



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Negotiating Islamisation and resistance : a study of religions, politics and social change in West Java from the early 20th Century to the present

Bamualim, C.S.

Citation

Bamualim, C. S. (2015, September 9). *Negotiating Islamisation and resistance : a study of religions, politics and social change in West Java from the early 20th Century to the present*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/35119>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/35119>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/35119> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation

Author: Bamualim, Chaider S.

Title: Negotiating Islamisation and resistance : a study of religions, politics and social change in West Java from the early 20th Century to the present

Issue Date: 2015-09-09

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION: NEGOTIATING ISLAMISATION, POLITICS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

This study aims to show that in Sundanese society, since the 19th century there has always been an intimate negotiation between Islamisation and other faiths, especially *Aliran Kebatinan* and Christianity. This means that there has always been a coherent dialectics between cultural categories in society. This negotiation was caused either by social integration or by conflict as Islamisation had different impacts depending on its approach and objectives. Islamisation integrated and united society when it did not threaten or pretend to change the existing power balance of culture and politics but included valued native beliefs and *adat* into its practices. Contrarily, Islamisation threatened social integration when it harmed the integrated belief system and the culture society preserved. This is because in society there is always a fundamental link between culture and power.¹⁴⁵

The findings of this research show that in West-Javanese society, cultural and religious - both Islamic and Christian - changes are the results of social and political adjustments caused by shifting political contexts that together provided the imperative for these adjustments. There are at least three shifting contexts that became crucial in defining the direction of Islamisation and the extent of the changes to take place in society. The *first* was the pre-independence context in which Islamic institutions were inclined to be autonomous bodies and Muslims in most cases sought to compromise with the Dutch ruler. *Second*, in the post-independence context, Soekarno guaranteed state neutrality towards all religions recognised by the state. As a rationalist, he called upon the Islamic *umat* and other believers to embrace a rational interpretation of

¹⁴⁵ Ann Swidler, 'Cultural Power and Social Movements', in Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (eds.), *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), p. 31.

religious beliefs. *Third*, Soeharto's authoritarian context provided Muslims with the setting for *Dakwahism* that led to the rise of Islamic culture and social institutions. *Fourth*, there is the *Reformasi* context during which regimes promoted democracy and an open society, but were contested by the radical Islamists and other groups who all had their own agenda and problems. Muslims, Christians and the *Penghayat* were given a new setting in which to push their religious agenda and to exist. In this democratic context, during which the more or less fair and liberal atmosphere was contested, rivalry among and negotiation between Islam and Christianity continued. It is also important, in this new setting, to bear in mind the dynamics of *Aliran Kebatinan* at the time.

Islamisation and Unified Religious Systems

Holding Balance between Islam and *Adat*

As observed in Chapter One, Islam and Sunda have variously been imagined and interpreted as two distinct phenomena or as two sides of the same coin. The most-discussed interpretation is the claim that the Sundanese have always been more Islamic observant than the Javanese although objections to such claim have been raised. Missionary accounts, especially about the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries about Sundanese society seemed to justify such common vision.¹⁴⁶ That Islamisation in the region from the sixteenth century onwards was successful was in part the result of Islam's accommodative attitude towards native syncretism, whose followers believe in what Niels Mulder calls 'the essential unity of all Existence'.¹⁴⁷ In the native-syncretic environment, Islamisation inclined to preserve *adat*, though not in its entirety. This attitude made it possible for the Sundanese to adapt Islam and to 'blend' its worldviews with their own typical religious practices and *adat* and other way around. Most important is that Islam had not in all cases, and also not in its entirety, been promoted to displace the *adat* that was largely rooted in Hindu-Buddhist worldviews and mysticism.¹⁴⁸ This Islamisation model obtained cultural and political legitimacy because the Sundanese *ulama*

¹⁴⁶ Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁷ Mulder, 'Aliran Kebatinan', p. 105.

¹⁴⁸ Wessing, 'A Princess from Sunda', pp. 317-318.

and aristocrats, for instance Haji Hasan Moestapa and R.A.A. Moeharam Wiranatakoesoema, gave their supports to such a model. They even played important roles in maintaining the balance between Islam and *adat*. This came to be so through a long process of 'intimate' dialectics between Islam and *adat* that caused the easy permeation of Islam into West Java and the transformation of its society.¹⁴⁹

It was not uncommon that *adat* was harmoniously preserved in Islamic practices, which shaped the religious identity of the Sundanese.¹⁵⁰ This *adat*-Islam setting provided the context for the protection of various native-syncretic beliefs. Even after world religions increasingly became central to the Sundanese, some syncretic creeds remained well preserved, for instance the belief in *guriang*, the Sundanese deity of prosperity, and honouring Nyai Roro Kidul, the Goddess Queen of the Southern Sea.¹⁵¹ The Sundanese custom of venerating the graves of saints remained to be honoured too.¹⁵²

The *adat*-Islam configuration has perhaps inspired some Sundanese leaders to juxtapose Islam-Sunda identities and to conceptualise them in the popular slogan "Islam *teh* Sunda, Sunda *teh* Islam," which means 'Islam is Sunda and Sunda is Islam'. Of course, this slogan does not necessarily mean to obscure the differences between the Sundanese and Islamic categories. Rather, this seems to be an affirmation of Islam-Sunda identity. Surprisingly this idea was conceptualised by Endang Saefuddin Anshari, none other than the leader of PERSIS, who was known to be highly critical of such blending. Although this notion was only first popularised in 1967, this view of Islam and *adat* had already become widespread among Sundanese Muslim leaders long before that time.¹⁵³ I think such claim has been generally accepted for the reason that Sundanese society has never been polarised according to strict religious and *adat*-cultural lines.

¹⁴⁹ A good example of the blend between Islamic precepts and existing practice may be found in 'The Makam of Syaikh Abdulmuhyi', in D.A. Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, pp. 1-16. Also Wessing, 'A Princess from Sunda', pp. 317-318. Interview with the expert on Sundanese culture and arts, Hidayat Suryalaga, Bandung, 13 August 2009.

¹⁵⁰ Interview, Hidayat Suryalaga, Bandung, 13 August 2009.

¹⁵¹ Wessing, 'A Princess from Sunda', pp. 317-318.

¹⁵² Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, p. 10.

¹⁵³ Interview, Hidayat Suryalaga, Bandung, 13 August 2009.

Thus, the importance of *adat* as the element of Sundanese identity seemed also to be effective in case Sundanese converted to other religions than Islam which most Sundanese consider religiously unacceptable. However, conversion did not necessarily polarise the Sundanese. The Christian Sundanese community in Gununghalu, Cianjur, for instance, has embraced Christianity since the nineteenth century and has lived in harmony with their fellow Sundanese Muslims to this day. Radical Islamists recently appeared in town trying to disrupt this unity, but they failed because the Muslim majority refused to support them and, as a consequence, they lost their influence.

Unified Religious System under Threat

Purified Islamic Discourse and Social Disintegration

As highlighted in Chapter Two, PERSIS had been critical towards *adat*. PERSIS leaders thought that *adat* contains animistic elements they considered un-Islamic and, therefore, must be removed as a means to carry on the complete conversion to Islam.¹⁵⁴ PERSIS's insistence on authenticity causes them to juxtapose Sundanese and Islam as two different identities, asserting that Hindu elements in Sundanese *adat* are harmful to Islam. PERSIS's attitude is not surprising, however, given the Modernist tendency to devalue tradition's significance¹⁵⁵ by imposing 'pure' religious practices. PERSIS's stance provoked this kind of anti-Islamic sentiment, which came up after the 1930s and climaxed in the 1960s. The way PERSIS campaigned against Traditionalist practices, like what Geertz calls 'unified *slametan*',¹⁵⁶ offended the *Penghayat* who propagated the anti-Islam sentiments among them. For instance, Madrais' son, Tejabuana, an ADS leader, criticised PERSIS ardently and called upon them to respect any religious practice that was integrated in nativist traditions. He insisted that any religious practice that does not share nativist spiritual visions is illegitimate.¹⁵⁷ This anti-*adat* tone is directed at the complex socio-political reality and the cultural plurality

¹⁵⁴ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, p. 150.

¹⁵⁵ Dale F. Eickelman, 'Islam and the Languages of Modernity', in Shahram Akbarzadeh (ed.), *Islam and Globalization: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 41.

¹⁵⁶ Geertz, 'Ritual and Social Change', p. 48.

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Pangeran Jatikusuma, Cigugur, Kuningan, 5 August 2009.

of Sundanese society. Its multicultural and syncretic composition meant that it is difficult to breathe in the straightjacket puritanical identity PERSIS sought.¹⁵⁸

Kyai Madrais and Mei Kartawinata, two important opponents of Islam, condemned this anti-*adat* and confrontational vision of PERSIS's religious discourses. That increased Islamisation causing the abandonment of other parts of the Sundanese creed caused social relationships to disintegrate as well as, perhaps, may be best exemplified by the example of Ciganjur, Kuningan where numerous Sundanese abandoned Islam and opted to convert to Christianity instead from 1964 onwards. However, the effect of these broken ties was not so great. This confirms that Sundanese society had not become polarised like Javanese society in Clifford Geertz's well-known social categorization of *priyayi*, *santri*, and *abangan*. Or at least, as Steenbrink observed, the polarisation of Sundanese society was not as strict as that of Javanese society, which was polarised along social-religious and cultural lines.¹⁵⁹

Dramatic Shifting Contexts

State Recognition of Islam and Soekarno's Rational Interpretation of Religion

In the 1945 Constitution, religions and beliefs were given all sorts of opportunities to grow and the Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion. Deeply inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, Soekarno insisted that Indonesian Muslims should think and behave in modern

¹⁵⁸ Kusnaka Adimihardja, 'Pergumulan antara Kebudayaan Sunda dengan Islam', in Cik Hasan Bisri (et al.), *Pergumulan Islam dengan Kebudayaan Lokal di Tatar Sunda* (Bandung: Kaki Langit, 2005), pp. 85-88.

¹⁵⁹ Steenbrink, 'A Catholic Sadrach'; p. 288 and Ricklefs' *Islamisation and its Opponent in Java*, p. 495. Ricklefs has also noticed that since 1830 to 1930, Javanese society changed and polarised along religious and cultural lines. This polarisation continued after independence. During the early years after the revolution, for example, the *santri-abangan* conflict deepened. See Ricklefs, *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java*, p. 496. The impact of the *aliran* conflict spread widely after the Madiun affair in 1948 and became what Hefner called "the basis for political organization in rural Java" as recounted in Chapter Two. See Hefner, 'Islamizing Java?', p. 535. See also Liddle, *Power, Participation and the Political Parties*, pp. 171-195.

ways by embracing the fire (spirit) of Islam.¹⁶⁰ He saw Islam as compatible to reason, so he thought that there was no contradiction between Islam and modernity.¹⁶¹ Soekarno had rational and modern views of Islam and he condemned Islamic backwardness, feudalism, mystical and irrational practices and superstitions, just like PERSIS, as revealed in his correspondence with A. Hassan from his place of exile in Ende, Flores. Having this understanding of Islam, Soekarno provided the setting for the development of Islamic institutions and cultures that promoted further Islamisation, both in urban and in rural areas.¹⁶² This was not only because of religious reasons but also to enable Indonesian culture to become more modern in other aspects as well. This caused Islamic institutions to flourish and created a gradual socio-religious transformation. In Bandung, Soekarno's approval for the construction of the Salman Mosque at the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) was crucial in intensifying campus *dakwah* and this increasingly Islamised ITB students, as observed in Chapter Four.

Extermination of DI and Its Impacts

From the political perspective, Soekarno's dealing with the extremism committed by DI rebels left no message to Muslim Sundanese except to rationalise their political choice. The overwhelming majority of Sundanese Muslims refused to answer the call to join the DI guerrilla in the 1950s and the 1960s. Rather, they decided to escape the tense situation in Tasikmalaya, Cianjur, Garut, Ciamis and other parts in the

¹⁶⁰ Soekarno admired liberal thinkers including Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Halide Edib Hanoum and Amir Ali. Atatürk and Halide are the most quoted Muslim thinkers in Soekarno's writings although Amir Ali was probably the most influential in his Islamic thinking. Lubis, *Soekarno & Modernisme Islam*, pp. 142, 143, 286.

¹⁶¹ Lubis, *Soekarno & Modernisme Islam*, pp. 142-43.

¹⁶² After independence to 1966, Soekarno contributed to building Islamic education, both state and private Islamic universities, and initiated Islamic festivals celebrated officially by the state. Soekarno contributed to *dakwah* in secular campuses especially after he approved the establishment of the Salman Mosque just inside the grounds of the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) in 1964. As discussed in Chapter Four, Soekarno's approval of the mosque, despite the ITB Rector's disapproval, helped inspiring *Dakwahism* among the educated class of Muslim society. Under Soekarno, Muslims enjoyed state neutrality of religion from which *dakwah* and the Islamisation project continued.

region, and they fled to places in rural mountainous West Java, particularly Lembang, to liberate themselves from the insecurity inflicted by the rebellion. They also chose to go to Lembang for economic reasons because, as Horikoshi suggested, due to the rebellion, agricultural productivity had dropped and there were disruptions in commodity flows between regions caused by the deterioration of the transportation system.¹⁶³

As observed in Chapter Five, the majority of these people were Traditionalist Sundanese Muslims. They were trained in *pesantrens* across West Java and their socio-religious background enabled them to speak the same language as the people in Lembang and because they shared a similar cultural identity they encountered little difficulties to live in harmony with the people in their new place of residence. Endowed with this social and cultural capital they were able to approach the people in Lembang without being confrontational and they persuaded the people to embrace Islam through friendly and appealing ways.¹⁶⁴ Because the people in Lembang were introduced to Islamic doctrine and practices, in the end the migration of the people from outside led to a gradual replacement of the established syncretic cultural basis in the area, as discussed in Chapter Five.

The change created a new religious configuration in the area which was known as a Nationalist stronghold where Islamic identity had not been predominant. Interestingly, this process occurred without meeting strong opposition from Nationalist proponents which may indicate that the Nationalist Sundanese did not feel uncomfortable with the increased presence of Islam; or it might be fair to say that they did not think that these Muslim migrants were their opponents, because they upheld Sundanese identity while practicing Islam as a cultural category rather than as a political one.

¹⁶³ Horikoshi, 'The Dar ul-Islam Movement in West Java (1948-62)', p. 77.

¹⁶⁴ Interview, K.H. Junaidi, Lembang, 03 September 2014. Van Bruinessen's *Kitab Kuning* is an important work that gives us valuable information about the textbooks which are used as teaching materials and *dakwah* references especially in Traditionalist *pesantrens*. Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, pp. 142-176.

The Rise of the New Order and the Fall of the *Penghayat*

The dramatic political change in the aftermath of the 30 September 1965 coup attempt was crucial in the development of Islam in Indonesia. This change produced an unprecedented socio-cultural and political setting that increasingly shifted away from the social and cultural foundations of Soekarno's political reign, which had been rather liberal in its outlook, towards Soeharto's political reign in which religions were given a wider mandate. Consequently, this shift weakened the nativist syncretic creeds and favoured a much more intense Islamisation than ever before. Religious identity became increasingly stronger. In other words, political change caused religious change and the other way around, and these changes in their turn caused social change. This Islamisation transformed Sundanese society.¹⁶⁵ It swept across West Java's rural areas and weakened the *Penghayat*, the guardians of the native-syncretic creeds and caused them to become outsiders in this region. This socio-political change provided the context for the Islamisation of the Sundanese.

***Dakwahism* and 'Islamisation from Below'**

The fall of the *Penghayat* paved the way for 'Islamisation from below' after Soeharto supported Muslims' *dakwah* projects notwithstanding his opposition to political Islam. As said in Chapter Three, Soeharto, a devoted subscriber to Javanese values, was surprisingly accommodative towards Muslims' cultural projects especially those the Modernists demanded. Moreover, he accepted the ideas of religious communities with respect to his development agenda, on issues such as family planning, education, economic empowerment and so on. Soeharto secured Muslims' civil rights by accepting the Islamic inspired Marriage

¹⁶⁵ In East and Central Java, Ricklefs observes that: ".....Soeharto's New Order brought an aspiring totalitarianism to Indonesia and facilitated a much deeper Islamisation of Javanese society, a profound social change from Java's past. Even while multiple scholars, journalists and politicians, both within Indonesia and outside, maintained the view that the Javanese constituted of a sort of impregnable *abangan* bastion against greater Islamic influence in Indonesian affairs – an idea resting largely on the still-influential 1950s work of Clifford Geertz – Javanese society was moving beyond this stereotype." See Ricklefs, *Islamisation and its opponents in Java*, p. 259.

Law no 1/1974. This law had slowly but constantly driven the *Penghayat* to convert to Islam. Some of them, however, converted by coercion or had embraced Islam for political reasons. Islamisation was in part the result of the politicisation of Islam among the grassroots.

Marpu and his followers' coercive conversion to Islam in 1976, as discussed in Chapter Three, is perhaps the best example of politically-driven Islamisation in Sumedang West Java. This coercive conversion in part marked the fall of the *Penghayat* but strengthened the supremacy of Islam and Christianity in society. Soekarno's fall was followed by tremendous socio-political transformation in which Muslims and their identity and institutions increasingly became more influential. This considerably factored in what Ricklefs calls 'Islamisation from below'¹⁶⁶ or what Van Bruinessen called the 'Conservative Turn'.¹⁶⁷ The *Dakwahist* upsurge in both urban and rural West Java across campuses in the cities and across mosques in the villages proves that Islamisation was indeed deepening among the grassroots in Sundanese society.

Christianity Turned into Islam's Greatest Opponent

As said in Chapter Three, the Soeharto regime's politics on religions was translated into a favourable attitude towards *Dakwahism* and Christian missionaries aiming to neutralise Communist influence over society. Although ambivalent, theoretically the regime considered Islam and Christianity as important allies. Under these changing circumstances conflict patterns changed. Muslim Sundanese were happy with the pressure that had been put on the *Penghayat* across West Java, but their joy was tempered by the realisation that the Christian mission had turned into their greatest opponent, especially in the wake of the conversion of many thousands of Sundanese to Christianity.

The promotion of religion, however, was not built on a solid vision of religious freedom and tolerance. The Christian leaders sought a liberal policy in spreading religion but, contrarily, Muslims demanded restrictions and favoured a conservative religious policy. Facing this dilemma, the regime resorted to a conservative stance and it saw social

¹⁶⁶ Ricklefs, *Islamisation and its opponents in Java*, p. 162.

¹⁶⁷ Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), 'Introduction: Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam and the "Conservative Turn" of the Early 21st century', in *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013).

order and stability as its priority and without hesitation, the regime warned all parties not to provoke social and political instability. The Christian leaders, in particular, were upset by the regime's insistence on a stable social and political order through downplaying the Christians' right to exercise their religious freedom.

Regardless of this development, and to the surprise of many observers, under this circumstance, Evangelical Protestantism has seen significant growth. The Christian leaders, especially the evangelicals, were now more passionate and courageous in their efforts to propagate Christianity. With increasing confidence the Christian leaders rose to prominence. With Chinese leaders playing an important role – as elaborated in Chapter Six, Muslims saw these developments as threatening and began to organise resistance to defend Islam.

Educated Muslims Turned *Dakwahists*

In the past Muslim leaders, particularly the Modernists, believed in politics as an effective means to defend Islam and their religious objectives. Now they could no longer trust this belief as it crumpled in front of their eyes. They even had mixed feelings of hope and anxiety whether the changing political environment under the New Order regime would provide the political changes they expected to ensure greater fairness for their religion and their *umat*. With these mixed feelings, they sought a solid foundation to enable them to defend their religious aims by turning Muslim students, youths and the educated class among Muslim society's agenda towards *dakwah*.

They hoped that with the students playing an important role, *dakwah* leadership and its vision would be transformed. With this mission in mind, the most prominent *Dakwahist*, Mohamed Natsir and student leaders such as Imaduddin Abdulrahim and his friends, turned their eyes to secular campuses to promote Islamisation. The Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) became one of their most important targets. After some years, this *dakwah* project increasingly became the agenda of the educated class in Muslim society; and it no longer became an exclusive job routinely exercised by *ulama* or other traditional *dakwah* agents. With Muslim intellectuals in charge of the *dakwah* project, a significant change was promoted especially in the organisation, leadership and themes of *dakwah*.

However, it is worth noting that under the Salman movement, particularly during the 1970s to 1990s, no single ideology prevailed. Campus *dakwah* offered a diversity of Islamic discourses. With this new leadership and vision, *dakwah* had become attractive to a wide range of students and to society in general. Over time, this *dakwah* movement provided an Islamic nuance and an identity not only to Muslim intellectuals of the ITB, but also to other Muslims in the capital of West Java and surrounding areas. However, as no single ideology was promoted, the Salman movement was prone to ideological infiltration from Islamist like the Tarbiyah in the 1990s. This infiltration, however, did not succeed because of resistance from Salman elites.

The dynamics of religious resurgence from below and of social changes are largely determined by the regime's political programme made to sustain the rulers and to control society. Despite being crucial, the regime and its ambition to control society has, to some extent, failed to engineer the social religious vision and way of life the regime expected. It seems clear that during this period the relationships between Islam, the AK and Christianity formed a unique, continually-changing dialectic of contest, negotiation, victory, and defeat.

The Reform: The Contest Continued

Penghayat's Reclaim of their Identity?

Under the New Order's closed political system, the regime ruled in authoritarian ways and it engineered the making of political dynamics in society, one of which caused religious change as exemplified by the decrease of the *Aliran Kebatinan* in Lembang. After politics became democratised and thus changed society to become more open and free, this changing political setting again brought about religious change that also caused social change. Thus, the political change under the authoritarian regime was a form of top-down social engineering; contrarily, in the Reform era, the change was inspired by people from the grassroots. The latter is exemplified by the *Penghayat's* mounting claim that their belief in the *Aliran Kebatinan* is a true faith because the syncretic current is essentially the religion of the Sundanese ancestors.

In recent times, the *Aliran Kebatinan* followers have sought to legitimise their presence by reclaiming their position in Sundanese history. This is an attempt to reconsolidate the superiority of their

Sundanese identity and that of the *Aliran Kebatinan* over other religions, particularly Islam, whose influence was deepening. Nativist or ethnic sentiments were important factors in *Aliran Kebatinan's* search for identity consolidation. Islam's use of the Arabic language and culture prevented it from being meaningful to some local people in the rural areas who found it easier to have meaningful relationships with the ethnic symbols already embedded in everyday rural life. The growing appreciation of local symbols thus reflects their resurgent identification with their cultural heritage. *Aliran Kebatinan* followers are worried about the dominance of the current Muslims' legal, political and cultural presence in the life of the Sundanese as this will come at the expense of local traditions and symbols, thus jeopardizing their ties to their authentic historical identity. For this reason they are now struggling to revive.

Christianisation and Ethno-Religious Sentiments

Under the shifting political context from the 1960s, Christianity revived too and it flourished even more after the start of the Reform era pioneered especially by the Pentecostal churches. Indonesians of ethnic Chinese origins played a crucial role in this revival and thus provoked anti-Christian and anti-Chinese sentiments at the same time. Muslims' fear of Christianisation as observed by Mujiburrahman¹⁶⁸ was increasingly transformed into fear of Christian Chinese. Which motive was stronger, religion or ethnic, can not be decided. Muslims' fear was evident, for instance, in the protests against the Mahanaim Foundation owned by Iln Tjipto, an Indonesian of ethnic Chinese origin, in Bekasi. This sentiment adds fuel to the existing tension between Islam and Christianity across West Java. The eruption of anti-Christianisation actions across West Java and the attack on HKBP leaders in Bekasi in 2010 seems to have been inspired by the effect of the intersection of ethno-religious sentiments.

Radical Islamist's Dictating of the State

Unlike the New Order regime which set and controlled politics and society, the following democratic regimes did not have strong policies on religions. Rather, the pervasive roles of religious organisations in

¹⁶⁸ Mujiburrahman, *Feeling Threatened*.

politics saw them assume significant control and impose pressure on the state. Ricklefs observes that “in post-Soeharto years, it became less a case of the political regime setting the religious agenda than the reverse: religious dynamics shaping the political regime.”¹⁶⁹ Muslim activists preferred building mass organisations to articulate their interests especially in launching their protests against Christianisation which have thus sustained the perpetual tension and competitive relations between Islam and Christianity. Christianity’s upsurge and the eruption of anti-Christianisation actions in the past two decades, from 1990s to the 2000s, was also exacerbated by the shift in pattern of contemporary conflicts, from *aliran* politics during the 1950s to the 1960s to religious-ethno sentiment during the 1990s to 2000s during which Christianity became the greatest Islamic opponent. In the absence of strong policies on religions, tension and conflict between radical Islamists and evangelists will continue to erupt, thus West Javanese society will most likely be polarised according to religious, and maybe, ethnic sentiments unless the state embraces policies designed to maintain social harmony in the multicultural society of West Java.

¹⁶⁹ Ricklefs, *Islamisation and its opponent in Java*.

