

Prof. Harry J. Benda*, *THE CRESCENT AND RISING SUN; INDONESIAN ISLAM UNDER JAPANESE OCCUPATION, 1942-1945*. The Hague and Bandung, W. Van Hoeve, 1958, 320 pp.

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For the countries of Southeast Asia, the Pacific War meant liberation from their colonial status on the one hand, but on the other it provided them with the means of acquiring a spirit of resistance to the iron rule of the Japanese military occupation forces.

Typical of these countries was Indonesia, which as an important and strategic supply base, maintained the Japanese armed forces in the Southeast Asian theatre. Bamboo spear drills, forced on the Volunteer Corps of Defence, Hei-ho (Indonesian recruits), and various other youth organizations under the policy of mobilizing indigenous human resources, provided basic military training, which eventually led—through their experience in armed uprising against the Japanese in Blitar¹ and other places—to the form of the heroic armed struggle against the attempts of the Dutch to restore their colonial rule. These struggles continued from August 17, 1945 to the end of 1949. The three and a half years of Japanese military rule and the four years of armed struggle against the Dutch have become the subjects of academic study by West European scholars, and many studies have been published, dealing with this period.

The work under review divides into two parts, Part 1 dealing with the heritage of the colonial days and Part 2 the period of Japanese occupation. In the concluding part, the author casts a retrospective look at Indonesian Islam.

In Part 1, the author analyzes the policy of the Dutch colonial authorities toward the Indonesian Moslems and the latter's reaction to it and proceeds to inquire into the characteristic features of Indonesian Islam and Dutch policy as a preliminary step toward analyzing the Japanese policy toward the Indonesian Moslems.

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¹ The Blitar Incident was an armed revolt by a battalion of Indonesian volunteers against the Japanese, which occurred on Feb. 14, 1945, in Blitar, Kedili Province, Eastern Java. This incident showed that the "Japanese spirit" with which the volunteers were trained, inculcated in their minds a spirit of national independence rather than that of subordination to the Japanese. The incident was sparked by the harsh attitude of Japanese commanders toward the Indonesian volunteers and discrimination against them. A similar incident, though smaller in scale, occurred in Tjilatjap, Java. The insurgent Indonesians were no match for the Japanese, who turned their heavy and powerful guns against them, but the spirit of resistance as displayed by the volunteers provided an important basis for Independence.

2

We may say that the author makes an extremely successful analysis. Part I consists of three chapters. In Chapter I, he discusses Indonesian Islam and the foundations on which the Dutch policy was based, and in the following chapter on deals with the 'Renaissance' in Indonesian Islam, and in Chapter III "Challenge and Response", he discusses Indonesian Islam in the closing years of Dutch colonial rule.

In Part I as a whole, the author examines the circumstances and conditions under which Islam was introduced into Java and analyzes the characteristic traits of Indonesian Islam and the conditions under which the Indonesian people accepted it. As for the processes by which Islam was introduced into Java, he follows the views of West European scholars. As for the conditions under which the Javanese became Moslems, or more particularly regarding the social classification of the Javanese, he adopts the hypothesis derived from a case study of Central Java,¹ a hypothesis which is based on a recent tendency in the United States to analyze correlations between religion and economy in terms of Max Weber's theories.

That is, Indonesian Society is classified into three groups according to their attitudes towards the Faith and culture. These are the ruling class *Prijaji*, and the ruled classes *Abangan* and *Santri*. These differ according to their outlook towards the Islamic faith. *Prijaji's* view of life and the world is based on Islam as influenced by Hinduism. *Abangan's* is based on a mixture of various faiths predating Islam—primitive, Buddhist, and Hinduistic—and Islam. *Santri* is closer to orthodox Islam.²

Studying the relations between these three classes in the light of the direction of Dutch colonial policy, as framed by Prof. Dr. Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch authority on Islam, Prof. Benda makes clear the reason why the Dutch developed their policy towards Islam with emphasis on

¹ This case study is based on the results of studies by a group organized by Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The following reports are published by the Center:

Clifford Geertz, *Religious Belief and Economic Behaviour in a Central Javanese Town: Some Preliminary Considerations* (mimeo), 1956; *The Social Context of Economic Change: an Indonesian Case Study* (mimeo), 1956.

² These three groups are analyzed from the standpoint of village administration by Robert R. Jay in his "Local Government in Rural Central Java," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No. 2, Feb., 1956, pp. 215-228. The following two works by Herbert Feith referred to these groups in analyzing the political aspects of the question.

The Indonesian Election of 1955, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Interim Report Series, Ithaca, N. Y., 1957.

The Wilopo Cabinet, 1952-1955, A Turning Point in Post-revolutionary Indonesia, Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, Monograph Series, Ithaca, N. Y., 1958.

For a social anthropological study referring to these three groups, we have R.M. Koentjaraningrt's, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies Cultural Report Series, 1957, 111 pp.

the *Prijaji* elite. The Indonesian aristocracy yielded to Dutch culture when the foundations of their cultural and social life were undermined as a result of their military defeat by the Dutch. Thus a class of bureaucrats, which could be controlled easily by the Dutch, emerged.

The Dutch colonial government first undermined the power of *Prijaji* and after weakening their position then switched to the policy of utilizing them as instruments of colonial domination, thus establishing what may be called an "ethical" policy. However, the spread of Western education and the restiveness of other Asian peoples were followed by a growth of nationalism in Indonesia. Establishment of the *Sarekat Islam Indonesia*, a religious nationalist movement promoted mainly by *Santri*, and *Budi Utomo*, *Perkimpunan Indonesia* and other political nationalist movements, organized mainly by the younger generation of the *Prijaji* class were indicative of this trend.

Chapter III discusses the attitude of the Indonesian Moslems towards Dutch rule in its closing period and inquires into the religious and political questions on the eve of intervention by the Japanese armed forces.

3

Part 2 analyzes the Japanese policy toward the Indonesian Moslems during the military occupation and deals with various problems which had to be faced during this period, which was of great significance although it lasted only three and a half years.

In the early period of the Japanese occupation, the Japanese policy toward the Indonesian Moslems started favourably when compared with other occupation activities. Prof. Benda ascribes this to ample preparation, and he points out the following facts as grounds for his assertion: the collaboration of Japan with the Indonesian nationalist Husein Thamrin in the period immediately before the start of the war, the activities of the so-called "Fujiwara Organ", usually referred to as "F" Organ in North Sumatra, and the propaganda broadcasting activities of Radio Tokyo directed towards the Indonesians, and the vigorous activities of the Publicity Division (Senden-Bu) and Religious Affairs Division (Shūmu-Bu) immediately after the landing of the Japanese forces.

Favourably appraising the effects of the Japanese policy generally and the work of the Religious Affairs Division of the Occupation Forces towards the Moslems, the author says this:

"The military administrators obviously realized the importance of Islam as a power factor in the Indonesian village. Although lacking in academic expertise and scientific apparatus of their predecessors, the Japanese came to Java with a blueprint of a policy aimed at winning Muslim support. This policy—in part a crude reversal of Dutch aims—was primarily concerned with the grass-roots level of the Islamic problem."¹

¹ H. J. Benda, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

This view, that is, the view that the Japanese Islamic policy was initiated after careful and thorough studies is related to the general question of whether the Japanese armed forces were fully prepared for military operations in the Pacific War and cannot be accepted. Prof. Benda is right in his opinion that the Japanese policy was a poor reversal or imitation of Dutch aims. But the truth is that the Japanese took a naive view of Islam and equated it with the idea of 'Hakkō-Ichiū' (all the world-one-family principle) which although inconsistent with the former, provided the basis of their policy. The Japanese did not appraise Islam carefully, neither did they study the Dutch Policy towards Indonesian Islam. It could not even be called a blueprint. It may better be called a "translation" of an introduction to Islam. This will be clearly observed in the military administration principle prescribed by the Japanese armed forces.

Just before the start of the war, the "Scheme for the Handling of Administration in the Southern Occupied Areas" was prepared as a basic manual, which was supplemented by the "Scheme for the Military Administration for the Occupied Areas" and these were prepared by the Japanese Army and Navy respectively. These manuals were also supplemented for (1) Java, (2) Sumatra, and (3) Borneo and areas east of the Celebes. Further, the Scheme for Handling Religious Affairs was prepared as a detailed project for these administrative plans.¹ It is assumed that Prof. Benda refers to these plans when he speaks of a "blueprint". But these schemes were poorly conceived and were not as comprehensive as might be expected from their titles.

4

Prof. Benda describes a series of political measures for Islam taken by the Japanese military administrative authorities, and analyzes the reaction of the Indonesian leaders and people in general to them. Of these measures the one that was resented the strongest by the Indonesians was the daily performance of a "profound bow" in the direction of the Japanese Imperial Palace. Referring to this, the author points out that the feeling of racial superiority of the Japanese people was unacceptable to all the Indonesians and that the "Japanese spirit" and Shintoism, which were the main support of this awareness, were incompatible with the tenets of Islam. Prof. Benda criticizes the attempts to forcibly interrelate these incompatible ideas made by the Japanese Moslems who were staff members of the Religious Affairs Division (Shūmu-Bu) and who were in charge of Islamic affairs in Indonesia. He quotes their words from

¹ As for the policy of the Japanese military government towards the Moslems as seen in the "Scheme for the Handling of Administrative Affairs in Occupied Areas in Southeast Asia" and the "Scheme for Handling Religious Affairs," please refer to my work *A study of Japanese Military Government in Indonesia*, Tokyo, the Social Science Institute of Waseda University, 1959.

the Indonesian language newspaper *Asia Raya* and *Pandji Poestaka* published by Balai Poestaka of the Education Affairs Division of the Japanese Military Government.

Prof. Benda devotes a considerable part of his work to the question of Islamic organizations under the Japanese occupation, M.I.A.I. (Madjlisul Islamil A'laa Indonesia—Great Islamic Council of Indonesia) and *Masjumi* (Madjlis Sjuro Muslimin Indonesia—Consultative Conference of Indonesian Moslems), which was reorganized from the former during the occupation.

MIAI was a prewar organization¹ and its continued existence under the occupation was a grave problem. But the 16th Army, which administered the military occupation of Java, took a much more lenient attitude toward this organization as it did when dealing with other matters. It is noteworthy that MIAI was allowed to continue its unofficial existence even when other nationalist political parties were ordered dissolved under a ban on political association. As for a reason for this, he points out that the Japanese intended to reorganize MIAI as part of the 3-A movement. Thus, he explains in detail, the Japanese established a Preparatory Committee for Unification of the Islamic Community (*Persiapan Persatoean Oemmat Islam*) for the purpose of creating an Islamic organization as a link in the chain of the 3-A movement and after the failure of the 3-A movement, they reversed their policy and reorganized MIAI to permit its continued existence.

One year later MIAI was again reorganized into *Masjumi*. Prof. Benda analyzes the problems which arose between the Islamic leaders and the Japanese military administrators of religious affairs that occurred during the period before this reorganization took place, and deals with a new people's movement called *Putera* (*Pusat Tenaga Rakjat*—The movement of national regimentation of the people's opinion), focusing his attention on the correlations between them. Here his analysis excels the studies of his predecessors.

Prof. Benda points out that the period prior to the organization of *Masjumi* was marked by the concurrence of the two types of struggles: One the attempt of the Japanese military administrative authorities to control Islam and the resistance of the Islamic leaders to this control and the other the attempt of military administrative authorities to exercise control over secular nationalist leaders and the resistance of these leaders to this attempt. His analysis is based on the recognition that a relationship existed between these two types of struggles. The similarity between the treatment of the Japanese military authorities of these two important problems was a reflection of the vacillation that characterized the Military Administration of Java in those days. This was related to the fact that the Japanese military authorities had then not made a

¹ MIAI was established in Sept., 1937 in Surabaja, Eastern Java.

decision on the basic question of how to treat Indonesia inclusive of Java: Whether Indonesia should be retained as a permanent Japanese possession or granted a high degree of self-government or independence. But Prof. Benda fails to refer to this question in his analysis.

Prof. Benda then proceeds to deal with the Japanese policy of utilizing both the administrative and religious groups—village heads and Moslem priests—to carry their military administration into the rural communities. The Military Government fully utilized the Indonesian bureaucratic machinery remaining from the old Dutch colonial days. *Prijaji*, or the officials who had served in the Dutch colonial government, lost no time in switching their allegiance to the Japanese military administration, a cause of offence to many Moslem leaders. Some Moslem leaders, particularly those living in urban areas had been pro-Dutch, but this was not noted among the *Kijaji* and *Ulama* (Moslem priests), of the countryside, who had been neglected by the Dutch and had not enjoyed any of their political privileges.

Quoting a passage from *Asia Raya* dated April 9, 1943, Prof. Benda states that it was Mr Inada, a Japanese Moslem working in the Religious Affairs Division, who initiated the policy of politically utilizing Moslem priests¹. However, it would be closer to the truth to say that the Military Government as a whole followed this direction after the Japanese affirmed their respect for Islam and publicly apologized for their lack of understanding of Indonesian Moslems during the first conference with Moslem leaders held on December 8, 1942. However, these promises remained empty words until the refusal of Indonesian farmers to deliver rice forced the Japanese to take concrete measures to respect Islam susceptibilities. Prof. Benda reads in these two incidents a great significance which led to the establishment of closer relations between Indonesian farmers and the Military Government and the Japanese policy of utilizing Moslem priests in rural communities.

The Tasikmalaya Incident in 1944 and the Indoramayu Incident that followed it, were revolts of Indonesian farmers led by Moslem priests against the coercion by *Prijaji* who were charged with delivering rice to the Japanese. These incidents shocked the Military Government leaders. For the Japanese it was imperative to secure Japanese rice for their Southern fronts, and consequently rice was of great importance to their military operations. These incidents made them aware of the compelling need to control those Moslem leaders in rural communities who were in a strong position to influence farmers, and forced them to change their policy toward the Moslems. This was also pointed out by Japanese who were staff members of the Religious Affairs Division. Prof. Benda believes these incidents marked a changing point in Japanese policy and cites a number of concrete examples to prove his point.²

¹ H. J. Benda, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

² H. J. Benda, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

The establishment of "Volunteer Corps" helped greatly toward the promotion of the policy of respecting Islam. Prof. Benda explains that according to Japanese official pronouncements the volunteers were organized on the advice of influential Moslem leaders. However, the organization of the Volunteer Corps was based on misrepresentation of the Japanese forces. That is, the Volunteer Corps was created under the joint plan of the Military Government Section and the Staff of Japanese Army in Java to enlist Moslems for service in the Pacific War, and in translating this plan into action, the Japanese created the impression that the "Volunteer Corps" was organized in accordance with the wishes of Gatot Mankoepradja and other influential Moslem leaders. In this connection the important fact cannot be overlooked that the special service agency of the General Staff had already started training Indonesian youths at Youth Training Centres to produce cadres for the volunteers. In other words, the volunteers which were later to become the Indonesian Army consisting mainly of Moslems, and were organized not by the choice of the Indonesian people themselves but by the strategic desires of the Japanese armed forces.

5

In Chapter VIII "Towards Independence: September 1944-August 1945," Prof. Benda characterizes this period (from the Koiso statement to the Declaration of Independence) as one in which the leaders of the various groups of the Indonesian people attained a rapid political growth and investigates the process by which the officials, nationalists and Moslem leaders as leaders of the three different groups built up their strength to achieve independence. This was the time of preparation for the armed struggle which took place against the Dutch after the Declaration of Independence. This chapter is of special importance in that it describes the balance of power among these different groups.

We have to fully appreciate his analysis in which he unravels the problems arising from the discrepancy between the attitude of the Japanese toward the nationalist leaders and that of the nationalist leaders toward the Japanese, and traditional antagonisms between the nationalist leaders and the old feudalistic ruling class (which Prof. Benda calls aristocratic ruler-officials), the rise of a Moslem elite, and the organization of youths, which laid a foundation for the creation of a new elite class in present-day Indonesia.

However, we suspect that Prof. Benda is committing a mistake in appraising the role of *Angkatan Muda* in the organization of Indonesian youths. In a word, *Angkatan Muda* was organized by Japanese propaganda agents stationed in Bandung, and the organization of youth which assumed such significance as is pointed out by Prof. Benda, was *Angkatan Baru Indonesia*. This organization came out squarely against the Japanese Government, expressing their demands and convictions when the Japanese

Military Government held a conference of leaders of various youth organizations between June 3 and 6, 1945, for the purpose of unifying them to start a new people's movement.

6

In the concluding part entitled "Retrospect", Prof. Benda points out the merit of the Japanese military administration fully utilizing the three main Indonesian elite classes for different purposes. However, when viewed from another standpoint, the truth is this: The Japanese Military Government, determined to hold Java as a main supply base as the military situation in the Pacific worsened, was forced to pursue a policy necessitated by this military situation, which fortunately proved successful just as the proverb says "It is a long lane that has no turning".

In stating that the Japanese military administration was successful only in its policy toward the Moslems, Prof. Benda probably bases this view on the active role played by the Moslem leaders in the armed struggle of the Indonesian people against the Dutch after August, 1945.

Whatever the case may be, his analysis of the attitude of the Indonesian Moslems toward Japanese military rule is possible on the premise that there were antagonisms in Java among *Prijaji*, *Abangan* and *Santri*.

A similar analysis is being made of the present-day political situation in Indonesia, and it is our opinion that studies in this direction should be encouraged further.

Lastly, we would like to add that Prof. Benda's work would have been more valuable if he had paid attention to the fact that the Japanese followed entirely different policies toward Moslems in Sumatra, Java and in the Navy-administered areas (Borneo, Celebes, and areas east of Lesser Sunda).

As Prof. Benda points out, the policy of the Japanese army toward Moslems in Java was the result of special studies by the Religious Affairs Division, which was established within the military administration. In the Navy-administered areas, however, religious problems were dealt with merely as a part of administrative affairs.

As is well known there were few Moslems in Japan, and these were drafted by the Government to work within various organs of the military administration in order to help maintain contact with the Moslem inhabitants.

However, after Hadji Omar (Tetsuo Kobayashi), a graduate of Azhar University and the only Japanese Moslem in the Navy-administered areas, was killed in action, the Navy was unable to find any other Moslem to continue Hadji Omar's work. The Navy then had members of the diplomatic service in middle Eastern affairs train Japanese students of Aikoku Gakuin, an institute run by Ainosuke Iwata, in the Islamic faith. After training, these young men were received in the Islamic faith and were posted to the Navy-administered areas. But their ignorance of Moslem

doctrine resulted only in provoking a strong antipathy in the Indonesian Moslem leaders towards the Japanese administration. Further, the lack of knowledge about Islamism among Japanese officers and men in Sumatra was the cause of many unnecessary conflicts with the local inhabitants.

Therefore, it must be concluded that the Japan's Islamic policy was successful only in Java, due to the efforts of several Japanese Moslems living there and that it failed to obtain similar successes elsewhere in Indonesia.

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