceh dibentuk dan difasilitasi oleh konteks politik kelembagaan di mana gerakan itu mengemuka.

Kata kunci: Aceh-Indonesia, Separatisme, DI/TII and GAM, Identitas Kultural.

ملخص: يهدف هذا المقال إلى تسليط الضوء على ظهور شكلين من التعبئة الثقافية لدى حركة أتشيه الانفصالية، أولهما ظهور دار الإسلام (DI) في خمسينيات القرن العشرين، وثانيهما ظهور حركة أتشيه الحرة (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) خلال ثمانينيات وتسعينيات القرن الماضي. وقد أثارت الاتجاهات العامة لديناميكية السياسة التي حصلت في إقليم أتشيه عدة تساؤلات حول مؤسسات جديدة داخل حكومة أتشيه المحلية تعقد الأبعاد السياسية للحركة. وعلى الرغم من قيام بعض هذه المؤسسات بتشكيل نمط جديد للعلاقات بين أتشيه وجاكرتا، إلا أن بعضها الآخر قام بإحياء الأجندة السابقة لثورة أتشيه وهي دار الإسلام والجيش الإسلامي الإندونيسي (DI/TII). والسؤال الذي يطرح نفسه هنا، ماهي الأسباب التي أدت إلى عودة ظهور الإسلام إلى المشهد السياسي في أتشيه؟ يرى هذا المقال أن العامل الأساسي الذي دفع إلى حدوث حلقتين من ثورة أتشيه هو وجود التفاعل بين التصميم المؤسسي للدولة القطرية والفرصة المتوفرة للقيام بالتعبئة الثقافية في بعض المؤسسات الخاصة. وكانت الأيديولوجيات التي تبناها الانفصاليون في هذا الإقليم تم تشكيلها من خلال السياق السياسي المؤسسي الذي يمكن الحركة من تأكيده وجودها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أتشيه – إندونيسيا، الانفصالية، DI/TII (دار الإسلام / الجيش الإسلامي الإندونيسي) و GAM (حركة أتشيه الحرة)، الهوية الثقافية.

Recent trends in Aceh political dynamics pose a striking puzzle as to how the institutional arrangements, created by the government of Aceh, has complicated the political dimensions of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM). This puzzle is remarkable, not only in that the creation of such institutions signal the end of long standing secular character of the GAM (i.e. the Aceh-ethnic identity has served as dominant ideological frame since 1978), but also because of their strong appeal for an Islamic state. Since 2006, a number of institutions have been established to implement the 2005 Helsinki Accord between the central government and the GAM by creating regional-political institutions. Some institutions may have shaped new patterns of Aceh-Jakarta relations, but others may not reveal the true agenda of the GAM. Rather, these institutions represent a revitalization of the old Aceh-Islamic rebellion under the leadership of Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia (DI/TII). These institutions include Wali Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (The Darussalam Aceh Supreme Patron, 2007), Majelis Adat Aceh (Aceh Customary Council, 2006), Majelis Persatuan Ulama Aceh (Council for the United-Ulama of Aceh, 2008), Wilayatul Hisbah Aceh (Aceh Council of Public Morality, 2009), Dewan Syari'at Islam (Islamic Law Board, 2007); and the most explicit institution to excute Islamic law, Qanun Jinayat (Islamic Penal Code, 2014).

Islam is not a new force in defining the character of Aceh secessionist ideology. Its political assertion that Aceh is an Islamic region is the central tenet of Aceh rebellions. Its political origins date back to the mid 19th century when the struggle against the Dutch colonization occurred. But never before has an Islamic aspiration espousing such institutional push matched the Aceh's current level of social and political support. This trend of institutional arrangement demonstrates that the penetration of the Islamic state alternative in Aceh signals the strong demands for making Aceh more religious or more Islamic; an aspiration that is apparently sidelined by the GAM's leadership. The question may then be posed: What are the likely causes for an Islamic alternative coming to the center stage of Aceh politics after the Helsinki Accord?

This article explains the appeal of two different remarkable phenomena within the broader forms of the Aceh Secessionist Movement in Indonesia: 1) the emergence of the Darul Islam rebellion in the 1950s, and 2) the rise of the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh

Merdeka, GAM) during the 1980s and 1990s. My concern is not with the contemporary development of Aceh, but rather with the historical change and continuity of Aceh rebellions. This article argues that the primary forces that have driven these variations, in the two episodes of rebellion, were the interactions between the institutional design of the nation-state and the considerable opportunity for cultural mobilization at a particular institutional juncture. That is to say, such secessionist ideologies in Aceh were shaped and mediated by the institutional context in which they were manifested. Political institutions have a direct impact on the development of cultural identity, its use in political mobilization, as well as the means available to negotiate group claims (Horowitz 1985, 229–35). Ethnic elites, as leading actors in the rebellions, serve as agents to uphold political mobilization defining the interests of the region on the basis of their cultural markers.

Embedded in the issues of cultural identity and institutional challenge, however, is another series of questions that this article will address. In particular, what are the intrinsic variations in the ideological foundations of the insurgency for these two specific episodes? Why, for example, did the first rebellion occur in the 1950s linking itself with other Islamic state rebellions in the Republic? Why did GAM in the early 1980s appeal to ethnic roots in its political revolt? Similarly, why did the rise of the two rebellions occur in such varying ways; for instance, led by the ulama in the Darul Islam and by secular intelligentsias in GAM? I employed an institutional analytical framework to explain the variation of the Aceh secessionist mobilizations.

Scholars of nationalism and nationalist conflicts have developed and refined approaches to the study of ethnic secessionism in the context of global ethnic conflicts.¹ However, most theoretical discussions have been with reference to Africa, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. It is interesting to note that although many secessionist movements have emerged in Southeast Asia, literature on ethnic secessionism tends to be almost anti-theoretical. This phenomenon is evident in Horowitz's encyclopedic study on ethnic conflict. Horowitz only briefly mentions ethnic secessionist movements in Southeast Asia (Horowitz 1985, 213–38). Area specialists focusing on Aceh illustrated the other trend in this academic sphere. Literature on this particular topic was in many ways impressive, and for any one seeking explanations of the root causes and possible common patterns underlying this ethnic secessionist

phenomenon a number of different conclusions were offered (Dijk 1986; Kell 1995; Morris 1983, 1985; Sjamsuddin 1984). My comment on the trend is straightforward: the focus on the unique and complex circumstances of the Aceh case—as commonly promoted by Southeast Asianists—neglected general explanations and the theoretical aspects of this particular secessionist movement.

There are at least three perspectives employed in the study of Aceh secessionist movements: First, strong state theory states that common cultural basis for plural societies requires a strong state or regime to uphold national integration. As a consequence, by stressing on the territorial history of ethnic groups this theory suggests that ethnic groups define themselves by reference to their history in a particular homeland territory. Should they occupy a homeland which is within the borders of a state controlled by members of an alien ethnic group, they will defend their inalienable rights to retain control of their own culture, language and territory (Aspinal 2003; Aspinal and Crouch 2003; Morris 1983, 1985; Sjamsuddin 1984); Second is “internal colonialism”, which is generally based on class analytical framework. It states that ethnic nationalism has its roots in the uneven regional economic development between the centers and the peripheries of multi-ethnic societies. Such a relationship may in turn be the result of policies of “internal colonialism.” Perceptions of relative deprivation may develop, and they generate demands for a better bargain. If the demands are ignored, societies on the peripheries will call for secession legitimated by reference to ethnic differences (R. T. McVey et al. 1981; Reid 1974, 2012); Third, elite theory that states that social elites in ethnic groups seek to promote their own careers and interest in politics by acting as ethnic entrepreneurs. These ethnic entrepreneurs are identified as the educated youth, the intelligentsia, or the professionals. Other theorists of ethnic movement try to deny the validity of single-causal explanation and argue that secessionist movements would seem to emerge when one or a combination characterizes a particular situation (Brown 1988; Kell 1995). Rather than taking a side in single theoretical framework, this article takes an eclectic position to combine those perspectives in explaining the Aceh rebellions.

As mentioned earlier, this article introduces insights from historical institutionalism to interrogate the politics of secession in Aceh. This approach to politics is appealing especially in its ability to explain

variations and irregularities in political outcomes. The hypothesis is that, secessionist ideology does not emerge spontaneously from distinct cultural markers; rather, it is shaped by the institutional construct of the state emerging during a certain period of political development. Institutions, therefore, are a central point for the analysis to explicate the processes of ideology creation, transformation, and politicization that serve as analytical core of identity politics. Following this insight, institution is defined as “a materialized structure of the nation-state” (Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992, 2). This definition refers to what Peter A. Hall (1998, 17), a prominent scholar who developed institutional analytical frameworks in political science, recalled as an analysis which conceived

... institutions as the formal, informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity... [They] can range from the rules of a constitutional order or the standard operating procedures of a bureaucracy to the conventions governing trade union behavior.²

The aim of this article is, therefore, to observe important variables of the Acehese rebellions in order to find a general explanation on this particular ethnic secessionist movement. Based on the unique appearance of the Aceh case, discernment of particular elements revealed a common pattern within the framework of theoretical discussion on ethnic-nationalist politics. This exercise led to focusing attention on the character and the impact of the state institutions of Indonesia as key elements in explaining the emergence and the development of the Aceh secessionist movements.

State-Building and Regional Rebellion: A Background

Indonesian society is multi-ethnic in character, and yet the circumstances in which the modern state was formed promoted the identification of the state within the region inhabited by a major ethnic community. Ethnic minority groups have been marginalized in the state political and economic development. This marginalization occurred especially in both the fact that the senior positions in the state machinery came to be virtually monopolised by the dominant ethnic majority and also, more importantly, in the centralizing character of state economic development. In the Indonesian geographical context, central governments in Java are associated with both domination of the

ethnic majority and a center for economic distribution (R. T. McVey et al. 1981, 21–40).

It is the association of the state, and hence the economic well being, with the majority ethnic groups that provides the starting point for explaining the development of ethnic secessionist movements among the Indonesian ethnic minorities. The centralizing character of the Indonesian state derives from circumstances of its formation. Although Indonesia is unique in having achieved both its independence and its colonial system since the seventeenth (17th) century, it also shared similar patterns with most of the states in the post-colonial world. It was the Dutch colonial conquest that shaped the character of the state. The Malay-Indonesian archipelago comprises up to two hundred and sixteen distinct linguistic groups. However, the eight largest (82 percent of the population) are predominant in the major islands of Java, Sumatra, Borneo and Sulawesi, where important Islamic sultanates and kingdoms shared both the experience of conquest and Dutch colonization and the struggle for ethnic-regional freedom (Brown 1988, 157–71; R. T. McVey et al. 1981, 19–20). Batavia—found within modern day Jakarta—named after the Roman designation for Holland—located in northwestern part of Java, was the most important city during the Dutch colonial administration as it became the home office for the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies. From the eighteenth century onwards, the main geo-political division in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago was the division between Java under effective control and cultural development of the Dutch and regions of the other major islands. The non-Javanese regions were meanwhile still referred to as underdeveloped (“*terbelakang*”) and less educated (McVey 2003, 7–9; Morris 1983, 28).

The division was consolidated during the subsequent two centuries of Dutch colonial education policy for the limited native population and then the early period of independence. While the policy was meant to “[transform] the native in the archipelago into a modern civilization” (Benda 1980, 160), it is in the cities of Java that the Dutch established learning institutions ranging from preliminary schools to medical academies for the natives. The elite of Javanese families took advantage of the policies and their educated presence led them into becoming the lead actors of national awakenings. Cities in Java, Jakarta in particular, emerged as “the locus of political power, cultural core,

and major concentration of economic distribution” (McVey et al. 1981, 40). This pattern of Java and other regions’ cultural relations set the development of national character of the Indonesian state to be dominated by Javanese culture, as many figures of nationalist organizations in the early 20th century came and studied in Java. The independence of Indonesia in 1945 and its subsequent history came to be portrayed in terms of the development and nationalism of Java, with other regions being portrayed as less significant.

After independence, all Indonesian regions experienced political tensions as a result of attempts by the central government in Jakarta to expand influence and attempts by regions to defend their autonomy (Bemmelen and Raben 2011). However, ethnic-regional secessionist movements in Indonesia cannot be explained simply in terms of center-periphery tensions since it is the character of state and the consequence of its assimilationist patterns that have determined the nature of the ensuing politics. It must be noted that although the Indonesian state cannot be identified with any one indigenous linguistic group, it can be characterised in terms of the cultural and geographic divisions that have become so politically evident between the “overwhelmingly modernized and bureaucratized state system in Java,” and “the most disaffected regional communities...in the outer islands” (McVey et al. 1981, 37). When the state attempted to introduce the values and institutions associated with a modern state system, it implied that the central government should integrate and assimilate the ethnic groups along the peripheral regions within the fold of the dominant cultural groups. This in turn created a situation that suggested the values and institutions of the latter were in some way inferior. Such a dominating character of Javanese culture within the Indonesian state was especially overwhelmed during Suharto’s New Order. McVey (1981, 37) stated that during this particular period of institutional development: “... insofar as members of the ethnic groups have a role in the power structure, they have performed that function in the context of new state, subject to central government approval”.

Historically speaking, the expansion and penetration of the Indonesian state were implemented partly by military force, but also by reinforced policies of administration within the framework of a unitarian state system. This included the use of *bahasa* Indonesia as a national language, the promotion of the modern education system, and

the centralized nature of governance institutions (Sjamsuddin 1984, 56; Sukma 2003, 52–55). Perhaps the two politically significant aspects of state policy were, however, the policy of reorganizing the military between 1948 and 1953 and the introduction of provincial government institutions in 1950 (Dijk 1986, 77–90). In the post-revolutionary war of Indonesia, local unit guerillas involved in the war for independence were bypassed by the central Government as it recruited Dutch educated traditional-elites to become leading commanders in a new Indonesian military institution (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, TNI), especially in the regions where the local guerilla fought (Sjamsuddin 1984, 52–57). This is the case of the DI/TII rebellion in West Java under the leadership of Kartosuwirjo.³

The same policy was applied to the civil administration (Morris 1985, 27–40; Sjamsuddin 1984, 60–64). As new division of the provincial governments were established, with nine provinces across Indonesia, the authorities relied on members of the former pre-war bureaucracy. In some cases, outsiders to particular regions were appointed to such positions in the civil offices. This policy gave rise to regional feelings of discontent and increased accusations that the central government in Jakarta wanted to restore the traditional elite to power, as van Dijk (1986, 256) noted:

At the proclamation of Indonesian national independence the provincial governors in the rudimentary administration of the time were still mostly sons of the region...[At] the lower levels the Republican Government simply took over the local officials who worked for the Dutch and Japanese. After formal recognition of independence the situation was reversed, and as a rule governors no longer were natives of the region of which they were head.

The periodic expansion and penetration of the Republic in Jakarta to other regions provoked numerous rebellions. From the early 1950s onwards, the majority of insurgent activities that arose in the Archipelago took place on the part of regional communities (*pemberontakan daerah*).⁴ In regards to Aceh, the central government policy on Provincial Institution in 1950 to incorporate this region into provincial part of North Sumatra, and headed by a non-Acehnese, was clearly a major situational change in the formation of their ethnic group identity. This produced correspondingly major changes in their ethnic-regional challenges of the central government. However, it is important to note that the Darul Islam rebellion of Aceh during the 1950s had

a definitive republican, nationalist character (Kell 1995, 3–11; Morris 1985, 7–18; Sjamsuddin 1984, 23–51). In 1959 the rebellion ended and Jakarta recognized Aceh as a special administrative region (*daerah istimewa*) with autonomy in religious affairs, law and Islamic education. A native Acehnese, Ali Hasymi, was named as its first governor. From then on, most Acehnese were reduced to trying to negotiate favourable conditions through political parties associated with anti-government and/or Islamic ideologies, and they resolved to establish an Islamic society in Aceh (Kell 1995; Sjamsuddin 1984, 17–18).

However, by the mid-1980s a new form of rebellion in Aceh arose declaring a Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM). Unlike the Darul Islam in the 1950s, the GAM's concerns were predominantly secular in nature. The movement's propaganda "made a clearly ethnic appeal to rise up against Javanese colonialism," (Kell 1995, 14) and paid great attention to "Aceh's natural wealth and past glories" (Kell 1995, 61). Not only did The Declaration of Independence of Aceh-Sumatera make no mention of religious identities, the key leaders within GAM were dominated by secular-elite intelligentsias who emerged during the process of economic development under the New Order (Kell 1995, 67–68). By highlighting the economic resources of the region, and by giving voice to a sense of resentment against the Javanese-dominated state, the elites within GAM promoted Acehnese distrust of solutions within institutional boundaries of the Indonesian state. Thus according to GAM, independence from Indonesia is the final solution for the failure of institutional building of Indonesia within the framework of just, equal center-periphery relations.

Traditional Elite, Islamic State, and Rebellion: DI/TII

The process of incorporation into, and penetration by, the modern state was clearly a major situational change for the Aceh community in post-war Indonesia. Consequently, it produced a shift in the Acehnese ethnic-regional identity. How then did this shift in identity promote the secessionist rebellion during the 1950s under the banner of Islam? Investigation of the roots of the Aceh Darul Islam rebellion revealed that the formation of an ethnic-regional identity, on a popular level, was accompanied by the dramatic decline in the power, authority and status of the traditional institutions—especially the Aceh nobility—as

a result of modern state penetration. Both changes contributed to the development of the appeals to primordial sentiments which were useful for political mobilization during the rebellion.

The crisis of traditional elites in Aceh can be traced to the periodic decline of the Sultanate of Aceh and the expansion of Dutch conquest in North Sumatra between the 18th and early 19th centuries. During Dutch colonial times, there was rivalry “to gain control over the politics and economy of Aceh between *ulama* (Muslim scholars and clerics) and nobility (the *uleebalang*) within the sultanate of Aceh” (Kell 1995, 17–18; Morris 1985, 37–40).⁵ Concerned primarily with the defence of the Acehnese sultanate territories, the *uleebalang* could not provide the unity necessary for resistance against the Dutch. The *uleebalang* compromised with the colonial government and as administrators in the colonial government, the nobility became politically dependent on Dutch power and they were alienated from the wider population. By the early 18th century, as the “sultanate of Aceh became a weak institution, largely without influence in the internal affairs of territory” (Kell 1995, 19), the struggle for resistance was led by the *ulama* who had always been revered in Aceh but had been largely uninvolved in the running of society. During the 1880s, as Anthony Reid (1979, 60) noted, “the war was gradually transformed into genuinely popular cause under *ulama* inspiration”. The foremost ideologue and tactician of the holy war was Teungku Chik di Tiro of Pidie (Reid 1979, 58). However, by 1903 a stable *uleebalang* administration under Dutch control was in place and, in 1913, the Dutch could at last be said to have conquered Aceh, the *ulama* having finally given up the guerrilla struggle (Morris 1985, 71–73).

In the late 1920s a reformist religious revival was initiated by the *ulama*, inspired by “the new forces [of the Middle Eastern reformers] transforming both the Islamic and Indonesian worlds” (Noer 1984, 42–46). The reformist movement swept the rural areas of Aceh, providing the Acehnese with a hope for a better future for their society. Reid (1979) observed that social and economic conditions in the early twentieth century Aceh were conducive to the success of the revival: the collapse of pepper production in the mid-1910s led to high unemployment in the 1930s, and consequently the Acehnese were drawn to the teachings of the reformist *ulama*. This religious-reformist enthusiasm culminated in the formation in 1939 of the All-Aceh Ulama Association (Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh, PUSA). The organization was “the nearest

approach to a popular movement of an all-Aceh character” (Reid 1979, 64). The PUSA Acehese demographics rendered it acceptable to the Dutch, for whom the activities of Indonesian nationalists were a greater cause of concern. However, the divisions between the nobility, the ulama, and their subjects became bitter in the fading years of Dutch rule in Aceh, “all of the anti-establishment forces gradually associated themselves with the Ulama Association (PUSA), transforming them into a more political organization” (Morris 1985, 77; Reid 2012).

A short period of Japanese occupation in the former Dutch East Indies was welcomed by the ulama (Sjamsuddin 1984, 31–33). With the collapse of the Japanese war effort in 1945, Aceh joined the struggle for Indonesian independence. In October 1945, the ulama indicated their support for the new republic with the “Declaration of Ulama Throughout Aceh,” signed by four prominent religious leaders, including Daud Beureuh, and declaring the struggle a holy war (Morris 1985, 99–111; Sjamsuddin 1984, 39). This support did not, however, extend to the “new official Republican leadership” in Aceh, which “was virtually to a man the *uleebalang* establishment,” (Morris 1985, 107) and many of whose members looked forward to the restoration of Dutch power and of the prewar status quo. In these circumstances, as Reid (1979, 90) noted, “the revolutionary impulse came from a coalition of PUSA ulama and young educated in the Islamic learning institutions”.

The Ulama resistance movements soon became social revolutions as these groups confronted the *uleebalang* (Kahin 1984). By March 1946, the nobility had been decimated, and the political, economic, and military power in Aceh fell into the hands of the PUSA ulama and forces associated with it. From then on, the only institution that defined the character of anti-Dutch nationalist movements was the ulama. During the central government’s preoccupation with the struggle against the re-imposition of Dutch authority in Java, from the late-1940s to the mid-1950s, this new emerging elite in Aceh operated with almost complete autonomy (Kell 1995, 45–46). Its members consolidated their positions within the Acehese social structure and controlled all political and economic activities, including “a lucrative barter trade across the Straits of Malacca with Penang and Singapore” (Kell 1995, 46). Aceh’s choice to integrate itself into the struggle for the Indonesian independence was mainly inspired by the desire to run its

regional affairs without interference from Jakarta. The Acehese elites also expected that their region's contribution to the national revolution would be acknowledged in the new Indonesian state. However, the new-formed government in Jakarta soon demonstrated that it had no intention of creating of an autonomous Acehese region and preserving the role of existing traditional elites in governing their territory. With the central government policy of provincial division in 1949, in which Aceh was incorporated into the Province of North Sumatra, the Acehese community came to see that their support of the new Republic was betrayed (Kell 1995, 18–19; Sjamsuddin 1984, 57–63).

The process was furthered by the disruption of traditional authority structures. As Jakarta attempted to establish leadership of the modern state machinery in Aceh, based on modern-Westernized measures, it removed the ulama from positions of political and administrative power and replaced them with new elites, as administrators over the region⁶ (Dijk 1986, 236). The cumulative effect of these pressures on Aceh was, as noted by Morris (1985, 57),

... a situation where completing elites, ulama and young educated in Islamic schools, were seeking ways to regain support and legitimacy in their community. Thus they were in a position to take advantage of the incipient ethnic-regional consciousness by articulating and ideologising it.

The situation gave rise to “anti-Jakarta” sentiments, particularly in the period of centralization of state institutions and military organizations. With the undermining of the *uleebalang* influence, it was the ulama who maintained the claims of leadership in Aceh territory. The emergence of the Darul Islam revolt in West Java in 1949, followed by other regions in South Kalimantan (1951) and South Sulawesi (1952), facilitated the popular discontent amongst the Acehese arising from the Indonesian government's disruptive policies in the region (Dijk 1986). Subsequently various political movements and militias were formed, and although few groups demanded a separate state of Aceh, the dominant trend was to declare the Acehese rebellion as a part of the Darul Islam in West Java, Indonesia. Within this framework, the Aceh Darul Islam movement against the Indonesian republic did not seek to secede but, instead, to transform it.

Like the Darul Islam movements in other regions, the role of the ulama in the Acehese rebellion was significant. The population was mobilized by religious leaders around Islamic symbols; not exclusively

ethnic, but at the same time tied with Indonesian nationalist visions (Morris 1985, 111–17; Sjamsuddin 1984). While the idea of an Islamic state might have been unclear, in Aceh in the 1950s, the mobilization for rebellion developed out of attempts by elites to respond to institutional changes that threatened the traditional structure and authority: namely the Muslim communities in Indonesia. By expressing the idea of an Islamic state in the context of an ethnic-regional identity (i.e., the assertion that the cultural integrity of Indonesian Muslim community makes self-government not just a desirable goal but an inalienable right), the ulama of Aceh ensured the escalation of political tension with the Jakarta administration into a direct confrontation between vision of “secular-state” and vision of “Islamic state” of Indonesia.

Two important political developments in post-independence Indonesia contributed to the Islamic mobilization in Aceh. Firstly, as the ulama power and authority base grew stronger during the Indonesian revolution, the ulama leadership began to dominate the administrative structure of Aceh-Indonesia. As a result, Islamic symbols and identity became a source of unification of the Acehnese in their relationship with central government. Secondly, the failure of political elites in Jakarta to adopt an Islamic constitution in Indonesia in 1945 had been particularly important in signifying the formulation of vision of an Islamic state for the Darul Islam rebellions (Boland 1984, 20; Dijk 1986). Thus, linked to the formation of provincial institutions in which Aceh was incorporated into non-Acehnese-led North Sumatera government in 1948, the supported Islamic State vision determined the success of the ulama to integrate the political interest of Acehnese territory into its religious markers.

The Acehnese population greatly supported the rebellion that began in 1953. The Ulama, high ranking civil servants and ex-military commanders constituted the core members of the rebellion but tens of thousands of villagers joined (Dijk 1986, 219). Even if the supply of arms limited their ability to fully participate, they supported the rebellion by monitoring Indonesian troop movements or providing material support (Sjamsuddin 1984, 81–86). As Sjamsuddin (1984, 83) noted, the ulama could mobilize the population in large part because of the respect they enjoyed among the Acehnese and because of their Islamic goals.

The settlement of the rebellion narrowed the field of possibilities for future resistance in Aceh. Three aspects were important in the resolution of hostilities. First, the declining struggle for an Islamic state in other regions with the capture of its central leader, Kartosowirjo-West Java, in 1960, and the assassination of Kahar Muzakar-South Sulawesi, in 1961, created a situation in which the Acehnese leaders began to question the moral objective for the establishment of an Islamic state (Boland 1984, 63; Dijk 1986, 214).

Second, the compromise with the Republic allowed the Acehnese elite to redefine its objectives in regional terms. Meanwhile, the elites abandoned their broader struggle. In order to weaken the Acehnese aspirations, in late 1958 the Indonesian government reinstated Aceh's provincial status, returned many PUSA members to their previous positions, and reassigned Acehnese soldiers to serve in the region. When a cease-fire was reached in early 1959, rebel leaders were split into groups between those who rejected the Jakarta compensation and those who compromised and accepted a settlement on Aceh. However, most rebels abandoned Daud Beureueh's group, the radical faction, and joined Hasan Saleh's which negotiated a compromise with the government. In the end, the government agreed to extending wide-ranging autonomy in religion, education, and customary law, under a new status as a "special region" (*daerah istimewa*) (Sjamsuddin 1984, 81–84).⁷

Third, such an agreement with Jakarta further divided the Acehnese political elite. Most civil servants and administrators of the region, who later joined the Darul Islam rebellion, accepted the settlement with the Republic. They were not ulama, but had strongly supported the PUSA leadership during the revolution. Agreements that were perceived as a return to the special status of Aceh meant a return of power and cultural autonomy for them. This segment of the political elites served as the primary leaders who persuaded the Acehnese community to settle for an Islamic Aceh, far short of the broader goal of an Islamic state for Indonesia. The peace was reached between Darul Islam of Aceh and Jakarta in 1962 and brought Aceh into the Indonesian nation.

The New Order, Development and Repression: GAM

By the end of the 1980s another Acehnese rebellion against the central government arose: the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM). This second rebellion emerged with different leaders, agendas,

and forms of mobilization. Nevertheless, its rise can be explained as an unintended consequence of the three pillars of the New Order's institutional development: political homogenization, military force to eliminate political opposition, and economic growth (Sulistiyanto 2001, 213–30). Although a peace settlement was reached between Aceh leaders and the central government in 1962, the authoritarian rule of the New Order tightened the institutional constraints on Aceh and promoted greater integration into the Indonesian nation. This political development created its own untenable tensions and, in the case of Aceh-Jakarta relations, led to escalating violence. The argument is straight forward: the defeat of the Acehnese in the Darul Islam uprising, the strong sense of communal identity, and their special status, created the political and social environment in which negative reaction to the economic exploitation of their region and the use of military force to resolve center-regional problems found fertile soil.

Politically speaking, less than a decade after Aceh was granted special region status, a major political change took place in Jakarta: the fall of Sukarno in 1965 and the emergence of the New Order government under Suharto. Aceh was one of the Indonesian regions where the new government was received warmly, primarily because of its strong anti-Communist stance (Boland 1984, 29). However, the Acehnese soon found that their early optimism was misplaced. The authoritarian character of Indonesian state, in the ending years of Sukarno's rule, continued to appeal for institutional development of the New Order. Not only did the regime have no intention of giving wider scope to Islam as a social and political force, Aceh's special status faded rapidly with the centralization of political, economic and military powers. The regime legitimized its centralizing character by promoting homogenization, military force to suppress any opposition—especially those who were separatist in nature—and economic development. In the political sphere, mobilization in favor of an Islamic state was no longer tolerated. Furthermore, Suharto and the military consolidated their power relative to the legislature, political parties and business groups, which became very restricted. As Robison (1986, 154) noted, “patrimonial networks were the only means left of accessing resources and power in Suharto's New Order”.

In 1968, the Acehnese provincial assembly implemented elements of Islamic law through the Regional Regulation No. 6, providing the

institutional arrangements for Aceh as an Islamic province (Feener 2013, 16–18). Despite its limited application, to minor issues such as holidays in public offices and schools on Friday to give Muslims time to go for Friday prayers, the regulation was never approved by Jakarta. In the realm of education, the ulama proposed modifications that would have reconciled the traditional Islamic schools and the modern-public elementary schools, so that the Acehnese would be exposed to both. The proposal never received an answer from the Ministry of Education and Culture, and was therefore never implemented. Within these constraints, the ulama could no longer promote Islam in Aceh's political realm and they were restricted even regarding Islamic education.

In 1973, the New Order took steps toward curtailing all political parties, especially those associated with the struggle for an Islamic state (Liddle 1985, 97–119). Through manipulation, co-optation, and repression, the New Order virtually rendered impotent the Islamic organizations. It maintained the ban on Masyumi, the largest Islamic party in the 1950s, and prevented its former leaders from leading a government-created version of the party under the Development Unity Party (PPP). Its creation further weakened Islamist political aspirations by forcing all Muslim social organizations with different ideological backgrounds under the same umbrella. As the vehicles to promote Islamic values were constrained, many ulama in Aceh sought to utilize new channels for access to the regime and its patronage network. They joined the government party, Golongan Karya (Golkar) as well as the regime-sponsored Indonesian Council of Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI). All these political and institutional developments in Indonesia have contributed to the declining legitimacy of regional ulama organization, especially the PUSA, in Aceh.

As the ulama's role declined, the central government fostered the development of the technocratic elite of Aceh (Kell 1995, 87). Having received a modern education in Jakarta and abroad, yet strongly committed to Islamic values, this elite was sympathetic to the government's modernization programs. The elite rose rapidly in administrative positions, the military, the provincial government, and the university, especially at the local Syiah Kuala University (Amal 1997, 218-219). The technocratic vision began to supersede the Islamic vision of the ulama. Through the powerful relationships among the elites, the central government was able to extend its influence and

create a constituency with a strong interest in preserving the New Order's institutional platform. The division between the elites and the Acehese community explained the relatively weaker support for the Acehese secession movement that emerged in the mid-1970s and was revived at the end of 1980s.

Economic development was the primary pillar of the New Order regime's legitimacy. In Aceh, this particular aspect of modernization was closely linked to the development of central-regional industrial enclaves. In 1971, large reserves of liquid natural gas (LNG) were discovered in North Aceh. By 1977, an industrial zone had been created near Lhoksumawe where most of the LNG reserves were located. By the 1980s, Aceh was supplying 30% of the country's oil and gas exports, which were the government's main source of revenue. Other energy-dependent industries were also established, such as the Aceh fertilizer plant and cement factories (Schwarz 2001, 311).

However, problems remained due to the economic resource exploitation in Aceh that were directed by Jakarta and followed a centralized pattern of fiscal management policy. The logic of the system meant that a unitary state institution, with national development goals, superseded any regional or provincial considerations. As a result, almost all of the revenues from the investments moved directly to foreign investors, their Indonesian partners in Jakarta, and the central government. The provincial government, in turn, received its annual budget through a system of allocations at the central government level and retained few taxation rights. Therefore, the provincial budget amounted to only a very small fraction of the total revenues generated in the province. Such a centralized financial institution created a situation in which the Aceh population received only a few benefits derived from this economic web.⁸ A large proportion of Acehese consequently saw little progress in their living standards, while LNG production and other industrial ventures developed.

Another pillar that constituted the New Order institutional approach to Aceh was the expansion of the military. Under the New Order regime, the military played a central role. In line with the notion of a unitary state system, the armed forces saw themselves as the ultimate guardians of national unity. The strong military presence in Aceh since the early 1970s, as Crouch (1988, 46) noted, "is a consequence of institutional arrangements of the New Order's policy on national unity

and political stability”. Islamic state politics was co-opted as they were seen as a threat to the state, and Aceh had been a main region where the issue of the Islamic state had been strong. While a negotiated solution, mediated by Acehnese military officers and politicians, allowed Islamic rebels to reintegrate into Acehnese society peacefully, the armed forces were not as tolerant of separatist rebels in the 1970s and in the late 1980s (Kell 1995, 57). Moreover, disgruntled elites resented the central government’s control over LNG and other industrial production. As a result, it was common for the armed forces to use military repression as a primary tool to maintain national unity and political stability.

In October 1976, Hasan Tiro, an educated young man of Aceh whose family tree dated back to Aceh’s sultanate, founded the Free Aceh Movement (*Gerakan Aceh Merdeka*, GAM). He was a local businessman and had previously been a representative of the Darul Islam at the United Nations. The GAM’s first emergence was marginal and had garnered little support. The GAM denounced the “Javanese” colonial empire, the exploitation of Aceh’s natural resources, and the use of military force to maintain control. With only a few hundred supporters, the movement declared the independence of Aceh-Sumatra in 1977.

Raising the GAM flag in various locations in Aceh districts, most of movement members undertook no significant military actions. This secessionist movement was formed mainly by intellectuals, technocrats and businessmen. Morris (1985) and Kell (1995) agreed, in their respective analysis, that the movement failed to capture wide support, in part, because it barely mentioned Islam. Certainly, the absence of an Islamic agenda kept the ulama from supporting the movement and a few even denounced it. Brown (1988, 116–27) argued that among the broader population, it was too early in the development of the province’s large economic resources for strong resentment at the few socio-economic benefits of industrial production to have arisen. The ethnic appeals to an Acehnese independent state did not seem to capture a wide audience. In the mid 1970s and the early 1980s, the GAM was eclipsed by a political trend among the Acehnese ulama and technocratic elite to integrate the territory into the Indonesian nation by maintaining their links with central institutions, such as bureaucracy, political parties (Golkar and the PPP) and Islamic social organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama.

However, the GAM secessionist movement re-emerged in the late 1980s. The re-energized movement seemed to enjoy much broader support among the local population and, although the number of fighters remained relatively small, they were better armed (Kell 1995, 43–48). Yet, as in the 1970s, the Acehnese were not necessarily supportive of the idea of an independent Aceh but they saw an opportunity to share in common grievances against the Indonesian government. A couple of significant factors contributing to the stronger influence of the GAM were the continuing presence of the armed forces to protect industrial plants and the increasing gap created between the wealth surrounding LNG production relative to the property of the Acehnese population.

It is important to note from this GAM second emergence is the fact that, while the movement held ethnic-regional mobilization, the Acehnese had shifted the nature of their grievances. From the Darul Islam rebellion, they retained their sense of identity, which was distinct from that the rest of Indonesian nation. During interviews, Yusni Sabi, a Muslim intellectual from Aceh who has served as a member of Humanitarian Pause Committee during Abdurrahman Wahid's peace initiative for Aceh in 2000, stated that:

[The] Acehnese had fought for an Islamic Indonesia, had lost, and had retreated in a regionalist defense of Islam and local culture. As they become more marginalized, the autonomy for Islam was never implemented and only a small portion of the elite seemed to reap benefits from the New Order regime.⁹

Under the New Order Regime's political influence, the exploitation of natural resources, LNG industrial production, and increased military presence, the Acehnese had little means to gain benefits from the development in their territory.

The New Order's response to the rebellion was out of proportion to the estimate of GAM forces. Since 1989, parts of Aceh, especially its northern and western regions, were designated as a Military Operation region (*Daerah Operasi Militer*, DOM). In July 1990, 6,000 troops were sent to supplement the 6,000 already in the province, while GAM forces were numbered at only a few hundred (Sukma 2003, 24; Sulistiyanto 2001, 37). By 1993, the rebellion was crushed but the armed forces continued their operation. Since it was estimated that thousands of villagers supported the GAM, soldiers used torture,

arbitrary killings, arrests, detentions, and other means of weeding out supporters. According to an Indonesian human rights group, Forum Peduli HAM (Forum for Human Rights Concern), which was founded after the end of the New Order in 1998, 2,000 people were killed during the decade of DOM implementation in Aceh. Hundreds also disappeared and more than 2,300 people were tortured (Sulistiyanto 2001, 40–42).

The continued use of violence to suppress GAM activities, even after the sudden collapse of New Order, has brought cumulative grievances from the Acehnese as they share common suffering and alienation within the Indonesian state. The GAM secessionist movement then retained tremendous symbolic force as an organization through which all Acehnese grievances could be channeled. As a consequence, when democratization of the Indonesian regimes in post-Suharto New Order allowed cumulative grievances to be expressed, a civilian movement began to demand a referendum on the status of Aceh (Sukma 2003, 28–35). Although Jakarta has never recognized the demand for the referendum, it is evident that a large proportion of the population supported independence.

The paper highlights the importance of events and political situations such as the development a small armed-secessionist struggle to the widely-supported civilian movement that was mostly shaped by the New Order institutional legacy. With the use of widespread violence, the New Order regime shifted the Acehnese identity further away from an Indonesian national identity. As Brown (1988, 123) noted regarding the armed separatist movements in Southeast Asia, “the terms of inclusion in the nation became defined as the silent acceptance of exploitation of natural resources for national interests, with few local benefits and violent military repression of suspected opposition”. Because of such a situation, many Acehnese abandoned their loyalty to the Indonesian nation. The objectives of creating an Islamic state had long given way to disillusionment and, now, the Acehnese are disgusted with the treatment of Jakarta’s armed forces. Many people in Aceh suffered from the military operation and, therefore, many more Acehnese shifted their support toward secession. From a marginal movement beginning, the GAM ethnic appeals came to symbolize resistance not only to the New Order but also to the Indonesian state and nation.

Institution, Culture and the Ideology of Secession: Concluding Remarks

As the purpose of this article is to explain the continuity and change in Acehese rebellions, the two episodes of ethnic-secessionist movement has offered several answers that illustrate a direction opposite to that which most studies on Acehese secession have suggested. It is the interaction between institutional changes and opportunities that explain why such a politics of ethnic identity arose, and in the way how ethnic and religious identities were politicized during the two periods of rebellion. Cultural approaches to the phenomenon and most of area specialists tend to interpret the meaning of the emergence of identity political movements by focusing on their cultural dimension. Consequently, as the Acehese case demonstrates, there are no significant differences between the historical, cultural, and social profiles among the ethnic movements in the two periods of mobilization.

My analysis to the two episodes of rebellion reveals the strength of Islam for mobilization in the first Acehese rebellion and its virtual absence for the mobilization of the GAM leaders. Thus the analysis moves beyond the framework of cultural approaches. Cultural perspectives have different criteria such as the ethno-nationalist mobilizations that were associated with common social and political profiles. Most importantly, cultural entities had specific agendas to establish a state within its ethnic boundaries and held a belief in a common cultural identity that forged the ethnic-state's politics. At that point, the cultural approach fails to explain the different political consequences of particular ethno-nationalist groups.

A closer look at the forms of cultural mobilization in Aceh provides a more persuasive argument with regards to the contrast between two different periods of rebellion. As this article suggests, institutions are relatively autonomous of social actors and are important factors in political life. Two aspects of Indonesian institutional history explain the variations between the Islamic character of rebellion in the 1950s and the ethnic appeals in the late 1980s. The first involves attempts at state policies and penetration of regional territories, especially in the post-revolutionary Indonesia, to weaken the traditional structure of ethnic-regional communities. The elites' attempts of maintaining their legitimacy coincided with the search at the popular level for a response to the state's institutional penetration. In regards to Aceh, this in turn

engendered feelings of insecurity out of which a new basis for communal identity was developed. The Acehnese joined the Indonesian Republic at a point when they had formed a unique sense of community based on their past glory as a regional power, their resistance to the Dutch, and their strong ties with the ulama.

The DI/TII rebellion contested the Indonesian state's decision to discard the Islamic option in favour of a nationalist-secularist vision of the state. The subsequent autonomy and special status of Aceh were sufficient reasons for Jakarta to bring back the elite to their socio-political position. This political development, however, stabilized the Aceh-Jakarta relations until the next institutional juncture when, under the Suharto New Order regime, a more centralist, repressive, and exploitative form of the state institution was implemented.

Under the New Order, the Aceh-Jakarta relations experienced an unintended transformation accompanied by the second aspect of the state's institutional development that favored an authoritarian path for establishing order and stability: control through military actions. Suharto's repression of Aceh regional demands, included especially severe and brutal suppression of any secessionist aspirations during the 1970's and 1980's, and the subsequent political accommodation for the newly emerging Acehnese elites through state bureaucracy, and the co-opted Islamic party, PPP, led the Acehnese to conflate the ideas of an ethnic-based rebellion against the central government. Consequently, the use of force during Suharto's authoritarian institution unintentionally narrowed the ability to convince the Acehnese population of the benefits of New Order's institutional building. The regime's violence created the political opportunities for marginalized ethnic-elites within the GAM to mobilize the population by identifying the Indonesian nation as exploitative and destructive for the Acehnese. The collective circumstances were largely responsible for broadening and deepening the GAM secession struggle, especially during the particularly repressive decade of the 1990s.

The forms of cultural mobilization in Aceh rebellions showed that institutions influence and shape an actor's definition of his own interest, by establishing his institutional responsibilities and relationship to other actors as well as structuring power relations among actors and therefore policy outcomes. Similarly, as Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth (1992) argued that institutions shape the goals of political actors.

In summary, the insights provided by historical institutionalism as an approach to ethno-nationalist movement lies in its ability to explain variations and irregularities in its mobilization outcomes. This makes it a particularly challenging approach to cultural frameworks, because one of the noticeable features of cultural identities is their contingency. They appear only within some groups whose political claims only appear in certain occasions. The nature and intensity of these claims fluctuate, and vary from one movement group to another. The contextual character of ethnic identities and their political consequences suggest that ethno-regional identity does not emerge spontaneously from distinct ethnic markers, since it serves only as a point of departure. Rather, it is shaped by institutional design of the polity. Institutions, therefore, are a central point for an analysis to illuminate the processes of identity creation, transformation, and mobilization that lie at the heart of politics of ethno-nationalism.

Endnotes

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1. See, for example, Wood (1981).
 2. See Hall and Taylor (1998, 23). Historical institutionalism has been used to analyze many contemporary political phenomena. To mention few, Valerie Bunce (1999); Jacob (1994); and Douglas C. North (1990).
 3. For comprehensive study on DI/TII in West Java, see Karl Jackson (1980).
 4. A number of rebellions emerged during the post-revolutionary war Indonesia. They were mostly a consequence of regional-central political tensions. We can list a few of them: The Darul Islam rebellion (1949) in West Java intended to establish an Islamic state. In 1950 in South Sulawesi a clash between the army and guerrilla leaders resulted in a similar rising under the leadership of Kahar Muzakkar. At the same time the Acehese rebellion broke out in 1953 under leadership of Daud Beureuh joining the Darul Islam movement in West Java. Other rebellions took place in North Sulawesi in 1958, South Molucas Islands in 1956, and West Sumatera in 1960. See, Boland (1984).
 5. Nobility and ulama represent social elites in most Indonesian Muslim communities referring to political and religious elites. In Aceh, Sultan Iskandar Muda brought this nobility into being during the golden era of the Aceh sultanate in the 16th century. See, Hadi (1999, 14–56). On the emergence of ulama as subordinate power under the Aceh nobility, see Fathurahman (2011, 177–79).
 6. Karl Jackson (1980), in his study on the Darul Islam of West Java, suggested that the decline of traditional authority has become a source of social discontent that inspired Muslim elite in West Java to join the rebellion.
 7. Up until today, after almost two decades of regional autonomy reform, within the Indonesian provincial government system, there are only two provinces with special status: Aceh and Yogyakarta.
 8. In the midst of national economic growth between 1975 and 1995, Aceh population was still left in agricultural production. Up until the 1980s, more than 68 percent of Acehese remained employed in the agricultural sector and there were virtually no significant development in the industrial zone. Many of the skilled workers originated from out-side Aceh and lived in gated compounds. See, Hall (1996, 68–70).
 9. Interview with Yusni Sabi, 11 October, 2014.

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Ali Munhanif, *Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM); Faculty of Social and Political Sciences; Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta, Indonesia*. Email: ali.munhanif@uinjkt.ac.id.

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2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
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6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

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داداي دارمادي

جاجانج جهراي

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مجلس التحرير الدولي:

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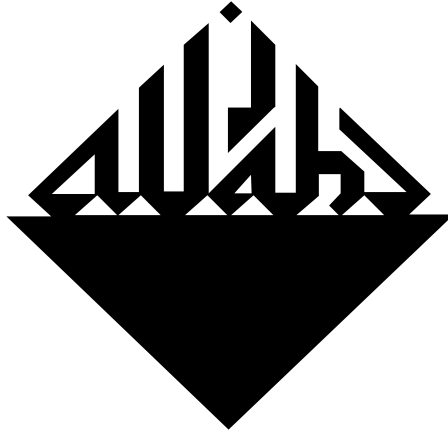
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ايكا فوئرا ويرمان

ءولة والءعوة الإسلامية في عهد النظام الجءيء:

ءراسء في فكر سوهارءو من ءلال الخطاباء الرئاسية

في المناسباء الإسلامية بإنءونيسيا

محمد عيسى عبء السلام
