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# The Netherlands Indies in Aceh, Bali and Buton: degrees of resistance and acceptance of indirect and direct rule

Johannes I. (Hans) Bakker

The basic argument that I would like to make is that the notion of 'resistance' needs to be tempered by a careful examination of specific historical and sociological details. Interpretation should not be merely an ideological reflex. Yet for many people the study of rebellions against colonialism is extrapolated into a general model of history. But, colonial indirect rule did not always result in rebellion. Indeed, colonial rule sometimes led to degrees of acceptance. I would like to illustrate that idea by mentioning three case study examples: Bali, Aceh, and Buton.

Many people around the world have heard of Bali. After the tsunami more people learned about Aceh. But very few people have ever heard of Buton. In this article I would like to briefly mention those three places in Indonesia as examples of communities which can be considered in the context of the debate on resistance to imperialism. Many other places could be considered in terms of resistance and rebellion as well.<sup>1</sup> My central thesis is that the Republic of Indonesia as it exists today is a complex secular entity. Because Indonesia is such a complex place any generalizations made about resistance today or in the past must be tempered by a careful acknowledgment of internal differences. Some authors have presented a very black and white picture. For example, in the *Indonesia heritage* series the brief articles are written by academic scholars, but they frequently provide a one-sided view.<sup>2</sup> The various political entities that have existed in the

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Young, *Islamic peasants and the state: the 1908 anti-tax rebellion in West Sumatra* (New Haven 1994). This study of the Minangkabau and the resilience of their institutions is a sophisticated narrative of the subtle interplay of sources of legitimate authority. The rebellion of 1908 in West Sumatra could easily constitute a fourth case study example. Rural *ulama* of one *tarekat* played a significant role.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Reid ed., *Indonesia heritage: early modern history* (Singapore and Jakarta 2001). This book is an outstanding resource, but the scholars who have contributed to it are limited to very brief discussions of two pages. Readers should always consult the excellent bibliography and read the fuller accounts. See David. H. Fischer, *Albion's seed: four British folkways in America* (Oxford 1989) vii-xi, 3-11, for an authoritative statement of the attempt to combine the older and newer approaches

Indonesian archipelago in the last several hundred years are social constructs and a dispassionate look at the historical background reveals that the histories of those places is often more complex than summaries in popular guidebooks tend to indicate.

The importance of 'imagined communities' (or 'imagined nations')<sup>3</sup> needs to be considered from various perspectives and at various levels, from micro (hamlet) to macro (nation and world system). Are the issues being analyzed in a balanced and scholarly manner by Helius Sjamsuddin and other Indonesian scholars interested in resistance?<sup>4</sup> Is there bias involved in viewing resistance to the Netherlands East Indies (N.E.I.) as always being in the short-term and long-term best interest of Indonesians? The question is particularly poignant today since the Republic of Indonesia has made enormous strides in recent years. Yet many journalists and political commentators still maintain an attitude toward the federal government that is highly critical. The three cases briefly reviewed here represent a range of reactions. If one studies only a single case then one gets a different impression of resistance than if all three are considered simultaneously. The story of Bali is widely reported, but not always with a great deal of respect for the facts. Aceh has become widely known since the tsunami that hit Southeast and South Asia on December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004. The small 'kingdom' of Buton, which included Buton island and Muna island, is not well known to most Indonesians, much less Indonesianists, but it provides an important and neglected example.<sup>5</sup>

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to historical inquiry in a more interdisciplinary approach that I would call 'comparative historical sociology'.

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London 1983). Anderson is well known for his outstanding contributions to Indonesian studies, but this book has applicability outside of Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Indeed, most scholars view it as applicable to the study of the concepts of 'nation' and 'nation-state' world-wide.

<sup>4</sup> Helius Sjamsuddin, 'Islam and resistance in South and Central Kalimantan in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries' in M. C. Ricklefs ed., *Islam in the Indonesian social context* (Clayton, Australia 1991) 7-17.

<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the words 'Butung' or 'Wolio' are used. Butung is another small town in the region. Wolio is one key language. My involvement with Buton-Wolio first began in 1986 when I worked as a consultant for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), on an integrated rural development project on Muna Island. I was able to have discussions with several Butonese 'aristocrats' and obtained photocopies of rare documents pertaining to the history of that little

In the social sciences – the ‘uncertain sciences’<sup>6</sup> – there is more concern with comparative generalizations, while idiographic historians, like John Smail, prefer detailed summaries of specific events.<sup>7</sup> Professor Sartono Kartodirdjo, the sociological historian who has contributed more to the study of resistance and rebellion in Java than any other author, is one of the few who has been able to combine both historical depth *and* sociological breadth. Rather than try to summarize professor Kartodirdjo’s lasting contribution here I will examine three cases outside of Java: Aceh, Bali and Buton.<sup>8</sup>

The struggles in Aceh are often viewed by outsiders in ways that do not do full justice to the whole story. Framing the struggles within Indonesian Islam as one between so-called ‘traditionalist’ and ‘modernist’ versions of Islam, as Deliar Noer points out, can be misleading.<sup>9</sup> It is generally accepted that all Indonesian Muslims should follow Islamic law (*shari’ah*), but the precise interpretation of Islamic law (and ‘Muhammadan Law’) is a matter of dispute. What is clear is that the Republic of Indonesia’s historical background is very important for the future of that republic and that a Eurocentric (for example, dogmatic Marxist) or an Orientalist perspective will not be constructive. But what is sometimes less clear is that an Islamo-centric perspective can also bias the history of a secular nation-state.

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known political entity from Abdul Mulku Zahari. I had further discussions with the district head (*bupati*) and relatives of the former *raja* when I made a second visit to the province of Southeast Sulawesi in 1988 in order to study local migration by the Bajo (*Bajau-sama*) ‘sea gypsies’ in one village near Mawasangka-Gu on the southwest coast of Muna Island.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Mazlish, *The uncertain sciences* (New Brunswick, N.J. 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Mazlish, *The uncertain sciences*, 83-128 emphasizes the importance of Interpretative approaches, which he dubs ‘hermeneutics’, following Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and method* (New York 1992). There is a great deal of variety among different Interpretative hermeneutic approaches to socio-cultural, historical sciences. Mazlish considers both Marx and Weber as Interpretative rather than Positivistic. But many Marxists think of Marx’s theories as strictly scientific. See J.I. Bakker on ‘Interpretivism’ in: Albert Mills et al. ed., *Encyclopedia of case study research* (New York 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, ‘Agrarian radicalism in Java: its setting and development’ in: Claire Holt ed., *Culture and politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1972).

<sup>9</sup> Deliar Noer, *The modernist Muslim movement in Indonesia, 1900-1942* (Singapore 1973).

Thus, while it is very important to study the roots of resistance, it is equally relevant to examine the roots of non-resistance and open support. Some people in the archipelago remained neutral or accepted aspects of European influence. A case in point is the Protestant Christian Minahassa.

Minahassa, on the northeastern peninsula of Sulawesi, was fringe territory of the sultanate of Ternate. It realized an independent existence through links to the Dutch and conversion to Christianity. (...) The oldest treaty between tribal leaders and the Dutch, dating from 1679, defined land borders to west and east and freed the tribes from tax obligations to the sultan of Ternate.<sup>10</sup>

During the nineteenth century the population doubled and a high percentage of the population was baptized. Schools were established. A high degree of rational legal bureaucracy had set in by the 1890s. Such a high degree of acceptance is quite a different story than resistance based in part on the great variety of Islamic Sufi fraternal orders (tarekat) like the Sammaniyya.<sup>11</sup>

### The concept of resistance

The question of resistance to external influences pre-supposes a unified internal civilization of some sort.<sup>12</sup> However, before Muslim traders – many of them Sufis – brought a version of Islam to the northwestern parts of the archipelago (for example, Aceh), starting in the thirteenth century, or even earlier, the archipelago was a rich tapestry of many different indigenous collectivities. In fact, it is anachronistic to speak of anything called ‘Indonesia’ until the declaration of independence (*merdeka*) on August 17, 1945. Moreover, whatever unity there is in the diversity of the many island cultures today was largely a product of the early part of the twentieth century and World War II. The modern nation-state of Indonesia is based on secular principles. That is very important to understand. The

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Gelman Taylor, *Indonesia: peoples and histories* (New Haven 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, ‘Origins and development of the Sufi orders (tarékat) in Southeast Asia’, *Studia Islamika* 1 (1) (1994) 1-23. Retrieved 16 February 2009 at [www.let.uu.nl/martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications](http://www.let.uu.nl/martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications).

<sup>12</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, ‘Civilizations’ in: George Ritzer ed., *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology* (Malden, MA 2007) 519-529.

conceptualization of a secular modern nation-state is radically at odds with the idea of an Islamic state, or any theocratic state. Much of the violent resistance to Dutch colonialism hinged on this point and much of the violent resistance to the Republic of Indonesia has continued to revolve around the same point.

In Aceh there were leaders who wanted to make the whole archipelago an Islamic state. Similarly, in Bali the traditional leaders favored theocratic principles.<sup>13</sup> The term 'secular' can have several different and contradictory meanings. The semantic elusiveness of it has led to many disputes about the true meaning of the five basic principles of the Indonesian state originally enunciated by Sukarno (*Pancasila*). These five principles evoke the five principles of Hinayana Buddhism and the Five Pillars of Islam, but also the mixture of indigenous animism and the eighth-century esoteric Vairochana cult of Mahayana Buddhism. It is probably the case that both Sukarno and Suharto thought of the core of religion in terms of the indigenous religion of Central Java, *agama Jawa*.<sup>14</sup> Like arguments concerning the American Constitution, there is continued dialogue about the precise meaning of all five principles. A clear implication seems to be that Indonesia is not an exclusively Muslim state and that the 'world religions' which recognize one God are all equal. Note that for Suharto one God was a mystical 'Godhead' as is found in *agama Jawa*. That recognition of tolerance of widely different religions leads to state secularism. Indonesia today is not an Islamic state, despite the large Muslim population.<sup>15</sup>

Historians and social scientists take somewhat different approaches to 'resistance' depending on theoretical orientation. In this chapter I will take a Neo-Weberian comparative-historical approach<sup>16</sup> rather than a Neo-Marxist approach and emphasize *variations* in resistance.<sup>17</sup> The ability to

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<sup>13</sup> I Wayan Ardika, 'Bali during the early classic period' and 'late classic period' and Endang Sri Hardiati, 'Bali in the middle classic period' in: John Miksic ed., *Indonesian heritage: Ancient history* (Singapore and Jakarta 2001) 70-71, 106-07, 122-23.

<sup>14</sup> Allen Sievers, *The Mystical world of Indonesia: culture & economic development in conflict* (Baltimore 1974) 7-10.

<sup>15</sup> One very misleading aspect of journalistic accounts of Indonesia is the notion that Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. Indonesia, like Turkey and India, is a secular nation-state and is therefore fundamentally different from Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

<sup>16</sup> Randall Collins, *The sociology of philosophies* (Cambridge, MA 1986).

<sup>17</sup> The Neo-Marxian and Neo-Weberian approaches do not need to be considered as fundamentally in opposition. Hence, we can regard Eric Wolf, for example, as

discern variations in resistance is part and parcel of acceptance of a notion of the 'imagined community' that is secular and tolerant. If we start with the idea that the ideal state is a theocratic state then there can be little meaningful discussion of variation. The 'bias' that dominates in modern scholarship is a European Enlightenment bias rather than an 'Islamic' traditional bias.

Hence, unfortunately, the idea of resistance is treated by many Indonesian scholars from a primarily Islamic point of view, with opposition framed in terms of legitimate Islamic struggles against the colonial power. The rebellions are assumed to be entirely legitimate, without question, because it is an Islamic struggle against infidels. In the minds of some writers colonialism is associated with infidel Christians. The grain of truth in that perspective should not cloud the larger importance in the long run of a secular, post-Enlightenment perspective. It is legitimate to point to abuses of colonialism. Imperialism was frequently not a matter of benevolent rule. But the Republic of Indonesia is also based on the post-Enlightenment idea of a secular nation-state that, at least in principle, remains tolerant of a variety of different religious faiths (*Pancasila*). Some Islamic groups have legitimate grievances against centralizing rule. However, they sometimes frame their grievances in terms of the need for a violent *jihad*.

That idea has led to recent tragedies, like the thousands of deaths which resulted in part from the military actions of the federal government against the Free Aceh Movement, an Islamic resistance to Suharto's rule and a secular nation-state that was proclaimed by Teungku Hasan Muhammad di Tiro in October 1976. That was an echo of the previous Islamic resistance in Aceh that was led by Teungku Haji Cik di Toro against the N.E.I.'s government between 1881-1891. Cik di Toro is considered a national hero, but the Suharto government did not accept the notion that Muhammad di Tiro against the federal government was a continuation of the colonial-era struggles against the N.E.I. colonial state and the V.O.C., the *kumpeni*.<sup>18</sup> The key here is not the idiographic details of the historical events. The key instead is the realization that two basic principles of legitimate authority were in collision: the Islamic state principle versus the secular nation-state principle.

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either Neo-Weberian or Neo-Marxian. But Wolf's work is not 'Neo-Marxist' and certainly not 'Marxist-Leninist' in the strict sense.

<sup>18</sup> Taylor, *Indonesia*, 364-370.

If I were an Islamic scholar who is opposed to secularism I would discuss the case of Aceh quite differently. But I am not a Muslim and I do not believe in theocracy. Instead, I am a social scientist whose underlying premise is the importance of religious tolerance within the modern nation-state.<sup>19</sup> The term resistance is treated here as a kind of *variable*, along an ordinal scale, from staunch *resistance* (Aceh at the end of the nineteenth century, and three principalities in Bali, 1906-1908) to relative *acceptance* (six principalities in Bali and the Buton Sultanate). There are probably few cases of staunch acceptance of what is perceived as foreign domination, but in situations where small states accept the legitimate authority of a relatively benign colonial power, rather than what is perceived as the domination of an existing foreign power, we can speak of a degree of acceptance. That is especially true under indirect rule. Moreover, we must also stop to consider the broader issue of the gradual acceptance of Islam itself. Islam, after all, is *also* a force from outside.

The acceptance of Islamic theology by Muslim societies like Ternate, Buton, Makassar and Melaka could be considered an example of acceptance that is more than just superficial or convenient.<sup>20</sup> While Muslim trade routes may have existed as early as the ninth century, it was not until the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that a string of small Muslim states existed in the archipelago.<sup>21</sup> Islam was gradually assimilated, yet it must be admitted that Islamic beliefs originating in the Arab peninsula are foreign to the archipelago. It was colonization, but not nineteenth century imperialism. The 'axial age' Islamic Civilization<sup>22</sup> that came to the archipelago we now know as Indonesia is not usually considered an imperialistic colonial influence, but it was definitely a 'foreign' import and it

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<sup>19</sup> To be perfectly clear, there are many outstanding Islamic scholars who do not advocate theocratic notions. Indeed, there is a wide range of opinion within Islam. Many Muslims in Indonesia and elsewhere do not advocate an Islamic theocratic state. See Gudrun Krämer, 'The contest of values: Notes on contemporary Islamic discourse' in: Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt ed., *The cultural values of Europe* (Liverpool 2008) 338-356. My own religious background is Congregationalist Protestant and I attend the Unitarian-Universalist Church. The U-U is centred on tolerance and absence of dogmatic theology.

<sup>20</sup> K.S. Sandhu and P. Wheatley, *Melaka: the transformation of a Malay capital c. 1400-1980* (Kuala Lumpur and Singapore 1983).

<sup>21</sup> Peter G. Riddell, *Islam and the Malay-Indonesian world* (Honolulu 2001); Taylor, *Indonesia*, 60-87.

<sup>22</sup> Eisenstadt, 'Civilizations', 519-29.



also evoked various kinds of resistance. The political economy of Islamic expansion is usually considered to have little to do with modern capitalism, even though it is definitely an aspect of generic, pre-modern 'capitalism'. In fact, some scholars even consider Islam the direct opposite to Western modernity.<sup>23</sup> That conservative idea does not necessarily run counter to Marxism, but it is not explained by extreme versions of the Marxist-Leninist thesis concerning imperialism as one of the later stages of modern monopoly capitalism.<sup>24</sup> Acceptance did take place, and not always under duress. But that does not fit the popular stereotype of outsider influence.

The Indonesian archipelago is a very complex tapestry and thousands of stories – most of them as yet untold – run simultaneously. It is only in introductory textbooks that it all fits into one neat pattern of exploiters and resisters. One cannot understand the Butonese, for example, without some understanding of how they were exploited by Ternate, Makassar and the Islamic Buginese, some of whom had a role as mercenaries.<sup>25</sup> The Europeans (including the Portuguese, English and Dutch) were often exploiters and foes, but they were also frequently operating on the fringe and regarded as allies, or not taken note of very much at all.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, it is somewhat Euro-centric to overemphasize the impact of the Europeans (particularly the Portuguese, English and Dutch) and de-emphasize the significance of the Chinese, Arab and Indian presence. The Arab and Indian Islamic presence is particularly important, but it is inter-dependent with the presence of Chinese traders and merchants. The story is much more complicated than a kind of development of underdevelopment. In that respect Geertz's famous 'involution' thesis concerning parts of Java does not do full justice to what was happening in all parts of Java, much less the rest of the archipelago.<sup>27</sup> There would not have been involution on most parts of islands like Sulawesi.

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Phillip Huntington, *The clash of civilizations: remaking of world order* (New York 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Originally Lenin argued that imperialism is the last stage of capitalism, but a great deal has happened since Lenin put forward that argument. Contemporary Marxist critiques of 'globalization' tend to move beyond the original Leninist argument, the kernel of which Lenin drew from John A. Hobson; See also Irving Zeitlin, *Capitalism and imperialism* (Chicago 1972).

<sup>25</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *A history of modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (London 1981<sup>3</sup>) 10, 67; Taylor, *Indonesia*, 94, 107.

<sup>26</sup> Ricklefs, *A history*, 169-201; Taylor, *Indonesia*, 184-86.

<sup>27</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural involution* (Berkeley, CA 1979).

After the mid-nineteenth century the N.E.I. government became more and more of an imperial state and a true N.E.I. started around 1906-08. There was certainly staunch resistance to intrusion in some parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Outside interference meant changes in relatively long-term 'traditional' rulership. But in some places and in certain respects European 'rational legal' modern capitalism was preferable to pre-modern forms of 'domination' and legitimate authority (*Herrschaft*). As Weber explains in extensive detail, the rise of modern capitalism requires rational legal bureaucratic administration rather than patrimonial-feudal or patrimonial-prebendal traditional bureaucracies.<sup>28</sup>

The study of resistance to empire is difficult. The whole idea of empire itself is very broad. The term evokes, for example, the Roman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire, both of which precede modern capitalism. Even if we ignore pre-modern empires that existed before modern capitalism and only consider the last five centuries or so the tendency is to think in very broad terms indeed. There are ideological interpretations that tend to stress the Marxist-Leninist notion that imperialism is by definition evil and that any form of indigenous rule is better than outside intervention. Often the historical record is distorted by nationalist rhetoric that served a useful purpose during periods of political struggle, as in the 1930s and 1950s. But what nationalist leaders like Sukarno said in emotionally-charged speeches, often on the basis of generalizations that were in part informed by conflicting adaptations of vaguely Marxist and Leninist ideas, should not be taken as historically accurate.

Dutch colonialism in Indonesia was not simply a matter of bad Europeans exploiting good Indonesians. For most of 'Indonesian' history there simply were no 'Indonesians,' only Butonese, Balinese, Javanese, Acehnese, and so forth.<sup>29</sup> For the most part, except in isolated circles, the idea of a 'Pan-Indonesian identity' did not develop until the twentieth

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<sup>28</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and society* (Berkeley, CA 1968); J.I. Bakker, 'Class relations in Java in the nineteenth century: a Weberian perspective', *Canadian journal of development studies* 8 (1987) 137-156.

<sup>29</sup> The more than 13 677 islands, large and small, that make up the archipelago have many quite varied population groups and represent around nine hundred different languages. The use of Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) makes it somewhat easier to have national unity, but it will always be 'unity in diversity' (*bhinneka tunggal ika*). The Republic of Indonesia is a secular nation-state.

century. The conflict with Malaysia and the more recent events in Timor (East Timor) indicate that the precise contours of Indonesian identity are still not completely settled. Paradoxically, one aspect of Dutch colonialism in the archipelago that definitely had a positive impact on the Republic of Indonesia is the creation of a political entity that spans a large part of the archipelago and is not just rooted in a small part of Central Sumatra or Central Java. Despite the claims of the Majapahit rulers that they had already unified the whole archipelago in the fifteenth century, it is actually only during the 1920s and 1930s that it is reasonable to speak of a relatively unified political entity. The modern nation-state of Indonesia would not exist in its present form as the fifth largest country in the world had it not been for the Dutch colonial presence. Sukarno himself was well aware of that, but he de-emphasized it in his efforts to achieve political independence, which he proclaimed on August 17, 1945, immediately after the Japanese surrender during World War II. Like every other nation-state in the world today, the history of Indonesia is far more complex than most tourist guidebooks and high school history texts would have us believe.

### **Balinese *puputan* and acceptance**

One of the most poignant forms of resistance to Dutch colonialism was the dramatic confrontation between K.N.I.L.-troops and some of the Balinese groups in the South in 1906 and 1908. That confrontation involved mass suicide, not unlike the Jim Jones sect's suicide in British Guiana. In Bali the killings and suicides were based on a worldview that is very difficult for modern people to fully understand. Some Balinese were shot by the K.N.I.L.-troops, but in many cases the children were killed by adults who then killed one another. Hundreds of men charged the troops in the belief that they were protected by the righteousness of their cause and their magic daggers (*keris*). Women stabbed their infants and then killed themselves as well. Many tourists have read the poignant, fictional account by a German writer who visited Bali in 1935.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Vicki Baum, *A tale from Bali* (Singapore 1999) especially 'The End', 419-512. Also see the 'Preface', 7-10. This version was translated in 1937 by Basil Creighton. The Balinese word *puputan* is translated by Creighton as 'the end.' Baum interprets the *puputan* of Badung as 'a heroic and medieval pride of arms' against the '*Realpolitik* of

This is very important because the ritual mass suicide, called *puputan* ('ending'), is represented by the nationalist narrative as *the* characteristic form of Balinese resistance. However, the island of Bali was not a unified territorial entity. After the demise of the Gelgel 'kingdom' in the seventeenth century Bali was characterized by a complex collection of small, quasi-independent 'princedom' (*ke-raja-an*) like Karangasem, Gianyar, Bangli, Buleleng, Jembrana, Tabanan, Badung and Klungkung. There was no unitary government after the mid-seventeenth century, if indeed there ever had been one. Nevertheless there are two cases of dramatic *puputan* by several hundred followers of the raja of Badung of 1906 and of the raja of Klungkung of 1908. Those symbolic forms of ritual resistance cost the lives of hundreds of men, women and children.

Nevertheless, while the *puputan* is sometimes taken as the characteristic response to Dutch imperialism, that is not the whole truth. The heroic confrontations should certainly not be slighted, since they can be viewed as reflecting a deep loyalty to traditional ways of life in the face of superior military force from outside. But it is not the case that every small principedom resorted to mass suicide when confronted by N.E.I. armed force. In 1906 in Tabanan, the raja and his son committed suicide, but there was no *puputan* comparable to those that took place in Badung and Klungkung. Moreover, Buleleng and Jembrana had been defeated in 1849, after heroic struggles in 1846 and 1848. They came under more direct forms of rule in 1882. Direct rule in these cases means that officials appointed by the N.E.I. government took over administrative tasks. Karangasem, Gianyar and Bangli came under indirect rule (in 1896, 1901 and 1909, respectively) but came under more direct forms of rule relatively peacefully (in 1921, 1917 and 1917). In other words, a full narrative account of events from 1846 to 1921 indicates a variety of different forms of incorporation into more direct forms of rule under the banner of the N.E.I. colonial government. 'Bangli, Gianyar and Karangasem – came under Dutch authority without military resistance around the turn of the century'.<sup>31</sup> The

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Holland.' The events covered in the novel span 1904-1906. The *puputan* of 1908 at Klungkung is not covered by the novel.

<sup>31</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, *The dark side of paradise: political violence in Bali* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1995) 24-27. Robinson's excellent study of the violence of the 1965-66 massacres, where probably at least 80 000 people died due to political upheaval on Bali – and approximately another 420 000 people, or more, died in the rest of Indonesia – also provides a very useful summary of the complex events during the pre-colonial and

incorporation of Bali into the N.E.I. was a long and complicated process. The process that began with the signing of the Kuta Peace Treaty of July 1849 involved much more than just violence and bloodshed. Internal rivalries played a role. Negotiations were sometimes effective. But no effective, widespread and coordinated rebellion took place. In that sense Bali was quite different from our next case: Aceh.

### **Aceh and Muslim resistance**

Aceh is an extremely important case to consider. It is important because of the centrality of Islam in Aceh. The Aceh War would never have taken place if the form of Islam in Aceh had been the same as the form Islam took elsewhere in most of the archipelago. At various times a shari'a system of law was imposed (for example, by the ulama Nurud-din ar-Raniri during the rule of Iskandar Thani, 1637-1641). Aceh has been the most staunchly traditionalistic Islamic part of the archipelago since very early in history. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Aceh was one of the most important trading areas for Muslim merchants from as far away as the Middle East and Gujarat in India. It became particularly important when the Portuguese took Melaka. Under Sultan al-Kahar (1539-1571) and his son Aceh assumed central importance. Sultan Al-Mukammil (1589-1604) seized power and his grandson Sultan Iskandar Muda (1607-1636) was equally ruthless. He was defeated by the Portuguese in 1629. After a period of decline Aceh emerged as a major exporter of pepper in the 1790s. At the end of the nineteenth century pepper exports declined again and was replaced in some areas by tobacco, rubber and palm oil.<sup>32</sup>

To fully grasp resistance in the Aceh area it is important to examine aspects of Muslim societies and Islamic beliefs. One cannot understand the Aceh War without a solid background in the outlines of Islam. The mystical

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colonial eras. I have benefited from Robinson's convenient narrative, as well as from Clifford Geertz, *Negara* (Princeton, N.J. 1970), and have not attempted here to summarize source material or the detailed Dutch literature on which they both rely. See also G. F. de Bruyn Kops, 'Het evolutie tijdperk op Bali, 1906-1909', *Koloniaal tijdschrift* 4 (1915) 459-479.

<sup>32</sup> Anthony Reid, 'Aceh, between port and palace'; Lee Kam Hing, 'Pepper and the revival of Aceh'; Taufik Abdullah, 'Islamic networks as alternative identity' in: Anthony Reid ed., *Indonesian heritage*, 52-43, 110-111, 116-117.

ritual communities (*tarekat*) were of central importance. Also, movements spread from Mecca which were based on a relatively orthodox form of Islam (for example, Naqshabandiyah Sunni Islam). The study of Islamic Muslim societies is complex and requires an awareness of many subtleties that can easily be overlooked.<sup>33</sup> The Southeast Asian context softened some of the more rigid aspects of Islamic dogma.<sup>34</sup> The mystical and non-denominational version of Islam, Sufism, which was a kind of mixture of Middle Eastern Islam and the mysticism of the India sub-continent, was especially important in Indonesia. But it was in Aceh that Middle Eastern forms of Islam were most important. The resistance to N.E.I. rule was not merely a resistance to colonialism. It was a resistance to modernity.

Indeed, in some ways many Islamic theological and socio-political legal ideas are closer to the pre-Renaissance and pre-Reformation Worldview that Kugel<sup>35</sup> lays out with respect to very early interpreters of the Talmud and Pentateuch.<sup>36</sup> Allam points out that interpretation of *Qur'an* (Koran) requires careful attention to semantic (and pragmatic) linguistic clarity.<sup>37</sup> The *Qur'an* is regarded as Allah's word and hence has divine provenance. Since it is viewed as divinely inspired and sanctioned the oral message is a revelation. Caliph Utman (died 656) decided to follow the more conservative Basora school of Arabic grammar and his scholars codified the definitive Sunni version of the written text, which could not change after the death of Muhammad, the messenger and charismatic perfect man. 'For the Shiites, on the contrary, the cycle of prophecy does not end, but continues throughout history'.<sup>38</sup> The prophetic tradition is kept

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<sup>33</sup> I. M. Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies* (Cambridge 1988).

<sup>34</sup> Rhoads Murphey, *A history of Asia* (New York 1996<sup>2</sup>) 98-100.

<sup>35</sup> James Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: a guide to the Bible as it was at the start of the common era* (Cambridge, MA 1998). Kugel only examines the first five books of the Bible (Torah, Pentateuch) here, but the general principles of first century hermeneutics apply to the other books as well.

<sup>36</sup> I use the word Talmud to describe the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Tanakh, and the word Pentateuch to indicate the first five books of the Christian Old Testament. In subtle ways the nuances of interpretation of those two texts are quite different, even though the words are almost the same when properly transliterated and translated.

<sup>37</sup> Khaled Fouad Allam, 'Islam', in: George Ritzer ed., *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology* (Malden, MA 2007) 2424-2428.

<sup>38</sup> Khaled Fouad Allam, 'Islam' 2428. See also J.-P. Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'Islam* (Paris 1994); Collins, *Sociology of philosophies*, 387-428, 510-513. A comparative-

alive in Shia Islam through the succession of *imams*. For Sunnis the death of Muhammad in 632 AD ends revelation and *theology* is based on timeless, fixed dogma, but legal *juridical* interpretation continues. Hence, the study of Muslim societies requires careful differentiation of Sunni and Shiite faiths.<sup>39</sup>

Due in part to its geographical location along major trade routes that go all the way to the Middle East, Aceh experienced a degree of direct Islamization very early, probably in the thirteenth century. Around 1515 Banda Aceh, the port, had an Islamic ruler, Sultan Ali Muhayat Syah, and 'Aceh Dar us-Salam' controlled the river mouth. Public life centered around the Great Mosque, Bait ur-Rahman, built in 1614 by Sultan Iskandar Muda. In an earlier chapter on the Aceh War I have tried to summarize some basic aspects of the conflict (1873-1913).<sup>40</sup> The Netherlands had no real claim to Aceh, but the 1871 treaty of Sumatra between the Netherlands and Great Britain cleared the way for military action. The war was provoked by the N.E.I. government when officials refused to negotiate with responsible Acehnese leaders in Banda Aceh. In an action reminiscent of the declaration by President George W. Bush that the mission was 'accomplished' in Iraq, the Dutch declared the war over in 1881, but that was really just the middle of the first phase of the war.<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that Anthony Reid ends his major study of the history of the region with a chapter on 'The End of the Atjehnese Nation, 1885-1898'.<sup>42</sup> Pepper exports declined and Aceh lost its place as the world's leading exporter of pepper. In 1902-05 the Calvinist-inspired, neo-conservative government of the Netherlands (the government led by Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper) rewarded the proponents of aggressive military action (the 'Atjeh School') with key posts throughout the archipelago. Many precedents were set. For example, civil and military government were considered to be held jointly, an important

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historical sociological interpretation of Islam is not, of course, acceptable to all Islamic scholars and intellectuals.

<sup>39</sup> E. Gellner, *Muslim society* (Cambridge 1981).

<sup>40</sup> J.I. Bakker, 'The Aceh war and the creation of the Netherlands East Indies state' in: A. Hamish Ion and E.J. Errington eds., *Great powers and little wars* (Westport, CN 1993) 53-82.

<sup>41</sup> The military course of the war is summarized in English by C. M Schulten, 'Tactics of the Dutch colonial army in the Netherlands East Indies', *Revue internationale d'histoire militaire* (Paris 1988). Schulten argues that the war had three phases: 1873-93, 1894-1903, 1904-13.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Reid, *The contest for North Sumatra: Atjeh, the Netherlands and Britain, 1858-1898* (London and Kuala Lumpur 1969).

precedent for the Republic of Indonesia's concept of 'two functions' (*dwi-fungs*), military and civil. I have commented on several key personalities of that struggle, especially General Johannes Benedictus van Heutsz, Daud Beureueh, Teungku Cik Di Toro, and Professor Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje.

Let me re-emphasize here the role of Teungku Cik Di Toro (1836-1891), of the Tiro family. The ulamas from Tiro were said to have originated with a Javanese haji who settled in Pidie. Tiro became a center of Islamic learning. Toro and his four sons led six thousand men in a holy war (*jihad*, *perang sabil*) against the colonial government, that was still known as the *kuempeni*, even though the V.O.C. had ceased almost a hundred years earlier. He sent letters to the uleebelangs to encourage them to fight for Allah against the infidel. Two of his sons died in fierce hand-to-hand fighting in 1896 and a grandson died in battle in 1911. In a situation that is repeated in many places in the world today, there was little if any recognition by the 'Europeans' (the N.E.I. government or the European officers of the K.N.I.L.) of the legitimacy of the moral outrage of the local (in this case Acehnese) jihadi guerillas.

The Shi'ite Islamic notion of power emanating from a charismatic imam was very important in Aceh and may have been more important than the Sunni concept of the source of legitimate authority stemming from a sacred community (the *umma*).<sup>43</sup> This had an impact long after the Aceh War. For example, James Siegel describes the ulama Daud Beureueh's role in Aceh in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>44</sup> He was a rival of the uleebelang Teuku Keumangan Oemar. Daud Beureueh led the Acehnese rebellion against the Republican government centered in Java and South Sumatra. Ultimately the Republican government supported a largely 'secular' notion of the European style nation-state, and Sukarno's conceptualization of the five basic principles (*Pancasila*) can be viewed as a rejection of Islamic political ideas. Suharto also believed in Javanese religion (*agama Jawa*). The Javanese-dominated government of the Republic of Indonesia is not Islamic.

The Acehnese are not closely related to the Javanese; at a certain stage of history they looked to Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Middle East and India for precedents. Their language is related to the language spoken

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<sup>43</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam observed: religious development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven, CN 1968). See also Marshall G. Hodgson, *The venture of Islam* (Chicago 1974) for an excellent general scholarly overview from a Western perspective.

<sup>44</sup> James Siegel, *The rope of God* (Berkeley, CA 1969).



by the Cham (from ancient Champa in South Vietnam). Language, of course, is a key to identity in an archipelago as diverse as Indonesia.<sup>45</sup> Despite its clear relevance to Java, traditional Islam has been more *centrally* important in Aceh than it has been in Java. In Java the Buddhist and Hindu background was such that layers of Islamic influence were to some degree ameliorated, a separate agama Java existed, and a significant portion of the population was not Muslim, or only nominally Muslim.<sup>46</sup> The same can probably be said, albeit for different reasons, for the Buton Sultanate.

### The Buton Sultanate

The complete history of Buton remains to be written, but we do have an excellent source, and enough is known about the Butonese and their rivals in Ternate, Makassar, and the diaspora Buginese, to present a few tentative idealized generalizations.<sup>47</sup> The main point about Buton is that to a large extent the Butonese actually benefited from Dutch indirect rule and colonialism. Although Buton was an Islamic Sultanate, the reaction to Dutch indirect rule was quite different in Buton than in Aceh. Islam played a different role in Buton than it did in Aceh, for a host of complex reasons. Hence, one can speculate, on the basis of available documents, that the rulers and the people largely accepted Dutch indirect rule as a relatively

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<sup>45</sup> J.I. Bakker, 'Language' in: George Ritzer ed., *The Blackwell encyclopedia of sociology* (Malden, MA 2007) 2533-2539; None of the three cases discussed here can be fully understood without knowledge of the indigenous languages spoken in Bali, Aceh and Buton. Berg, for example, has studied the various languages of Buton and Muna, like Wolio and Muna, including the little known Cia-Cia language spoken by only 60 000 or so people. A full historical account of the situation in Buton has yet to be written, in part since no one has had all of the language skills that would be required. See 'Languages of Indonesia (Sulawesi)' in: *Ethnologue: Languages of the world, 15<sup>th</sup> edition* (Dallas, TX 2008) 639-3 and [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com), a website for the Summer Institute for Linguistics.

<sup>46</sup> John Miksic ed., *Indonesian heritage: Ancient history* (Singapore and Jakarta 2001). This source is cited above for specific articles on Bali, but it has a wide scope.

<sup>47</sup> Pim Schoorl, 'Islam, macht en ontwikkeling in het sultanaat Buton', *Islam en macht: een historisch antropologisch perspectief* (Assen and Maastricht 1987) 52-65, 142, 148-149. See also Pim Schoorl, 'Het eeuwige verbond tussen Buton en de V.O.C., 1613-1669' in: Harry A. Poeze and Pim Schoorl ed., *Excursies in Celebes: een bundel bijdragen, Verhandelingen K.I.T.L.V.* 147 (Leiden 1991).

progressive development, all things considered. They do not so much constitute a case of resistance as an example of acceptance of Dutch power as a relatively beneficial counter-influence in an isolated area and a very complex situation. There were many players in a series of complex and shifting alliances.

One of the few general histories of Indonesia to even mention Buton (Butung) is by Jean Taylor, who is a student of the eminent Indonesian historian John R.W. Smail.<sup>48</sup> Smail himself wrote about the importance of attempting to formulate an 'autonomous history' of Southeast Asia.<sup>49</sup> Taylor touches on Buton because she summarizes many aspects of the history of Indonesia. She attempts as much as possible to provide what she calls 'an Indonesian-centered account.' Like many contemporary historians, she attempts to escape the constricting influences of a European-centered account where indigenous people 'fade into the background as observers, victims, or converts'. In other words, she tries to avoid the dilemma so cogently emphasized by Eric Wolf in his famous book *Europe and the people without history*.<sup>50</sup> If we wish to avoid a Eurocentric narrative then we must pay particular attention to the historical materials that are locally based, as in Ricklefs' careful study of a Javanese chronicle and in Sjamsuddin's study of Kalimantan.<sup>51</sup> We must, whenever possible, let indigenous people speak for themselves.

When it comes to the Butonese and Munanese the idea of a 'people without history' is exemplified in spades.<sup>52</sup> Very few people have ever heard of Muna Island, where I did field work, and the Buton Sultanate does not merit much more than a footnote in most standard works on Indonesian history. Buton is often considered insignificant, yet if we are going to fully understand resistance in Indonesia we should not be misled into thinking that Aceh is important while Buton is not.

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<sup>48</sup> Taylor, *Indonesia*. For this paragraph I have relied on her work above, note 10.

<sup>49</sup> D. J. Steinberg et al. eds. *In search of Southeast Asia: A modern history* (Honolulu, 1987). The highly influential first edition was published in 1971.

<sup>50</sup> Eric Wolf, *Europe and the people without history* (Berkeley, CA 1982).

<sup>51</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *Modern Javanese historical tradition: A study of an original Kartasura chronicle and related materials* (London 1978); Sjamsuddin, 'Islam and resistance', 7-17.

<sup>52</sup> The best succinct summary in English is Pim Schoorl, 'Butonese'. The former sultanate had its own four smaller vassal states (*barata*). They paid tribute, but each had its own ruler and council (*sarana*).



*Fig. 2: The mosque at Buton, as viewed from the fortress. The buildings were not in good condition. Source: author's private collection.*

To some extent Taylor examines 'sultanates' and sultans 'through Islam', that is, through Islamic writing. But as a product of modern European scholarship she shares assumptions first formulated during the Renaissance that seem like common sense to many people in the West but which contrast greatly with the traditional assumptions of almost all ancient and medieval Jewish, Christian and Islamic interpreters. So it is hardly the case in any precise sense that Taylor is writing the history of the Islamic petty states (like Ternate, Demak, Tuban, Gresik, Cirebon, Gorontalo, Luwu, Taoo', Gowa and Bima) from a Sunni or even a Shi'ite perspective. She is an American scholar who accepts Enlightenment values in her historical work. The 'hidden' esoteric meanings of the Qur'an are not considered by modern historians, like Smail and Taylor (or Fairbank and Murphey), to apply directly to specific events in the archipelago in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth centuries! For example, the eruption at Krakatau is not considered by modern historians to have been anticipated by Allah in his words to Mohammad in 632 AD<sup>53</sup> Enlightenment assumptions include the idea that sacred scriptures do not contain detailed predictions of events happening hundreds of years later. Ironically, the relative neglect of the

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<sup>53</sup> Ian Thornton, *Krakatau: the destruction and reassembly of an island ecosystem* (Cambridge, MA 1996).

Buton Sultanate is precisely due to the fact that Islamic traditional ideas were less directly relevant there. There was no Buton War. There was no active resistance. Hence, it becomes less interesting to historians of resistance. But if we want to get at the whole truth of colonialism then we have to consider moderate Islam as well as radical, violent Islamic forces.

## **Conclusion**

As stated, in this paper I have briefly discussed examples from Bali, Aceh and Buton. It would require at least three lengthy books to even begin to do those cases justice – much less begin to review in even a preliminary manner all of the possibly relevant cases – hence I have supplied a list of recommended, suggested readings. It is a long list, but far too short to satisfy most experts.<sup>54</sup> The case of Aceh fills lengthy books and resistance in Bali has been widely reported, although the true nature of traditional Balinese rulership is the subject of dispute. The least discussed case is the Buton Sultanate. Some work has been done and that case deserves to be better known, particularly in light of its theoretical importance as a counter to simplistic arguments about resistance.

To fully understand the postcolonial situation in the Republic of Indonesia we need to move beyond stereotypes concerning a uniform structure of domination. I myself have been guilty to some extent of over-emphasizing the central role of the Javanese court culture. While it may be true that the patrimonialism of the Central Javanese kratons is an important part of the story, particularly for Java and Bali, it is nevertheless also true that the importance of Islamic theories of *'asabiyya* should be given careful consideration. Just as the study of modern terrorism requires study of peer group influences,<sup>55</sup> the study of resistance challenges us to have a better grasp of the complexities of Southeast-Asian adaptations of Islam, particularly Sufism. More work needs to be done comparing the various Islamic states. We need to examine their own internal relationships, as well as their ties to India and the Middle East. There are several detailed studies, but there does not seem to be one comprehensive examination of the importance of various forms of Islam for Muslim societies throughout the

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<sup>54</sup> [www.leidschrift.nl](http://www.leidschrift.nl) and [www.semioticsigns.com](http://www.semioticsigns.com).

<sup>55</sup> J.I. Bakker, 'Terrorist organizations and agency: a comparative-historical approach' in: Bernard Phillips ed., *Understanding terrorism* (Boulder, CO 2007).

archipelago.<sup>56</sup> Detailed overviews, like Pelras's study of the Bugis, requires a great deal of work and a variety of historical, linguistic and ethnographic skills.<sup>57</sup>

When I visited Ceribon in 1976 it was surprising how important the *zīarah* veneration of the graves (tombs) of Islamic holy men (*wali*) like Sunan Gunung Jati (that is perhaps *She Lēmabhang*) still was.<sup>58</sup> At that time I did not know enough about the Javanese calendar to fully understand, but friends had told me an important ceremony was going to be happening. Thousands of people crowded into a small space in celebration of a man who had brought Islam to Sunda's Pajajaran and is considered by some to be an exemplar of the Islamic concept of a perfect man (*Rasulullah*, the *al-Insan al-Kamil*). Indeed, the 'saints' of Java are still important throughout Java.<sup>59</sup> A major procession featured the rulers of Ceribon in such a way that for an instant I felt like I was back in the seventeenth century, or even earlier. Ceribon is geographically close to Jakarta and Bandung, but it is culturally much closer to the coastal *pasisir* states of an earlier era. It is a vestige of a time which has largely been lost to modern (and postmodern) life in the globalized, urban Java of the twenty-first century.

The excellent work done by Johns and many others provides a beginning,<sup>60</sup> but hopefully in the future Indonesian scholars will provide more detailed studies of the sociological history of the inter-relationship between European and non-European outside forces. Buton and Aceh were both Islamic, but their forms of resistance were quite different. Indonesia is far too complex a place to allow for generalizations that take global terms

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<sup>56</sup> A.H. Johns, 'Sufism as a category in Indonesian literature and history' *Journal of Southeast Asian history* 2 (2): 10-23 (Canberra 1961). Also Cf. A.H. Johns, 'Islam in Southeast Asia' in Mircea Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of religion* (New York 1987) 404-422.

<sup>57</sup> Christian Pelras, *The Bugis* (Malden 1997). The Bugis are the most numerous of the four main ethnic groups on Southeast Sulawesi. They were small holders who grew rice until disruption caused a diaspora which made many traders and sailors.

<sup>58</sup> James Fox, 'Ziarah Visits to the tombs of the Wali, the founders of Islam on Java' in: M. C. Ricklefs ed., *Islam in the Indonesian social context* (Clayton, Australia 1991) 19-38.

<sup>59</sup> D. W. Drewes, 'New light on the coming of Islam to Indonesia', *Bijdragen tot de T., L., en V* (Leiden 1968).

<sup>60</sup> A. H. Johns, 'Islam in Southeast Asia', 404-422.

like 'Christianity,' 'imperialism,' 'colonialism,' and 'Islam' at face value. If we reify the words we do an injustice to the realities.<sup>61</sup>

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