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‘*Ghazwul Fikri* or Arabization? Indonesian Muslim Responses to Globalization’

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## ***Ghazwul Fikri* or Arabization? Indonesian Muslim Responses to Globalization**

Martin van Bruinessen

Globalization perceived as a threat: *ghazwul fikri* or Arabization?

In the 1990s, discussions in circles of committed Muslims in Indonesia were enriched with the concept of *ghazwul fikri* (*al-ghazw al-fikri*, invasion of ideas), which became a catch-all term to refer to various forms of Western cultural invasion: the impact of American movies, popular music, dance and dress styles on Indonesian popular culture, the emergence of middle-class lifestyles with ‘Westernized’ consumption preferences, and above all certain styles of religious thought and attitudes towards religion that the speakers disapproved of, notably secularism, liberalism and the idea of religious pluralism.

Critics were quick to point out that this concept was itself a symptom of another kind of cultural invasion. The term *ghazwul fikri* was part of a much larger complex of ideas, an entire *Weltanschauung*, that was adopted lock, stock and barrel from Middle Eastern Islamist sources and propagated by certain local actors backed up by lavish funding from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.<sup>1</sup> Many Indonesian Muslims were much concerned at what they perceived as a concerted effort to Arabize Indonesian Islam and wipe out local practices and liberal interpretations that had been influential among wide segments of the population. Against a perceived Arab-style ‘political Islam’, prominent intellectuals pleaded for what they called ‘cultural Islam’: the expression of Islamic values in Indonesian cultural forms.

Both the proponents of the *ghazwul fikri* thesis and the opponents of Arabization appeared to share the perception that Indonesian Islam was under threat of being subverted by foreign influences and the assumption that local cultures are largely passive recipients of global flows. In their call for resistance, however, they implicitly conceded the possibility of rejection or selective adoption of ‘foreign’ ideas and practices. In fact, Indonesia’s highly distinctive cultures are not the product of relative isolation from foreign influences, but came

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<sup>1</sup> The earliest Indonesian book on the subject that I have found is a straightforward translation from the Arabic: Marzuq (1990). A year earlier, a similar text was published in Singapore: Mahmud (1989). A perusal of relevant journals may yet show up earlier usage of the term in the late 1980s, but these are the books one finds often quoted by later Indonesian authors. The term occurs with increasing frequency in Islamic magazines and journals through the 1990s, and its continuing occurrence in the 2000s can easily be attested with a Google search (25,300 hits when last accessed on 14 December 2010, most of them magazine articles from the previous five years).

about precisely because of centuries and millennia of active interaction with powerful cultural flows that reached the archipelago from across the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.<sup>2</sup> Cultural borrowing was a creative process, in which the ‘foreign’ elements were soon incorporated into a distinctively local synthesis.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the dominant global flows impacting on Indonesia, each supported by communities of settlers, hailed from three powerful centres: the West, the world of Islam and China. As a nation, Indonesia was shaped by Dutch colonialism and Islam-inspired resistance to foreign domination. Colonial rule, gradually expanding during this period, integrated the various regions of insular Southeast Asia under a single administration and introduced new ideas and practices in law, education and associational life. Islam had come to Indonesia from various parts of Asia and in many different forms, but in the nineteenth century it was Arab traders from Hadramaut and hajjis, local men who had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, who were the most important cultural brokers. Like the colonial administration, networks of Muslim learning and trade transcended ethnic boundaries; for both, moreover, the Malay language, with its numerous Arabic loanwords, was the preferred medium of communication.<sup>3</sup> The Malay language, and other cultural expressions associated with it (poetry, song, music), came to constitute the core of Indonesia’s national identity.

Muslims have always looked towards Mecca and Medina as the prestigious heartland, and many travelled there not only to fulfil a religious obligation but to gain spiritual power and prestige. Upon their return, they often attempted to reform local religious practices and bring them more in line with what they had witnessed in Arabia. The history of Islam in Indonesia is one of wave upon wave of reform, brought about by these returning pilgrims, after which the reformed practices and beliefs were soon accommodated in new local adaptations or gave rise to anti-reformist protests (Ricklefs 1979, 2007; van Bruinessen 1999).

The regular communications with Arabia were not the only ‘foreign’ factor impinging on Indonesian Islam, however. The leading nationalists of the early twentieth century had received their education in Dutch schools and had no access to Arabic texts. Those among them who were committed to Islam and considered Islam to be part of Indonesia’s national identity in many cases depended on Dutch scholarship on Islam and a Dutch translation of the

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<sup>2</sup> This was brought out, for a much earlier period, in the important studies on Southeast Asian early states by Coedès (1948).

<sup>3</sup> There were in fact a number of different forms of Malay, ranging from kitab Malay, the idiom of religious texts translated from, and often maintaining the syntactic structures of, Arabic, to the ‘civilized’ standard Malay sponsored by the colonial administration in the last decades of Dutch rule. On the latter see Jedamski (1992). So-called Pasar Malay, the language of the market, used between Chinese middlemen and their indigenous customers, was quite different again and showed much less Arabic influence.

Quran. The first association of such Muslim intellectuals, Jong Islamieten Bond (JIB, Young Muslims' League, established in 1925), published its journal, *Het Licht* (The Light), in Dutch rather than Malay. The discussions in the association also indicated a quite Westernized approach to Islamic issues (Saidi 1989). Around the same time, the Ahmadiyah also began to gain influence in the same circles, due to its English-language publications and the English-speaking missionaries it had sent from British India to Indonesia.<sup>4</sup> Yet another significant European contribution to the distinctive character of Indonesian Islam concerned its associational life. The major Muslim associations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, were established according to Dutch Indies legislation and followed the model of Dutch Christian religious associations, also in terms of the type of activities they engaged in.

In a much earlier period, there had also been a distinctive Chinese component in Indonesian Islam, still recognizable in the architecture of certain mosques and saints' shrines.<sup>5</sup> The role of Chinese Muslims in the conversion to Islam of Java's north coast remains a highly controversial subject, but in the past decade, recent Chinese converts to Islam have made an effort to highlight and revive the relations between China's Muslim communities and those of Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, there are clear traces of Muslim influences hailing from various coastal regions of India in the early phases of Islamization, and in the twentieth century we find that various South Asian reform movements also made incursions in Indonesia.<sup>7</sup>

In summing up, we may state that the global flows impacting on, or interacting with, Indonesian Islam have been highly diverse and have originated from different cultural regions. 'The Middle East' and 'the West', which both include distinct sub-regions, have been the dominant and to some extent competing sources of the flow of ideas, with minor and less immediately visible roles being played by China and South Asia. Indonesian actors, both individuals and associations, had much more agency in this process than the discourse of 'cultural invasion' or 'Arabization' suggests, as the following sections will show.

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<sup>4</sup> The Ahmadiyah was a Muslim religious movement founded in late 19th-century British India by the charismatic Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which soon split into two rival sections, of which the larger, with headquarters in Qadian, considered the founder as a prophet and the smaller, based in Lahore, defined him as a reformer and renewer of Islam (mujaddid). Both sent envoys to the Netherlands Indies, leading to a lasting presence of the Ahmadiyah in Indonesia. It was the Lahore missionaries who made a significant impact on Muslim reformism in Indonesia. The Qadiani claim of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's prophethood has been the ostensible reason for world-wide anti-Ahmadi campaigns and violent attacks against Ahmadi communities, including in Indonesia. See Beck 2005, Burhani 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Lombard and Salmon (1985); cf. the observations on the pervasive Chinese influence on Javanese culture in general in: Lombard (1990).

<sup>6</sup> Two respected Dutch scholars lent their prestige to a fascinating but unreliable Malay text claiming that most of the saints of Java's north coast were of Chinese origin: de Graaf and Pigeaud (1984). On the recent efforts to re-establish a connection with China's Muslim (Hue) minority, see Chiou (2007).

<sup>7</sup> This concerns notably the Ahmadiyah, arriving in the 1920s, and the Tablighi Jama'at, active in Indonesia since the 1980s. See Zulkarnain (2005); Noor (2010, 2012).

## Studying Islam in the West: The New Order and its favoured Muslim discourses

Indonesians who wished to increase their knowledge and understanding of Islam had traditionally spent periods under the guidance of prominent scholars in Mecca or at the Azhar in Cairo. Leading religious authorities of Indonesia's main Muslim associations, the 'Traditionalist' Nahdlatul Ulama and the 'Reformist' Muhammadiyah, owed their legitimacy at least in part to their studies in the Arab Middle East. The major centres of Islamic learning in South Asia, which exercised some influence in Malaysia, never attracted many Indonesian students.<sup>8</sup> In the final three decades of the twentieth century, however, Western universities emerged as alternative sites to learn about Islam.

The first Indonesians to pursue Islamic studies in Western academia, as early as the late 1950s and 1960s, were a handful of young men affiliated with the Reformist Muslim party Masyumi (which in those years was the main pro-Western party). They received scholarships to study at the Institute of Islamic Studies at Canada's McGill University, which W. Cantwell Smith had recently established as a centre for interreligious encounter. Mukti Ali and Harun Nasution, who were to exert a major influence on later generations of Muslim students, were the best known among this first cohort.<sup>9</sup> Mukti Ali wrote his M.A. thesis on the Muhammadiyah movement and developed a strong interest in comparative religion. He was to be the New Order's first Minister of Religious Affairs (1973–1978) and later served long as the rector of Yogyakarta's State Institute of Islamic Studies. Nasution wrote his Ph.D. thesis on Muhammad Abduh and became Indonesia's most prominent defender of Mu'tazila rationalism and a long-time rector of Jakarta's IAIN (Institut Agama Islam Negeri: State Institute of Islamic Studies). Both men had an enormous influence on younger generations of students and Muslim intellectuals (Muzani 1994; Munhanif 1996).

The first IAINs had already been established in the final days of the Sukarno period. The NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) politician Saifuddin Zuhri, who was Sukarno's last Minister of Religious Affairs, is usually credited with the furthering of these institutes as a channel of educational mobility for students of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) background, who had no access to other higher education. Under the New Order their number rapidly expanded until every province had one. The government relied on these institutes to create a class of

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<sup>8</sup> The incorporation into the British Empire gave Malaya an orientation towards India that was to endure long after independence. The famous madrasah of Deoband, and later the Maududi Institute in Lahore, have attracted significant numbers of Malaysian students and made a lasting impact on Muslim discourses in Malaysia; see the contributions by Noor (2008).

<sup>9</sup> Others of the same generation included Anton Timur Jaylani and Kafrawi Ridwan (who were both to serve as high officials in the Ministry of Religious Affairs). McGill continued to train Indonesian Muslim scholars in the following decades. See Jabali and Jamhari (2003); Steenbrink (2003).

enlightened religious officials, willing to function in a de facto secular environment and to accept the principle of more or less equal relations between the five officially recognized religions. From the mid-1980s onwards, perceiving the radicalizing tendency among recent graduates from Middle Eastern countries, the Ministry of Religious Affairs intensified academic cooperation with Western countries and sent increasing numbers of IAIN graduates to Canada, the Netherlands, Australia and Germany for postgraduate studies. Foreign scholars were invited to teach at IAINs. All in all, this was probably one of the few programmes of 'religious engineering' anywhere in the world that were really successful. IAIN graduates in the religious bureaucracy, in the religious courts and in education have proven to be a force of moderation and reason in the conflict-ridden years following the fall of the Suharto regime.

The most famous and influential of the American graduates was Nurcholish Madjid. He had been the chairman of the 'Modernist' Muslim student association HMI (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam, Islamic Students' Association) for two periods in the early New Order period, was singled out as a potential leader and received exceptional treatment, completing his studies with a dissertation at the University of Chicago supervised by Fazlur Rahman. In the 1980s, when HMI alumni of his and later generations began filling the middle and higher ranks of the bureaucracy, universities, the media and the business world, Nurcholish's discourse of renewal of Islamic thought gained dominance. Moderation, interreligious understanding, bourgeois-liberal values, contextual interpretation of the Islamic sources and respect for local tradition are some of the core elements of this discourse. In the 1990s, corresponding with the changing global conditions, democratic values and human rights, as well as a tendency towards Perennialist and Sufi thought became increasingly salient. Nurcholish himself, though remaining personally modest, became Indonesia's Islamic superstar, loved by the rich and powerful, but also accepting invitations to appear in much less glamorous surroundings. His popularity and influence were much resented by those Muslims who were convinced that Islam and secularism do not go together and who thought that he betrayed the ideals of the struggle to make Indonesia a more Islamic society and state.

### The New Order's subaltern Muslims: The DDII, campus Islam, the radical underground and their transnational connections

Masyumi, the Reformist Muslim party, had been a pro-Western party under Sukarno, and some of its leading members took part in the CIA-sponsored regional rebellion PRRI (Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia) in 1958, which was the main reason why the party was banned. Masyumi leader Mohamad Natsir had been jailed under Sukarno and was released from prison soon after Suharto took over. He and other prominent Masyumi leaders were, however, not allowed to play a role in formal politics again, and the party remained banned. In this context, in 1967 Natsir and his closest collaborators established the Indonesian Council for Islamic Predication (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, DDII) as a vehicle to continue the old political struggle by new means: Islamizing

society from below by a concerted effort of *da'wa* (predication). Internationally, the DDII oriented itself not towards the West but towards the Arab Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia. Natsir himself was a member of the Founding Committee of the Muslim World League (Rabitat al-'Alam al-Islami, or Rabita for short), and it was to play an important role in anchoring parts of the Indonesian *ummah* in another global network of education, communication and action.

The Rabita had been established five years previously under Saudi sponsorship and was initially meant as a vehicle for supporting the conservative Saudi regime against Nasser's revolutionary Arab nationalism. Its leading members were not exclusively Salafi-oriented but included Islamist thinkers such as Maulana Maududi in Pakistan as well as several Sufis. Natsir and the DDII were not the only Indonesian contacts of the Rabita. A prominent conservative in NU, Kiai Haji Ahmad Sjaichu, was the Rabita's interface with Traditionalist Islam in Indonesia. Another favoured counterpart was Kiai Haji Zarkasji of the 'modern' *pesantren* of Gontor, which occupied the middle ground between the Traditionalist and Reformist streams.<sup>10</sup> The youth organization affiliated with the Rabita, WAMY (World Association of Muslim Youth), involved some Muslim activists in Indonesia, too, but never became as influential there as in Malaysia, where the Malaysian Islamic Youth Movement (Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, ABIM) was closely connected with it and where WAMY opened its regional offices.

The Rabita provided the DDII – or rather, Natsir personally, as well as some of the other contact persons; all relations were personalized – with funds for building mosques and training preachers. More importantly, it made numerous grants available for study in Saudi Arabia. Recipients of these grants were to play leading parts in the Islamist and Salafi movements that flourished in semi-legality in the 1990s and came to the surface after 1998. In the 1970s and 1980s (and continuing through the 1990s), the DDII and related publishing houses brought out translations of contemporary Islamist works. Initially, most of this literature was by authors affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood or Pakistan's Jama'at-i Islami – Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and his brother Muhammad Qutb, Yusuf Qaradawi, Abu'l A'la Maududi – perhaps reflecting the fact that the Saudi *ulama* were not themselves producing books deemed to be appealing. Several leaders of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood then lived and taught in Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi regime endorsed the dissemination of their works abroad. (Only from the 1990s onwards was there a significant shift to the dissemination of more strictly apolitical, Salafi literature.) In the mid-1980s, Saudi-inspired publishing became strongly focused on the struggle against Shi'a influence, and there appeared a huge amount of anti-Shi'i literature (alongside polemics against other undesirables such as the Ahmadiyah, the Baha'i faith, the Jews, the Freemasons and the Lions Club).

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<sup>10</sup> On the *pesantren* of Gontor and its remarkable influence within institutionalized Islam in Indonesia, see Castles (1966); van Bruinessen (2006).



On university campuses and among mosque-affiliated youth groups elsewhere, the Muslim Brotherhood literature fell upon willing ears. More overtly political (and generally left-leaning) student movements had been successfully repressed in the late 1970s, and strict new regulations prevented most organized student activity on campus, but the government allowed, and perhaps even encouraged, the cultivation of religious piety through study circles (known as *halqah* or *daurah*). Most of these were at some time connected with the DDII and modelled themselves to some extent on the Muslim Brotherhood or the Hizb ut-Tahrir, the other major transnational Islamist movement.

A more elusive network of radical Muslim groups that hoped to turn Indonesia into an Islamic state persisted underground and made its existence known by occasional acts of symbolic violence. The Negara Islam Indonesia (NII) movement had its origins in the Darul Islam uprising that from the late 1940s until its final suppression in the early 1960s had constituted a considerable force in several regions. This was a largely home-grown Islamist movement, but like the student movement of the 1980s and 1990s, it also adopted ideas and methods of disciplining from the Muslim Brotherhood. It remained very much an Indonesian movement, however, with Indonesian concerns and objectives restricted to Indonesia.<sup>11</sup>

Around 1990, a major shift in the New Order's policies towards Islam became apparent. Suharto co-opted many of his former Islamist critics through a number of symbolic pro-Islamic gestures, and within the armed forces a faction emerged that patronized Islamist groups. Besides the still dominant liberal Muslim voices, Islamist and fundamentalist voices were empowered and became entrenched in various institutions.<sup>12</sup> This shift occurred, not coincidentally, at a time when human rights discourse and the strengthening of civil society were becoming core elements of American (and more generally, Western) foreign policy. Anti-liberal and anti-Western Muslim discourses were welcomed and patronized by the elements in the regime that were for various reasons opposed to liberalization and to Western political and cultural domination. In a departure from previous government policy, street demonstrations by radical Muslim groups were allowed, especially when protesting distant issues such as Israeli policies in occupied Palestine. The Indonesian Committee for Solidarity with the World of Islam (KISDI, about which more below), established by DDII activists, became increasingly visible in Jakarta's streets during the 1990s; it was the precursor of the various vigilante groups that emerged after the fall of Suharto.

The 'Islamic turn' of Suharto's last decade provided the necessary conditions for an increasing orientation of large segments of the Muslim *ummah* towards the Middle East. The groundwork had been laid by organizations such as the DDII, and further developed by the various networks of study circles, both on and off campus. Two other factors, however, were

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<sup>11</sup> The Jamaah Islamiyah, which carried out the most spectacular terrorist acts of the 2000s, emerged from a split in the NII. On the Darul Islam movement and its later transformations, see Temby (2010).

<sup>12</sup> Various analyses of the process are given by: Liddle (1996); Hefner (2000); van Bruinessen (1996).



probably crucial: the rapid development of modern electronic communications media and their widespread availability among Indonesia's middle classes, and the significantly increased numbers of Indonesians pursuing studies in the Middle East.

### Arabization, *ghazwul fikri* and authenticity

Young graduates returning from the Azhar and from Saudi universities were having a noticeable impact on public discourse by the early 1990s, making efforts to 'correct' established local practices (as earlier generations of returnees from Arabia had done) and especially criticizing the ideas of 'liberal' and 'progressive' Muslim thinkers such as Abdurrahman Wahid and Nurcholish Madjid and their circles. Madjid had studied in the West and was frequently accused of having betrayed his origins; Wahid, who led the Traditionalist association Nahdlatul Ulama from 1984 to 1999, had extensive contacts with the world of international (that is, Western) NGOs and their interventionist agendas. Both, moreover, were vocal defenders of the specifically Indonesian expressions of Islam and the rights of religious minorities. In their view, and that of many mainstream Muslims, one should distinguish between Islam as a religion and Arab culture; a person could very well be a pious Muslim without adopting Arab culture. Their critics, on the other hand, tended to strongly reject all local Muslim practices as *bid'a*, 'innovation', that is, as deviations from authentic Islam. The liberal and tolerant attitudes displayed by the likes of Wahid and Madjid were decried as threats to genuine Islam, the unfortunate effects of globalization, an invasion of dangerous alien ideas: *ghazwul fikri*.

Like the battle cries of the anti-globalization movement, the term *ghazwul fikri* is itself a symptom of globalization. The Indonesians who adopted the term and the accompanying worldview borrowed them lock, stock and barrel from Arab, and more specifically Egyptian, authors. The increasing popularity of the term reflects increasing communication with the Arab Middle East. It was first adopted by Indonesian circles that were sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood or were in contact with the Rabita. In the Middle East, the concept of *al-ghazw al-fikri* appears to have gained currency following the Arab defeat in the Israeli-Arab war of 1967, and to be closely associated with the search for Arab authenticity.

In his celebrated book *The Arab Predicament*, the Lebanese liberal intellectual Fouad Ajami discusses various responses to that demoralizing defeat, one of which he calls 'radical Fundamentalist'. The iconic representative of this particular response, the prolific journalist Muhammad Jalal Kishk, wrote no less than four books with *al-ghazw al-fikri* in the title.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ajami (1981). Kishk's books that Ajami discusses are, in chronological order: *Al-Marksiyya wa-l-Ghazw al-Fikri* (Marxism and Cultural Invasion, Cairo, 1965); *Al-Ghazw al-Fikri* (Kuwait, 1967); *Al-Naksa wa-l-Ghazw al-Fikri* (The Setback and Cultural Invasion, Beirut, 1969); and *Al-Qawmiyya wa-l-Ghazw al-Fikri* (Nationalism and Cultural Invasion, Beirut, 1970).

One of these, *Al-Naksa wa-l-Ghazw al-Fikri* (The Setback and Cultural Invasion), was Kishk's analysis of the causes of the Arab defeat. Kishk, in Ajami's rendering, develops a view of history as a struggle for dominance between competing civilizations. Notions of cosmopolitanism and so-called universal values are not neutral and supra-civilizational, but they are the weapons used by one of the civilizations in its effort to dominate the others. The Arab people are facing a new crusade from the West, different from the earlier two. The first wave was that of medieval crusaders, with the cross and the sword, who were ultimately repelled. The second wave, which began with Napoleon's conquest of Egypt and the expansion of colonial empires, destroyed the self-confidence of the Muslim world, but was finally ended with decolonization. The current third crusade, unlike the earlier ones, is not military in nature and accepts the Arab states' political independence; its aim is to penetrate the minds of Muslims to make them accept the supremacy of the West. The Arabs lost the war with Israel because they had become alienated from their Muslim roots and had been seduced by the 'false doctrines of universalism', whether liberal or Marxist. The Arabs can only win the struggle for survival as a civilization when they hold on to the authentic core of that civilization, namely Islam, and do not allow their minds to be invaded by alien ideas and foreign ideologies.

Ajami places the discourse of *al-ghazw al-fikri* in the context of Arab soul-searching after the defeat of 1967, and increasing disappointment with socialism, liberalism and the various forms of nationalism that had dominated Arab political and intellectual life the 1950s and 1960s. Though himself a liberal, Ajami stresses that Kishk and people like him do not simply hark back to a pre-modern past; he recognizes the modernity of Kishk's quest for authenticity. More than a decade before Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington popularized the notion of a clash of civilizations, Ajami distilled this notion from Kishk's writings. In his analysis, Kishk's refusal of 'universal' values did not stem from a visceral rejection of modernity but from his keen awareness of the rise and fall of civilizations in a Darwinian struggle for hegemony.<sup>14</sup>

## Indonesian Muslims and the quest for authenticity

Once it was transmitted to Indonesia, the notion of *ghazwul fikri* and the quest for authenticity inevitably gained new connotations. As some critics were quick to point out, the very notion of *ghazwul fikri* also represented a cultural invasion, though not from the West, and they questioned why authenticity should be sought in an Arabian version of Islam. Many

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<sup>14</sup> 'Kishk's writings belie the notion that Muslim fundamentalists are reactionaries fixated on the image of a theocratic past that has to be restored. In Kishk's world view, cultures clash for preeminence: Some rise and conquer, and others surrender and are subjugated' (Ajami 1981, p. 52). Lewis (1990) presented his analysis of the Middle Eastern conflict as a 'clash of civilizations' in a much-quoted article, and Huntington (1993) drew on this view for his 'The clash of civilizations?'. It is not unlikely that Lewis took the 'clash of civilizations' idea from Ajami's book without formal acknowledgement.

Indonesians were keenly aware of the history of colonialism and modern imperialism, and of the role Islam had played in uniting the nation during the centuries of colonial rule, but rejected the notion that one could only be a good Muslim by adopting Arab customs.

Let me open a parenthesis here, and relate my own first encounter with debates on authenticity, soon after I had arrived in Bandung for an extensive period of fieldwork there in 1983. In the first weeks, when still trying to get my bearings in the new environment, I frequently met with a friendly elderly gentleman, who happened to live next to the guesthouse where I was staying, and who was very knowledgeable about Javanese and Sundanese culture and the spirit beliefs in which I took a special interest. Pak Dody had grown up in the early years of Indonesian Independence and belonged to the last generation that had benefited from a Dutch school education. As a senior official of the Indonesian Red Cross, he had seen much of the world, was familiar with various foreign cultures and found it easy to socialize with Westerners. After retirement, he had given in to his interest in the Javanese spiritual tradition and started practising meditation. He told me proudly about his son, who studied at the famous Agricultural Institute of Bogor and who was a very serious young man. The son often expressed his concern with all the things he thought were wrong in their country, its loss of moral strength, pride and confidence, and its surrender to foreign cultural domination. He urged upon his father the idea that as Indonesians they should be more conscious of their own, authentic values and find strength in their own traditions. I first thought that the son meant local knowledge and cultural practices and, like his father, wanted to reconnect with his Javanese roots, but Pak Dody explained his son meant a different set of authentic values and kept urging him to turn to (Reformist) Islam.

Pak Dody spoke with some bewilderment of his son's turn to Islam but refrained from expressing any explicit judgment. Perhaps some criticism was implied when he narrated his experiences in Saudi Arabia, where the Red Cross, because of its very name and flag, perpetually ran into problems and was accused of Christian proselytism. Pak Dody found the Saudis backward, and he was proud that many Indonesians of his generation were more cosmopolitan and had embraced what he considered universal values, but he was resigned to his son's adopting a different worldview altogether.

Many young men and women from families that were either Westernized or strongly committed to specifically Indonesian varieties of spirituality have gone through conversions similar to that of Pak Dody's son. The turn to Islam has, in a sense, widened their intellectual and geographical horizons; their concern with political and social issues elsewhere in the Muslim world is a form of cosmopolitanism – although the cosmos they inhabit and its universal values are not those of the Muslim liberals. This shifting orientation in self-identity occurred under the influence of both internal and external factors. To some extent, at least, it was an expression of cultural protest against Suharto's New Order and its cultivation of an invented national culture and national ideology, Pancasila. The protest might not have taken this particular form, however, and would certainly not have been as massive as it became, if it had not been for active efforts by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to spread their brand of

Islam through scholarship programmes and active efforts at proselytization by various transnational Islamic movements. Awareness of conflicts in the Middle East – the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Iranian–Saudi rivalries, the Afghan jihad and its aftermath – spread as more students returned from study in the Gulf or Egypt. The communications revolution due to the new electronic media – video cassettes and VCDs (Video Compact Disks), satellite television, Internet and mobile telephony – enabled Indonesians to be eyewitnesses to important events in other parts of the Muslim world and to identify more strongly with Muslim struggles across the globe.

## Middle East conflicts and their impact in Indonesia

Indonesia never recognized the state of Israel. This was initially, I gather, a gesture of Third World solidarity in support of Arab nationalism. In the 1950s, Sukarno and Nasser, along with India's Nehru, came to lead a bloc of non-aligned nations in a coalition against the imperialism of the former colonial powers. However, as the definition of the conflict gradually changed – the ethnic conflict between Jews and Arabs became a national one pitting Palestinians against Israelis, and ultimately one between Muslim and Judeo-Christian civilization – Palestinian Arabs increasingly came to be seen as fellow Muslims, and anti-colonial solidarity was reframed as religious solidarity.

In the aftermath of the Israeli-Arab war of 1967, Mohamad Natsir, the former chairman of the Masyumi party, visited Palestinian refugee camps, and upon his return to Indonesia told his countrymen how ashamed he had felt at seeing relief arriving from India and many other countries but not from Indonesia (Latief 2009). The *da'wa* organization DDII, which Natsir founded the same year, was not only to train numerous preachers but also made a considerable effort to inform Indonesian Muslims about political developments in the wider Muslim world, with special attention to Palestine. After the 1973 war, people affiliated with the DDII established a Muslim solidarity committee and called upon Indonesian Muslims to donate blood for Palestine. This resulted in the embarrassing amount of 45 litres of blood being sent to Lebanon as Indonesia's expression of Muslim solidarity (Latief 2009).

It was only by the late 1980s that the issue of Palestine and the struggle against Zionism could mobilize significant numbers of Indonesians. The first intifada (1987–1993) marked a turning point, no doubt in part due to the availability and impact of televised images. A number of political activists affiliated with the DDII established an organization named KISDI (Committee for Solidarity with the World of Islam), which specialized in political rallies and demonstrations, in protest against Israeli policies and in support of Palestinian rights. In the 1990s, KISDI took up other international 'Islamic' issues as well, such as the conflicts in Kashmir and Bosnia, and it demonstrated aggressively against 'biased' reporting in the Indonesian press (especially the Christian-owned media) (Hefner 2000, pp. 109–110; cf. van Bruinessen 2002).

The Russian occupation of Afghanistan (1979–1989) and the (American and Saudi-sponsored) jihad against the occupiers had from the early 1980s on drawn the attention of limited circles of highly motivated radical Muslims in Indonesia. Whereas there had never been, in spite of all anti-Zionist rhetoric, a call for Indonesian Muslims to join a jihad against the occupation of Palestine, the Afghan war – as mentioned above – attracted small groups of Indonesian would-be warriors, who travelled to Pakistan to receive training and do jihad. Some were recruited for the jihad while they were studying or working in Saudi Arabia, whereas others belonged to radical underground groups in Indonesia that were preparing for a violent Islamic revolution. Once they returned to Indonesia, the veterans spread information about the conflict by word of mouth and through semi-legal print publications.

Another significant event in the Middle East, the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979, initially made a much greater impression on students, although it took some time for its intellectual impact to be felt.<sup>15</sup> The first translations of Ali Shari’ati’s works appeared only from 1982 onwards (based on the English translations, which Indonesian students in the United States had brought back), and were followed by those of other Iranian thinkers. A small group of young intellectuals, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Haidar Bagir, Agus Abu Bakar and the Islamic scholar Husein al-Habsyi, led a movement of self-conversion to Shi’ism that attracted tens of thousands of recruits (Zainuddin and Basyar 2000; Zulkifli 2009).

In the long run, the impact of the Iranian revolution was overshadowed by the Saudi reaction to it. Feeling threatened by the Iranian revolutionaries’ questioning of its legitimacy, the Saudi regime opened a counter-offensive in order to gain a hold on the hearts and minds of Muslims all over the world. In Indonesia, the DDII was the Saudis’ closest collaborator, and it published numerous tracts and books purporting to prove that the Shi’a constituted a dangerous deviation from Islam proper. From the mid-1980s onwards, Saudi Arabia made great efforts to achieve discursive hegemony for its own brand of Islamic discourse, Salafism (usually dubbed Wahhabism by its opponents), and to delegitimize not only Shi’ism and various heterodox sects but also the moderate, accommodating discourses favoured by the New Order regime. As early as 1981, Saudi Arabia established an Institute of Arabic Studies, later revamped as the Institute of Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPIA), in Jakarta; this was allegedly the first foreign-owned educational institution officially recognized by the Indonesian government. LIPIA became a major vehicle for the spread of the Salafi *da’wa* in Indonesia, although in the first decades of its existence it also helped many students, who later turned out to be ‘liberals’ or progressives, to gain fluency in Arabic and acquaintance with modern, non-Salafi Arabic works.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Nasir Tamara, a young Indonesian journalist who flew from Paris to Tehran on Khomeini’s plane, wrote a book on the revolution that was widely read: Tamara (1980).

<sup>16</sup> On LIPIA and the development of the Salafi *da’wa* in Indonesia in general, see Hasan 2006, Chapter 2. Among LIPIA’s graduates one famously finds not only prominent Salafi activists but also liberals and NU intellectuals such as Ulil Abshar-Abdalla, Ahmad Baso and Mujiburrahman.

The Internet and improved telephonic communication enabled frequent contact between Indonesians living abroad and their friends at home. Events and discussions taking place in Cairo were relayed to Indonesia by students at al-Azhar. In the 2000s, Salafis in Indonesia regularly requested fatwas from *ulama* based in Saudi Arabia or Yemen by telephoning friends studying there, who would then ask the question in person and phone back the answer.<sup>17</sup>

### *Reformasi* and after: The consolidation of new transnational Islamic movements

The last decade of the New Order had allowed Islamist voices a certain freedom of expression, although the moderate voices of Nurcholish and his circle continued to be endorsed by the state and received most press coverage. After Suharto's resignation and the gradual unravelling of the New Order, radical Islamist groups came out from (semi-) clandestinity and their media, now published legally, for a few years enjoyed enormous circulation figures. In sheer volume and impact, Islamist discourse now dwarfed the liberal, pluralist discourse that had been almost hegemonic during the New Order.<sup>18</sup>

The most significant new movements that moved into the limelight were: an Indonesian version of the Muslim Brotherhood, that transformed itself into a political party, the Partai Keadilan (PK) and later the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS); an Indonesian wing of the Hizb ut-Tahrir; and a more diffuse Salafi movement (of which one wing became notorious as Laskar Jihad). All three are the Indonesian branches of well-established transnational movements and owe allegiance to a leadership abroad (PKS less so than the other two). In this sense they are significantly different from all earlier Indonesian Muslim organizations. It is precisely this transnational connection that provides them with a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of many ordinary Muslims. The PKS not only maintains connections with the Middle East but has also been careful to cultivate relations with Indonesian students abroad, in the West as well as the Arab world.

The former two movements sprang from student groups at several of the better Indonesian secular universities; a high proportion of their members and cadres are graduates from institutes of higher education in non-religious subjects. Relatively few of the cadre members of the PKS, but a larger proportion in the central leadership, have been educated in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the Arab world. Prior to the 2009 elections, an apparent split between 'pragmatists' and 'idealists' emerged in the party; this coincided to some extent with the line between professionals educated in non-religious subjects and *ustads* (religious

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<sup>17</sup> This included some crucial fatwas legitimating actions to be carried out by Laskar Jihad. See the discussion in Hasan 2006, Chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> This also happened in spite of significant injections of Western funds into the NGO world, subsidies for book printing and active support of anti-fundamentalist groups such as Jaringan Islam Liberal, the Liberal Islam Network.



teachers and preachers) with an Arab education. The Salafi movement, on the other hand, is almost exclusively Arab-educated and its major wing depends on significant funding from a foundation based in Kuwait. All wings of the Salafi movements appear to be connected with specific Salafi *ulama* in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait or Yemen (Hasan 2006; Wahid 2014).

Some of the other new movements are purely Indonesian, but do take a great interest in Muslim struggles elsewhere in the world. The Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI) was established in 2000 as a legal front for various groups that strive for an Islamic state (including sections of Darul Islam as well as Jama'ah Islamiyah). It has adopted some of the international *jihadi* Salafi discourse, but in practice it remains focused on the struggle for an Islamic state in Indonesia and an ideological war against all groups and movements that stand in the way of this ideal. The Hidayatullah movement, originating in the *pesantren* Hidayatullah in East Kalimantan, known for its historical connections with the Darul Islam movement, but now present throughout the archipelago, has religious teachings, developed by its founder Abdullah Said, that reflect a very Indonesian approach to Islam. Politically, however, the movement is a strong supporter of the jihads of oppressed Muslims (Ridwan 2008; van Bruinessen 2008).

Mainstream Muslim discourse has been much influenced by the discourse of these radical movements, as a series of surveys in the early 2000s suggested, although the violent activism of the most radical fringes was firmly rejected, and the acceptance of parts of Islamist discourse was never translated into a stronger vote for political parties that advocated the *shari'ah* (Mujani 2003). In their 2004 and 2005 congresses, the large associations NU and Muhammadiyah experienced a shift to Islamism and a purge of 'liberal' Muslims from their committees, partly under the influence of recent graduates from the Middle East. As these organizations have discovered that they were to some extent losing control of their constituencies – some mosques and schools were taken over by Hizb ut-Tahrir or PKS activists – they have begun making efforts to consolidate themselves and defend their turf against further takeovers. The two mainstream organizations have made it clear that they consider these transnational movements to be threats to their existence, and there are the beginnings of more assertive action in defence of the existing local forms of Islam.<sup>19</sup>

## Local responses to globalizing Islam: Cultural resistance in Cirebon

In this final section, I shall take a look at how globalization, especially in its 'Arabizing' form, has impacted at the local level in a somewhat peripheral region in Indonesia, and at various forms of cultural resistance that this has brought about. Cirebon is a rice-producing region on Java's north coast that has been bypassed by many developments in core areas of Java. The once flourishing harbour of the capital city is a sleepy affair, as trade has been diverted away from the region. There is no modern industry worth mentioning; the most

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<sup>19</sup> See the contributions by Najib Burhani and Martin van Bruinessen in: van Bruinessen (2013).

significant productive sector is the rattan industry, which processes raw rattan from Kalimantan into furniture for export. Recently enacted trade liberalization policies, affecting the export of unprocessed rattan, have dealt this industry a serious blow.

Cirebon is known for its distinctive and rich traditions in music, dance, batik and other art forms, as well as its colourful local adaptations of Islamic practices and the wide range of syncretistic mystical movements that emerged here. This heritage is commonly ascribed to the sultanate of Cirebon, which merged Chinese, Indian and Arab influences with Javanese and Sundanese traditions into a new synthesis. The sultanate, divided into four rival courts, was never patronized by Indonesia's republican government (as some of the other sultanates were) and is much in decline, but is still seen as the source of spiritual power that holds this vernacular civilization together (Siddique 1977; Muhaimin A.G. 1996). Orthodox Islam (as opposed to syncretistic Javanism) has long been dominated here by four large *pesantrens*, located around (and at some distance from) the city of Cirebon, which remain very influential in the cultural and political life of the region. The city has several modern universities, but none of these can compete with those of the big cities.

This is not a region where one would expect the above-mentioned transnational Islamic movements to find a natural following. To my surprise, however, I found that all the new Islamist movements are well represented in Cirebon and have a considerable measure of local support.<sup>20</sup> Their typical mode of expansion was through university students originating from Cirebon who studied in places like Bogor, Jakarta or Bandung and were inducted into these movements there. Returning home on the weekends, they set up religious study groups at the secondary schools from which they themselves had graduated. Locally recruited activists then attempted to establish groups of sympathizers in neighbourhoods. PKS activists established a number of schools that provide cheap and good education, besides solid discipline; a Salafi group established a large, well-funded madrasah that successfully targets the local Muslim middle class.

As elsewhere, in Cirebon these new movements have had some success in converting *abangan*, nominal Muslims adhering to syncretistic beliefs and practices, to their worldview. In fact, they may even have been more successful in recruiting former *abangan* to their ranks than youth with a prior religious education in Muhammadiyah or NU circles (but the latter are definitely represented as well). This is perhaps not as surprising as it seems at first sight. *Abangan* beliefs and rituals are focused on local shrines and local spirits, whose powers are geographically circumscribed. As has been observed elsewhere, once people break out of their geographical isolation and by trade and travel start interacting more intensively with more distant communities, the old local spirits are of little help to them and supernatural

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<sup>20</sup> The following paragraphs are based on my observations during a two-month period of field research in early 2009 and a number of shorter visits in the preceding years.

support of a more universal scope has a strong appeal.<sup>21</sup> When *abangan* decide to send their children to a *pesantren* or a Muhammadiyah school – a process that characterized the New Order period – this represents not only a gradual conversion to a more orthodox form of Islam but also mental migration from the village or urban neighbourhood community into the Indonesian nation-state. In Cirebon, such conversions have been taking place but never on a massive scale; relations between the large *pesantren* and the surrounding *abangan* environment have long been characterized by mutual hostility and distrust. The arrival of transnational Islamic movements in the region made it possible for *abangan* to skip the stage of the established national organizations and become part of a global community. It is one of the few available options for cosmopolitanism and a deliberate jump into modernity, however anti-modernist the movement as such may be.

In the post-Suharto period, a number of global Islamic issues were imported into the local political arena, as a direct result of increased transnational contacts. Debates on the compatibility or otherwise of Islam and liberal democracy were one such issue, capable of mobilizing many, on which the PK(S) was strongly affirmative, while several other movements, including Hizb ut-Tahrir and the MMI, rejected liberal democracy on principle.<sup>22</sup>

One imported global issue that gave rise to local-level conflict was anti-Ahmadiyah agitation. This was not entirely new: the Muslim World League has been spreading anti-Ahmadiyah materials and agitating for a worldwide ban of the Ahmadiyah almost since it was established. As early as 1980, Indonesia's Council of Ulama had issued a fatwa declaring the Ahmadiyah to be a deviant sect outside the bond of Islam, but this had had a negligible impact on the Ahmadi religious freedom. The situation changed dramatically around 2004, when in various parts of the country violent mobs, incited by self-appointed guardians of orthodoxy, attacked Ahmadi institutions and residences, while the police, reluctant to appear insufficiently sympathetic to radical Islam, did not dare to intervene.<sup>23</sup>

Not far from Cirebon lies a village that is almost entirely Ahmadiyah. Never before had these people experienced any serious problems; there are several villages in the neighbourhood that adhere to a number of different heterodox sects or minor religions, and

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<sup>21</sup> This reasoning is the core of an interesting theory explaining the spread of Islam and Christianity in Africa, at the expense of local religions: Horton (1971). Robert Hefner adapted Horton's idea to an explanation of the ongoing Islamization of East Java: Hefner (1987).

<sup>22</sup> In the 2009 elections, however, these movements allowed their followers to vote, on condition that they would vote for a party that supported the *shari'ah*.

<sup>23</sup> The main organization behind the anti-Ahmadiyah agitation is a small, apparently Middle East-funded group calling itself LPPI (Lembaga Pengkajian dan Penelitian Islam, 'Institute of Islamic Studies and Research'). In 2002, LPPI organized a seminar in Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque to denounce the Ahmadiyah; in 2005 it organized a major mob attack on the Qadiani Ahmadiyah's main community centre in Parung near Bogor, and it has remained at the forefront of agitation since.

traditionally mutual tolerance had reigned.<sup>24</sup> The first major attack on this village occurred in 2004; a coalition of local Islamist groups, reinforced by activists from Jakarta, stormed the village and attempted to destroy the main Ahmadiyah mosque. Since then, more raids have followed and the local authorities, feeling under pressure, closed down the Ahmadi mosques and forbade the Ahmadis to congregate for worship. The government has done little or nothing to protect the religious freedom of these citizens and instead made gestures to accommodate radical Muslim demands; in fact, in 2008 a joint ministerial decree practically proscribed all Ahmadiyah activities.<sup>25</sup>

There was, however, also some mobilization of local support for the beleaguered Ahmadiyah. An NGO in Cirebon affiliated with the NU, Fahmina, sent activists to the village to form a protective ring around the mosque and give moral support to the villagers. They advocated the Ahmadiyah's right to their different beliefs, and they managed to have the local press publish a strong statement by a leading NU scholar, who endorsed their pluralist views. In these actions, Fahmina activists operated cautiously in order not to alienate the major *pesantrens*, as NGO activists elsewhere had done. They made clear that their support for the basic rights of the Ahmadiyah did not mean acceptance, or even just tolerance, of Ahmadi doctrines but rather the defence of an earlier status quo in which different faith communities left each other in peace.

Fahmina is a rather small NGO but it derives strength from its good connections with the major *pesantrens* of the region. Fahmina itself is dwarfed by the numbers that the radical Islamist groups in Cirebon can mobilize, but as long as it maintains its connections with the *pesantrens*, it will remain able to call upon the support of the much larger masses that are loyal to the *kiais* and the NU. In opposing the 'Arabizing' influences brought into the region by the Islamists, Fahmina activists and a loose network of locally rooted allies have made an effort to revive local cultural traditions as a resource. Some younger *kiais* also take an active role in this effort, such as Kiai Maman Imanulhaq of the *pesantren* Al-Mizan in Jatiwangi, where traditional arts have become part of the curriculum.

Several senior *kiais* appear independently to have come to the conclusion that 'traditional' Islam needed to be salvaged from the homogenizing and purist influence of the new transnational movements. Their concern was primarily with the *pesantren* subculture, which in fact also reflected Arab and Indian Ocean influences in its expressions of devotion for the Prophet and the high prestige accorded to his descendants, as well as in the use of religious song and recitation and percussion instruments in popular performances. Some deliberate invention of tradition was going on during my fieldwork period: an obscure old

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<sup>24</sup> For a description of this village from more peaceful days, see Effendi (1990).

<sup>25</sup> This joint decree was signed by the Minister of Religious Affairs, the Attorney General and the Minister of the Interior on 9 June 2008. The decree stopped short of actually banning the Ahmadiyah, as had been demanded by the Council of Ulama and various radical groups.

grave under a tree was being developed into a new pilgrimage site, where colourful new rituals (based on popular *mawlid*s, celebrations of the birth of the Prophet) were periodically performed. One of the *ulama* involved told me that his ideal was to develop the site of this sacred grave into a centre of local culture. Interestingly, the arts performances I witnessed here, though by local artists, were of Egyptian-style popular music and of songs in praise of the Prophet accompanied by Arab percussion: the sort of cultural practices that Salafis as well as Muslim Brothers strongly object to but that are patronized by the region's Javanized *sayyids* (descendants of the prophet Muhammad).

### Some final observations

Those Indonesian Muslims who perceive dangerous trends of either Westernization or Arabization in the religious views and practices of their Muslim compatriots, as alternative (or perhaps concomitant) consequences of globalization, will have no difficulty pointing out developments that seem to confirm their analysis. Both underestimate, however, the extent to which the borrowing of ideas from the West or from the contemporary Middle East is a process of active and selective appropriation and adaptation, just as Indonesian cultures have always appropriated elements of foreign cultures and incorporated them into a synthesis that has remained uniquely Indonesian. The same is, *mutatis mutandis*, true of other cultures: they have always changed and incorporated whatever foreign ideas and artefacts appeared to fit in. The rate of borrowing has increased, but cultures have never been passive recipients of what other cultures had to offer.

It is true that both Western and Middle Eastern states have had deliberate policies of influencing Indonesian Muslims' worldviews and attitudes, through scholarship programmes and other sponsored travel, the sponsoring of publications and support of educational institutions. The effects of such programmes are seldom exactly as hoped; and in fact, they may in some cases have the reverse effect. Though some students may return from US universities as confirmed liberals and some graduates from Saudi universities may actively propagate a puritan, Salafi version of Islam, there are more than a few exceptions. It has been remarked before that many Muslim students became radicalized while studying at American universities. The writings of the ideologists of the Iranian revolution, as observed above, reached Indonesia by way of the United States. Similarly, not all Indonesians studying in Saudi Arabia or at the Saudi-funded institute LIPIA in Jakarta became converted to Salafi views; among the graduates we find several of the most vocal liberal and progressive thinkers.

The talk of Arabization versus Westernization implicitly assumes an essentialized, homogenized Arab world, or an equally monolithic West, impinging upon a vulnerable and malleable Indonesian *ummah*. It is undoubtedly true that the numbers of Indonesians travelling abroad have dramatically increased during the past few decades and that the flows of goods and ideas from the Middle East as well as the West (and from other regions)

towards Indonesia have accelerated and become more massive. However, these cultural flows have been highly complex and richly varied, and so has their impact. Muslims across the spectrum, from secular-minded liberals and progressives to Islamists and Salafis, have in various ways incorporated some influences of Western origin (or mediated by actors in the West) as well as influences traceable to the Middle East, alongside yet other influences. The adoption of foreign ideas and practices has always been selective, and made in accordance with perceived local needs.

The responses to the ‘Westernizing’ and ‘Arabizing’ varieties of globalization have often taken the form of appeals to Islamic or Indonesian authenticity and the invention of traditions. It strikes me as significant that the efforts to strengthen local culture to resist the influx of ‘Arabian’ puritan Islam in Cirebon involved cultural traditions reflecting an earlier synthesis of Arab and Javanese cultures.



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