

JAKARTA AND JAYAPURA

The Dialogue of Religions and ‘Papua, Land of Peace’

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Introduction: Islam in Melanesia

In his masterly synthesis of a lifetime of research, *Melanesian Religion*, Garry Trompf took an innovative – not to say revolutionary – approach to the subject in that he devoted fully half his monograph to the advent of Christianity and its interactions with the peoples and cultures of Melanesia.¹ Contrary to the bulk of opinion in anthropological circles, Trompf described this Melanesian Christianity – otherwise referred to as ‘assimilated’, ‘indigenised’ or ‘inculturated’ – as Melanesians’ *own* religion, now standing in some kind of continuity with the cultures they inherit from their ancient past. The history of the Christian missions is part of this, as are the famous ‘cargo cults’, which he is careful to keep distinct from possible Christian influence, and he does not neglect the post-colonial phenomenon of secularisation in Melanesia.²

At least two powerful themes emerge from this study: the political impact and ethical potential of Christianity in its Melanesian embodiment, and the beginnings of a Melanesian theology which would formulate the implications of the new faith for Melanesians in a way with which they can identify. These have been abiding interests of mine, too, since the years I shared with Garry in Papua New Guinea. But even then I was becoming aware of Islam as a growing presence on the Asia-Pacific scene, an awareness forced upon us by the systematic colonisation of what the Indonesians then called Irian Jaya, now Papua, but which its indigenous inhabitants refer to as West

¹ G.W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Part 2: “The New Time”.

² Whether or not the movements he describes in chapter 9 are independent *churches* in a sense similar to their African counterparts deserves further discussion, but they certainly illustrate the fluid boundaries between indigenous movements and imported institutions.

Papua in order to document its cultural continuity with the whole island of New Guinea and the rest of Melanesia. Islam, too, though Arabian in origin and thus quite foreign to the Malay cultural world of Indonesia, has interacted with Indonesia's rich cultural heritage in many and varied ways. What interests me here is evidence of a creative interaction between Indonesian Islam and Melanesian cultures and a specifically Islamic response to the gross violations of human rights and ecological integrity perpetrated by Indonesia in West Papua for over forty years.

In 1984 the Melanesian Institute in Goroka, Papua New Guinea, drew up a statement in response to a request from the World Council of Churches' sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths on Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Melanesia.³ It begins with a sketch of the religious situation in the Southwest Pacific which is still worth quoting over twenty years later:

Melanesia is overwhelmingly Christian, thanks to more than a century of intensive mission work by most of the major Christian denominations in this area of the Southwest Pacific. There is tenuous contact between Melanesians and Muslims only at the two extremities of the region. Across the only land border in the whole of the South Pacific, Melanesia is contiguous with the largest Muslim nation on earth, Indonesia with its 150 million people, up to 90% of them nominally Muslim. In the racially and religiously divided island nation of Fiji, far to the east, citizens of Indian origin who were brought out as indentured labourers around the turn of the century, many of them (about 60,000, mostly Sunni) Muslims, outnumber Melanesians. Otherwise, apart from tiny expatriate minorities (e.g. the 12,000 Muslims from former French colonies in New Caledonia and the Islamic Society of Papua New Guinea, founded in 1978), Islam is an unknown quantity, although the Bahā'i faith, which derives in part from Islam, is becoming quite widespread in the South Pacific. (1)

³ "Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Melanesia", *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 1/1 (1985), 91-96.

References in the text are to the numbered paragraphs of this statement.

The statistics would need to be updated,⁴ but the situation remains much the same. After mentioning the different but not unrelated developments in Africa (3-4), the document goes on to note that the two contexts, the Indonesian and the Fijian, have one thing in common: “neither is an Islamic state in the classical sense which still sets the pattern in the Arab heartland of Islam” (5), for in each, irrespective of their religious presence, Muslims are political minorities. “Melanesian Christians are thus not immediately confronted by that peculiar identity of religious and political authority which European Christians have sometimes found so perplexing when dealing with Islam in its more traditional forms” (5). The document warns that Islam has the potential to become a serious rival to Christianity in the Pacific, but that their relationship need not be seen only in these terms: “Islam may come to be seen, not merely as the rival and alien religion of the ‘enemy’, nor yet as a simple alternative to Christianity, but as a powerful spiritual and ethical force in its own right with which Christianity must reckon...” (8). It is this possibility that I would like to explore in the particularly contentious case of West Papua.

The Indonesian archipelago, with its more than 17,000 islands, is the bridge between Asia and the Pacific, the point at which their multifarious cultures overlap and intermingle. As the largest Muslim country on earth, Indonesia’s unique blend of Islamic orthodoxy and indigenous traditions necessarily has a decisive effect on the role of Islam throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Just as Christianity in its various European forms has had to come to terms with the myriad cultures and incipient democracies of Oceania, so Islam is having to rethink its relationship to indigenous customs and the political philosophies implicit in its own rich tradition. The tensions involved all come to a head in West Papua, as thoroughly Melanesian in culture as Papua New Guinea and the other Melanesian states, yet jealously retained by Indonesia as an integral part of the very different cultural, political and religious

⁴ The population of Indonesia is now closer to 200 million, and the number of Muslims in Papua New Guinea is estimated to be in excess of 2,000, for whom a large mosque has been built in the Port Moresby suburb of Hohola with the assistance of the Muslim World League and the government of Indonesia. The Muslim Association of Papua New Guinea was established in 1981, and the first Islamic Centre was established in 1988 with the help of the Regional Council for Islamic Daawa in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, based in Malaysia, and the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs. There are now seven such centres throughout the country.

sphere of its 'unitary state'. West Papua being 'Islamicised' and 'Javanised', but is this any more or less justifiable than the Christianising and Westernising of other parts of Melanesia?⁵

Building on Garry Trompf's work in analysing Christianity and secularisation in Melanesia, I wish to approach this challenging topic in two steps: first, by trying to understand the role of Islam in Indonesia's path to nationhood and democracy; second, by trying to correlate 'progressive' elements in Indonesian Islam with Indonesian policies on West Papua in an attempt to assess the potential of interfaith cooperation, involving Islam, for solving the seemingly intractable problem of West Papua's future status. To the outsider, many of the factors involved are extremely hard to evaluate and, as journalists are banned from entering West Papua, reliable information is scarce. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the ethical problems involved are so important that it is worth taking at least some tentative first steps towards understanding the role of the religions in West Papua.⁶

1. Jakarta: 'Political Islam' and Indonesian Democracy

After a colourful colonial past,⁷ we find the twentieth century in what was to become Indonesia beginning with a contest of identities: the retrieval of the islands' Hindu-

⁵ According to Dr Neles Tebay, a West Papuan Catholic priest, journalist and academic, Islamisation is indeed proceeding rapidly, with mosques in every major town and the prospect of a Muslim majority in the foreseeable future (email communication, 15.5.2007). I am grateful to Neles Tebay for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

⁶ The chapter draws upon some previous papers, as will be indicated from time to time: J.D. May, "The Religions and the Powers in West Papua", Michael Biehl and Amélie Admavi-Aho Ekué, eds., *Gottesgabe. Vom Geben und Nehmen im Kontext gelebter Religion. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Theodor Ahrens* (Frankfurt: Lembeck, 2005), 199-213; *id.*, "The Politics of Dialogue: *Nostra Aetate*, Interreligious Dialogue and Democracy", paper read at a conference marking forty years of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Christianity and Non-Christian Religions, Gregorian University, Rome, 25-28 September 2005, forthcoming under the editorship of John Borelli, Georgetown University.

⁷ On which see Norman G. Owen, ed., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 53-55, and the excellent study by Herman Beck, *Les Musulmans d'Indonésie* (Turnhout: Éditions Brepols, 2003), 11-38.

Buddhist past and the reassertion of Islam against the growing influence of Christian evangelisation (*Sarekat Islam*, 1911); resistance by the indigenous *pribumi* against Dutch, Eurasian, Chinese and Arab elements; the rise of the Communist Party and Sukarno's nationalists; and the influence of the much larger *Muhammadiyah* movement (1912). These stirrings of Islamic revival and incipient nationalism survived the conquest and division of the archipelago by the Japanese, and in the struggle for control after the war it was Sukarno's concept of a secular republic based on *Pancasila*⁸ that won out against both the Dutch and the political Muslims who wanted *sharī'a* law enshrined in the constitution. Though political parties proliferated and free elections were held in 1955, Sukarno regarded pluralist democracy as un-Indonesian and in 1956 he opted for the paternalistic alternative of 'guided democracy' (*Demokrasi Terpimpin*) based on 'consultation' (*shura*) and 'consensus' (*ijmā*).⁹ Sukarno, in short, was interested in the unified nation, not Islam, and the day after independence was declared (18 August 1945) he dropped the Islamist Jakarta Charter from the constitution. From this time on, the military began to assume the 'dual function' (*dwifungsi*) of maintaining national security and participating in economic and political life, which was eventually to make the armed forces, to all intents and purposes, the de facto government of the country and a major factor in business for much of the Suharto dictatorship.¹⁰

⁸ The 'five principles' of (1) belief in one supreme God, (2) humanitarianism, (3) nationalism expressed in the unity of Indonesia, (4) consultative democracy, and (5) social justice.

⁹ For more detail see Owen, *Emergence*, chapter 20. Of 83 parties contesting the elections, in which ninety-one percent of the population participated, only four attracted more than 16 percent of the vote: the Nationalist Party of Indonesia (22.3 percent), Masyumi (20.9 percent), Nahdlatul Ulama (18.4 percent), and the Communist Party of Indonesia (16.4 percent); on the failure of Islamic parties to dominate Indonesian politics, see also Bahtiar Effendy, *Islam and the State in Indonesia* (Athens, Oh.: Ohio University Press; Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), chapter 8. It was in this context of assertive nationalism that Soekarno began his campaign to wrest West New Guinea (Irian Jaya) from the Dutch in order to complete the new Indonesian nation 'from Sabang to Merauke'; see Owen, 308-309.

¹⁰ See Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), chapter 3; Denise Leith, *The Politics of Power: Freeport in Suharto's Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), chapter 2. The Indonesian army (TNI) must find up to 75 per cent of its budget through its own business ventures.

The stage was thus set for Muslims to play a significant part in the democratisation of a post-colonial state. Alongside the traditional ‘*ulamā*’ or legal scholars and in a certain sense as their rivals, Indonesian Islam had already brought forth a number of extra-state organisations such as the rural-based ‘traditionalist’ *Nahdlatul Ulama* (1926) and the urban-based ‘modernist’ *Muhammadiyah* (1912), each of which had a very large popular base (some 30-40 million in each case) and carried considerable weight in that unique interplay of legal interpretation, religious ethos and political philosophy which characterises Indonesian Islam.¹¹ Islam in Indonesia had always been plural, divided roughly along the lines of aristocratic *priyayi* religious culture deriving from the Hindu-Buddhist past and popular *abangan* mysticism, which translated politically into the ‘regimist’ Islam of Indonesian nationalists and the ‘Javanist’ Islam favoured at first but never empowered by Suharto’s New Order. Cutting across these was the tension between ‘secular nationalism’ and the ‘primordial solidarities’ (*ikatan primordial*) of ethnic traditions.¹²

At no time did this plurality of political forces result in Muslim ascendancy; indeed,

The Soeharto New Order regime, at least in the period of the 1970s and 1980s, was not on good terms with Muslim political forces in general. In fact there was a lot of mutual suspicion and hostility between the two sides. Soeharto took very harsh measures against any expression of Islamic extremism.¹³

But the question does arise whether the voluntary Muslim organisations located in the public sphere, which mediated between the household or village community and the state, already constituted the ‘social capital’ necessary for building civil society and pluralist democracy. There were continuing tensions throughout the 1950s and 1960s

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of how philosophical and ethical reflection takes place in the medium of jurisprudence in such a context, see M.B. Hooker, *Indonesian Islam: Social Change through Contemporary Fatawa* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin; Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

¹² These complex matters are lucidly discussed by Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 14-16, 50-53, 74-76. See also Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1960), and Effendy, *Islam and the State*, chapters 2 and 7.

¹³ Azyumardi Azra, “Militant Islamic Movements in Southeast Asia: Socio-political and Historical Contexts”, *Kultur: The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Cultures* 3/1 (2003), 17-27, 21.

between *adat* or custom and sporadic attempts to introduce *sharī'a*, accompanied by the proliferation of *pesantren* or local Islamic boarding schools, but these broadly based popular religious movements also constituted an enormous political potential. It would take us too far to go into the story of Sukarno's fall and Suharto's rise to power by using the hostility to the Communist Party of Indonesia on the part of both the Muslims and the military, backing the army against a weakened state and inciting civilians (including members of *Nahdlatul Ulama*) to slaughter Communists. His abuse of power to enrich his family and his opportunistic tilt towards Islam eventually alienated his secular allies and fomented religious and ethnic discontent. "The repoliticization of religion and ethnicity", Hefner concludes, "and the systematic drain on Indonesia's social capital of tolerance and civility was to be the most tragic of Soeharto's legacies".¹⁴

What interests us here is the ways in which leading progressive-reformist Muslim thinkers have tried to come to terms with these tensions and whether their thought has had any bearing on the situation in West Papua. Islam, it must be remembered, "emerged as a point of identification among Southeast Asians in opposition to the Europeans who were identified as Christian",¹⁵ in Indonesia's case, the Dutch, as evidenced in the Dutch-Acehnese War (1884-1911). Indeed, it was Dutch wariness about the potential of Islam to become a focal point of resistance that led to restrictions on the practice of Islam and the scope of Islamic law, thereby fostering the symbiosis of imperfectly understood Islam and local custom in village life.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the first movements of Islamic 'modernists' – meaning those who favoured exclusive adherence to *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* over recourse to the medieval jurists – took shape around this time, with the *Muhammadiyah* founded by Ahmad Dachlan in 1912, while the *Persatuan Islam* (PERSIS), founded in 1923 under the influence of merchants from Arabia, championed Islamic orthodoxy.¹⁷ There was thus scope for tension between orthodox pan-Islamists and emerging nationalists, with

¹⁴ Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 72. The full extent of the patronage system under Suharto and the political corruption to which it gave rise is graphically portrayed by Leith, *Politics of Power*.

¹⁵ Howard M. Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology in the Emerging Indonesian State: The Persatuan Islam (PERSIS), 1923 to 1957* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001, 2nd rev. ed.), 10.

¹⁶ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 12-15.

¹⁷ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 25-32.

currents of opposition between faith and reason, modernism and traditionalism, Arab and Indonesian, Muslim and Christian running through the years leading up to the Second World War and the struggle for independence. While Sukarno, as we have seen, favoured a secular nationalism and the separation of Islam and the state on the model of Atatürk's Turkey, the modernist Muslims gathered in the *Persatuan Islam* made their own preparations for independence, anticipating the Jakarta Charta which Sukarno eventually rejected and initiating the *pesantren* or Islamic boarding schools in 1936.¹⁸

PERSIS was rigorist in its disapproval of established customs such as the festive meals (*slametan*) which were so much a part of village life; of all forms of magic, soothsaying, amulets and, in general, 'polytheism' and 'mysticism', including the intercession of saints and Hindu theatre.¹⁹ It roundly condemned the *Ahmadiyah* movement and traditionalist Islam as un-Islamic, and its reaction to Christianity was defensive. Preaching was to be in Arabic where feasible, and Arabs were to be given special status in Indonesia. In short, the movement advocated "religion as the primary loyalty" (Ahmad Hassan), and its main preoccupation was with Islam itself.²⁰ Islam was assumed to be an ideology, a template for life, capable of replacing colonial governments with Islamic states. "Many Muslims had yet to be convinced of these concepts – some never were – and effort needed to be undertaken to bring about the reality of the concepts to the community of believers itself".²¹ At independence, however, neither PERSIS nor the other Islamic movements gathered in the umbrella organisation *Masjumi* made significant gains, and it was the army, the Communists and Sukarno himself who grew in power at the expense of the parliament. Most Muslims, except the radicals of *Darul Islam*, accepted the secular state. This left PERSIS in a "radical-revolutionary" stance, "wanting to change society to its very roots" and "shatter the illness of the Muslims in a radical and revolutionary manner" (1956 Manifesto). "This view can best be described as wanting the fundamentals of

¹⁸ See Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 35-36, 48, 82, 102-103, 115.

¹⁹ See Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, chapter 3.

²⁰ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 176, 181. Sacred law was to be given priority over national law, and the *hudūd* punishments were to be upheld, 305.

²¹ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 186.

religion operative throughout society”.²² Because of its intransigence, however, PERSIS never achieved this goal, though it eventually came to accept democracy and even nationalism as compatible with it. With regard to its jurisprudence, “lacking in these [PERSIS] *fatāwā* was any full discussion of the social problems presented by the technological advances and sociological developments of the previous century, and the impact of these trends on the religious life of Indonesian Muslims”; these could be accepted, but only if guided by Islam, because they emanate from the “unspiritual” West.²³ “The world had become a complex place that needed sophisticated understanding. Persis writers were not up to that standard”; they were capable of no more than a reiteration of historic Islam.²⁴

PERSIS, which left *Masjumi* in 1952 amidst polemics against NU, was not necessarily typical of Indonesian Islam, but nor was it without long term influence on Muslim thinking. Like *Muhammadiyah*, it was basically a reformist movement dedicated to purifying Islam from corruption. But can there be any such thing as ‘pure’ Islam? It may be asked whether Java was ever wholeheartedly converted to an Islam cut off from the Arabic sources of orthodoxy and suppressed by the Dutch as a rallying point for resistance. Islam flourished in Indonesia, but in a heavily indigenised form.²⁵ This suggested that Islamic orthodoxy had to be redefined for Indonesian conditions, but the medium in which this occurred was practice rather than belief, law rather than theology. The consensus (*ijmā’*) of the worldwide Muslim community (*ummah*) becomes tangible in the form of regulation (*hukm*).²⁶ We are dealing with what Saleh calls the ‘mainstream community’ (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l Jamā’ah*) of Sunni Islam, after which Indonesian Islam is patterned and to which Wahhabi advances were considered

²² Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 262.

²³ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 294, 296-298. On the role of *fatāwā* in Indonesian Islamic jurisprudence and the methodologies entailed in interpreting the rules of *fiqh*, see the detailed study by Hooker, *Indonesian Islam*.

²⁴ Federspiel, *Islam and Ideology*, 317, 328.

²⁵ See Fauzan Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in Twentieth Century Indonesia: A Critical Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), introduction and chapter 1. The assimilation of Muhammad to the Ocean Goddess is a particularly striking example (23), but popular customs, too, such as *gamelan* (Javanese orchestra), *wayang* (shadow puppet play) and *ronggeng* (Javanese dance), though forbidden, remain to this day (41-42).

²⁶ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 47-50.

by the 'ulamā' to be a threat; hence the founding of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* ('Resurgence of the Ulama') in 1926, like the more textually orientated *Muhammadiyah* before it (1912). Both claimed to represent the authentic community, embracing both *santri* and *abangan* elements but stressing that each was legitimately *santri*, i.e. strictly traditional.²⁷ Underlying these tensions in the practical implementation of Islam was the ancient rivalry between the more rationalist Mu'talizite and the orthodox Ash'arite schools, and it was within these coordinates that the contemporary theologians of Indonesian Islam were constrained to move. For Mas Mansoer, all polytheism such as that implied in shamanism, dealings with the spirits of the dead and the sacred dread of 'eerie objects and places', was *shirk*, a denial of the unity of God (*tawhīd*); for the apologists of *Persatuan Islam*, such as Ahmad Hassan, the Islamic 'Pillars of Belief' were revealed by God and could not be compromised.²⁸

The debate reduced itself to the choice between free will (*qadar*) and predestination (*qadā'*): were they equally valid, or did exclusive emphasis on the former lead to libertinism just as the latter led to fatalism?²⁹ Rejecting this dichotomy, Amien Rais (b. 1944) developed the social dimension of *tawhīd*, advocating a *Tauhid Sosial* which tried to apply orthodox doctrine to society and seeing in traditional institutions such as *zakāh* (religious donations) and *waqf* (charitable foundations) ways of addressing social welfare according to the *Qur'ān* – a kind of incipient liberation theology.³⁰ Otherwise, such thinkers foresaw a crisis of relevance and an increase of secularism unless Islam avoided politics, combated moral laxity and became involved in areas such as education and welfare. Harun Nasution went to the length of arguing for a reassessment of Mu'tazilism for contemporary Indonesia. "Time and again Nasution insisted that fatalism as a result of the people's adherence to Ash'arite traditional theology has been the primary cause of Muslim inertia and backwardness".³¹ The reform initiated by Muhammadiyah must move beyond jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and into theology (*kalām*) based on philosophy. Poverty and injustice, in Nasution's view,

²⁷ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 63-73, 101-102.

²⁸ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 121-162.

²⁹ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 154-175.

³⁰ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 175-195.

³¹ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 233.

went hand in hand with theological misconceptions – a view for which he was of course criticised, even by his own students. In Saleh’s judgement, thanks to Nasution “Islam has been made widely open as an object of critical enquiry”³² and we see the beginnings of a “theology of the oppressed”;³³ but the approach also had its limitations: “Since the upholders of theological reform perceived the issue only from this point of view, they did not consider unjustified social structures as a determining factor and as an object of scrutiny”.³⁴

These observations prepare the ground for an assessment of one of the leading thinkers of reformist Islam in Indonesia, Nurcholish Madjid, and for the possible application of this progressive thinking to situations such as that of West Papua. The difficulties for a Western observer become apparent, however, when we learn that Madjid and the student organisations from which he emerged, though they brought about “the most radical development in Islamic religio-political thought in Indonesia to date”,³⁵ were in step with Sukarno’s New Order regime, which they saw as the guarantee of a stable and modern Indonesia. “They felt that the path to a modern and progressive Indonesia was being obstructed, among other factors, by the unenlightened religious life style of Muslims”.³⁶ Though they were opposed by neo-modernist ‘scripturalists’, their aim was to combine the traditional and the modern through pluralist, non-sectarian education, using traditional interpretation (*ijtihad*) as a hermeneutic for today.³⁷ Madjid took a stand for social justice and human rights and against the political instrumentalisation of Islam; within the framework of Pancasila he encouraged reinterpretation of the *Qur’ān*, tolerance towards other Muslims and non-Muslims, and interfaith dialogue; the antithesis of militant Islamism, he represented the “broader, non-political dimension of Islam”; yet for him ‘Islam-ness’ and ‘Indonesian-ness’ were equivalent.³⁸ His was a cultural rather than a dogmatic Islam, less ‘Arabised’, more universalist, and acknowledging growth, development

³² Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 235.

³³ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 239, n. 88.

³⁴ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 238.

³⁵ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 241.

³⁶ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 243.

³⁷ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 244.

³⁸ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 250-255.

and plurality by a more flexible use of *ijtihād*. Stopping short of syncretism, it envisaged indigenisation and contextualisation in a kind of Islamic cosmopolitanism, which was congenial to those Muslim intellectuals who had studied in the West rather than the Middle East.³⁹ Madjid's approach demonstrated the new self-confidence of Islam as a contributor to the public well-being of the country while remaining authentically itself, not unlike that of Abdurrahman Wahid. Critics, however, such as Muhammed Arkoun, Muhammad al-Jābirī and Zayd Baso, saw in it a futile attempt to justify modern Islam from the past, offering an 'ideal model' of an urban civil society that is not valid for Indonesia: "Baso perceives Madjid's ideas of inclusive, tolerant and plural Islam as merely intended to posit Islam as a dominant value system in Indonesia".⁴⁰ A version of Islam which affirmed the New Order without suggesting an alternative to it would seem to be seriously defective as an instrument of social criticism and an advocate of human rights.

From about 1990 Suharto threw his support behind the Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) against both his former backers in the military and the pro-democracy movement. This cynical manoeuvre was denounced by the leader of NU, Abdurrahman Wahid, as sectarian and undemocratic, a stance which ended his friendship with Suharto. The ICMI, which incongruously combined business interests, social activists and Muslim intellectuals, was placed under the control of Suharto's favourite son, B.J. Habibie, which did not prevent Muslim intellectuals of the stature of Nurcholish Madjid from exercising considerable influence in it, but in fact it amounted to "the return of sectarian factionalism to the ruling elite itself".⁴¹ Madjid became a spiritual leader in these circles, representing the "'high politics' of political civility and principled pluralism" and the 'wider Islam' of all believers, sanctioned by the Qur'ānic injunctions to protect the truth of other revelations. ICMI thus became an "open *public sphere* for discussion and exchange",⁴² opposed to the 'regimist Islam' and 'secular nationalists' in the military, where there was tension between the 'green'

³⁹ See Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 259, 263-265, 277-279.

⁴⁰ Saleh, *Modern Trends*, 291; see 274-279, 281, 289. As a final irony, the new young 'traditionalists' opposed to Madjid's 'modernism' are inspired by deconstructionism, 285, n. 190; 293, n. 205.

⁴¹ Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 140-142, see 128. The following paragraphs draw upon May, "Politics of Dialogue".

⁴² Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 143; see 143-145.

(Islamist) and the ‘red and white’ (nationalist) elements, though this did not prevent the suppression of three influential weeklies in 1994 for criticising Habibie’s reckless development policies. It was in the course of these complex political manoeuvres that Abdurrahman Wahid emerged as the advocate of a pluralist Islamic democracy, criticising not only both factions in the military, but also the regime that played one off against the other in order to maintain itself in power.

Wahid’s ‘ecumenical’ stance in opposing fundamentalists of all types called forth a campaign of slander against him from Suharto and even from within his own organisation, just as the nationalist Megawati Sukarnoputri and the leader of Muhammadiyah, Amien Rais, were also undermined, which left the pro-democracy movement confused and disorientated. ‘Civil society’ (*masyarakat madani*) itself seemed under threat.⁴³ Suharto’s fundamental mistake was his failure to realise that the Islamists were not opportunists like himself, but actually wanted democratic reform.⁴⁴ The emergence of civil society, however fragile, combined with the Asian economic collapse of 1997 and exacerbated by the ‘loss’ of East Timor in 1999, called forth nothing but violent repression and racist abuse from the beleaguered Suharto, who resigned on 21 May 1999. The regimist Muslims switched their allegiance to Habibie, but the pro-democracy Muslims stood firm: “That the bulk of the Muslim leadership rejected these antidemocratic feints bears eloquent testimony to their civil-democratic convictions”.⁴⁵

These dramatic events should make us cautious about accepting the widespread assumption that Islam is culturally incompatible with democracy.⁴⁶ The ‘public

⁴³ Hefner, *Civil Islam*, chapters 6 and 7, gives a detailed account of these developments, in the course of which, as Haidar Bagir, the ICMI’s publisher, put it, “Muslims and non-Muslims are getting lessons in democracy”, 154. Only a ‘watermelon Muslim’ – green on the outside, red on the inside! – like Adi Sasono seemed able to survive in such a climate, see Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 147.

⁴⁴ See Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 208.

⁴⁵ Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 208.

⁴⁶ See Azyumardi Azra, “The Challenge of Democracy in the Muslim World: Traditional Politics and Democratic Political Culture”, Karlina Helmanita, Irfan Abubakar and Dina Afrianty, eds., *Dialogue in the World Disorder: A Response to the Threat of Unilateralism and World Terrorism* (Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Syarif Hidayatulla Jakarta and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2004), 203-214; see also Brian Glancy, *Liberalism without Secularism? Rachid Ghannouchi*

culture' of autonomous agency mediated by civil organisations depends on "the creation of a civilized and self-limiting state" in which a Muslim pluralism can flourish, and in creating broadly based civic associations "Muslims showed themselves second to none" in Indonesia.⁴⁷ The crucial factor is the temptation of conservative Muslims to "dissolve the wall between public and private, and force citizens to virtue", but by and large Indonesia's Muslim movements have succeeded in "drawing themselves down into mass society and away from exclusive elites". The problem then becomes, just as it did for Protestants and Catholics in early twentieth century Europe and America – though it goes back to the Reformation itself in the case of the former and to the medieval jurists in that of the latter – how to maintain religious allegiance while affirming the social relevance of religion. "In this setting, traditions laying claim to ultimate meanings face a common dilemma: how to maintain a steadied worldview and social engagement while acknowledging the pluralism of the age".⁴⁸ Paradoxically, "the absence of *aliran* [oppositional] politics in Suharto's New Order administration enabled *santri* and *abangan* communities to converge religiously as well as politically".⁴⁹

2. Jayapura: Islam in West Papua – Collaborator or Critic?

Underlying these complex political developments are some fundamental issues which continue to determine the policies that affect West Papua today. Among them are the tensions between the 'higher' or 'universal' religion (*agama*) of the Islamic organisations and the 'local' or 'customary' religion (*adat*) of Indonesia's numerous indigenous cultures, also expressed as the opposition between the orthodox or puritan (*santri*) Islam of the Javanese aristocracy and the 'mystical' or 'traditional' (*abangan*) Islam deriving from Sufism which is practised predominantly in rural areas. In general, these differences correlate with the contrast between Java with its refined

and the Theory and Politics of Islamic Democracy (Dublin: Columba Press, 2007). In developing this theme in what follows I have benefited greatly from a seminar by John Kelsay on "Christianity, Islam and Democracy" at the Institute for International Integration Studies, Trinity College Dublin, 3 June 2005, and from discussions with him during his subsequent visiting professorship in Dublin.

⁴⁷ Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 215, 217.

⁴⁸ Hefner, *Civil Islam*, 218-219.

⁴⁹ Effendy, *Islam and the State*, 203.

hierarchical culture and what are seen as the more ‘primitive’ ways of life on the ‘outer islands’, the most extreme example of which, of course, is the Melanesian culture of the West Papuans. There is a scarcely concealed racism in the way these are referred to by the central government, the army and police, and the internal immigrants who continue to stream into West Papua from poorer parts of the archipelago (in the context of the government policy of *transmigrasi*, as a result of which the ratio of indigenous to expatriate now stands at around 52% to 48%). “International and local human rights groups estimate that at least 100,000 Papuans have been killed by the Indonesian security forces” – not counting possibly twice that number who have died from malnutrition and disease as a result of having to flee to the jungle – and “Indonesian soldiers can freely kill any Papuan at any time and in any place for any reason. Since they do not kill Papuans but separatists, who are considered to be enemies of the Indonesian state, they never feel any guilt”.⁵⁰ All this is taking place in an all-pervasive culture of corruption and impunity in which violence is taken for granted as the way to solve problems.

The theological developments in Indonesian Islam discussed above are undoubtedly significant in the wider context of the worldwide struggle between Islamic fundamentalists and progressive Muslims with their different attitudes to the relation between religion and the state.⁵¹ They are superficially similar to the ‘socially engaged Buddhism’ emerging from other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, but unlike the engaged Buddhists the progressive Muslims give the impression that Indonesian Islam seems perfectly able to ignore the glaring injustices taking place in West Papua and is mainly preoccupied with itself and its place within the polity of the ‘unitary state’. The resulting account of Islam seems to favour ‘Islamisation’ (*santrisasi*) rather than ‘indigenisation’ (*pribumisasi*) and provides no basis for criticising the collusion of the military and the police with the radical Islamists of *Laskar Jihad* or *Jamaah Islamiya* as they stir up trouble in Maluku or infiltrate West

⁵⁰ Neles Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours for Peace in West Papua* (Aachen: Missio, 2006), 6-7.

⁵¹ See J.J.G Jansen, *The Dual Nature of Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Hurst, 1997), who, while acknowledging Fahmī Huwaydī’s proposition “that the basic difference between Islamic and Western culture is the separation between religion and the state” (7), concludes that “during the many centuries preceding the European conquest of the Muslim world, the world of Islam effectively knew a separation of politics and religion” (12).

Papua. We therefore need to look more closely at religious and political developments in that easternmost part of the far-flung nation.

West Papua has been heavily evangelised, the predominant Christian churches being Evangelical, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic. Evangelical Christianity with its discipline, ritual and biblical orientation is already regarded as ‘traditional religion’, especially in the mountainous interior, whereas in the urban context of the provincial capital Jayapura it is losing ground to the Pentecostals, who have no problems with a multi-ethnic membership and give leadership roles to women.⁵² In his study of the Dani of the Baliem Valley as they make the transition to the urban lifestyle of Jayapura, Farhadian finds that for them “the church is a new ritual” which “serves as a functional substitute for traditional Dani ritual performance”.⁵³ This does not mean, however, that they do not have recourse to traditional practices such as sorcery which the missionaries encouraged them to abandon.⁵⁴ The Evangelical emphasis is on preaching – by male ministers – and there are cases where the expatriate missionaries live segregated from the indigenous city-dwellers in Western enclaves.⁵⁵ By contrast, “Pentecostalism helps bridge diverse ethnicities by making common communication possible. It overcomes the limitation of expository, word-based (i.e. evangelical)

⁵² See Charles E. Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism in Indonesia* (New York and London: Routledge, 2005), 111, 114. “Christianity has acquired the status of tradition among the Dani: the Dani insist that, ‘we are Christians’”, 91, and “the urban church has been subsumed into Dani tradition”, 107; this confirms Garry Trompf’s acceptance of Christianity as ‘Melanesian religion’. See also the review of Farhadian by James Haire, *Studies in World Christianity* 12/2 (2006), 187-188.

⁵³ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 113. Another striking example comes from just over the border in the westernmost part of Papua New Guinea, where the tiny mountain people of the Urapmin in the Telefolmin area of West Sepik Province voluntarily substituted Baptist Christianity for their traditional religion, see Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in a Papua New Guinea Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

⁵⁴ See Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 141.

⁵⁵ See Farhadian’s description of *Pos 7*, a Dani settlement in the hills above Jayapura, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 90-95.

worship”.⁵⁶ The Catholics, for their part, have a strong tradition of social justice teaching to fall back on.⁵⁷ Farhadian is able to conclude:

The church occupies a unique position within society, for as a *new community* in the social realities of West Papua divided culturally (e.g. Papuan vs. *pendatang* [‘straight hair’, i.e. Indonesian]), religiously (Christian vs. Muslim), economically (rich vs. poor), racially (e.g. Melanesian vs. Austronesian), and educationally (educated vs. uneducated) the church affirms that all are “one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3: 27).⁵⁸

Of course, the freedom that is offered by the Evangelical churches is a purely spiritual freedom from sin, whereas the more immediate needs of indigenous Papuans in the urban situation are sufficient education and language ability to find jobs and avoid the temptations of drugs, alcohol, prostitution and violence.

Education, however, tends to be Java-centred – “learning to be Indonesian”,⁵⁹ Papuans are incited to look west to Southeast Asia rather than east to Melanesia, and they are openly regarded as “still stupid” (*masih bodoh*), though their customs are found useful for marketing Indonesia as a tourist attraction.⁶⁰ The “silent history”

⁵⁶ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 120. At the same time, “What is most compelling about the Bible for the Dani is that they see themselves and their own history recorded in its pages”, 116.

⁵⁷ See Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, who draws extensively on a contribution by Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar, OFM, “Different Religions United in Building a Culture of Peace in the Land of Papua”, T. Aldaba Fernando and P. Petilla Ma. Josefa, eds., *CIIR Round Table on Inter-Faith Collaboration for Peace and Development in West Papua and Mindanao* (London: CIIR, 2004); see also Neles Tebay, “The Role of the Catholic Church in Defending and Promoting Human Rights in West Papua”, *Jakarta Post*, 25 April 2002 (taken from <http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/2002/May/05-03-1.htm>), and Bishop H.F.M. Munninghoff, OFM, *Violations of Human Rights in the Timika Area of Irian Jaya, Indonesia: A Report by the Catholic Church of Jayapura*, August 1995 (<http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/boyer/fp/bishop-irian-jaya>), see Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam and Nationalism*, 153-155.

⁵⁸ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 106.

⁵⁹ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 57, citing Karl Heider.

⁶⁰ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 28, 36; in West Papua, he adds, “Two worlds and two visions met”, 29.

(*syarah sunyi*) of their “conspicuous subjugation” deserves a much fuller account than can be given here.⁶¹ One effect of being thrown together with West Papuans of various ethnic backgrounds in the urban context is the realisation that they share a common history of suffering which in turn has given rise for the first time to a sense of “Papuanness”: “The experience of unity in suffering led to a burgeoning of feeling Papuan...”.⁶² It is thus not surprising that an indeterminate number of Christians became attracted to the West Papuan liberation movement OPM (*Operasi Papua Merdeka*) at the opposite pole to Evangelical abstention from politics. The OPM, “an ad hoc mixture of Christian ideas and local religious aspirations”, sought freedom from what Nicolaas Jouwe, one of the earliest resistance leaders, called West Papua’s “second Asian colonizer” (the first being the Japanese).⁶³ Though the Indonesians had promised progress and prosperity, West Papuans had experienced the opposite; they now have the lowest living standard, not just in Indonesia, but in the whole of Southeast Asia.⁶⁴ It is therefore no wonder that many of them – Farhadian calls them “enacted theologians” – found God in the OPM, “the God of the Papuans, the God of Hebrews – our God”.⁶⁵ From having embraced a privatised Christianity of interior conversion, West Papuans were now being transformed by the brutal persecution of their people and the ruthless exploitation of their natural resources into agents of political resistance in the public sphere.

⁶¹ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 153, 25. *Tapol*, the bulletin of the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign in London, regularly gives details of human rights abuses in Indonesia, including West Papua; Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, lists numerous individual cases and general deficiencies; and Farhadian, 151-157, cites moving testimonies of torture and intimidation.

⁶² See Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 155-156. Prior to the mid-1990s, he remarks elsewhere, the Dani “could say, ‘I’m Christian’, but they could not say, ‘I’m Papuan’”, 176.

⁶³ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 29; see 73. A Western informant is quoted as saying: “The same people that latched on to the gospel were the ones who latched on to the freedom movement”, 36. For an articulate example see Trwar Max Ireeuw, “An Appeal for Melanesian Christian Solidarity”, Garry Trompf, ed., *The Gospel is Not Western: Black Theologies from the Southwest Pacific* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987), 170-182.

⁶⁴ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 41-42, quotes some alarming figures: highest infant mortality rate (70-200/1000); lowest life expectancy (50.3 years for women); highest HIV infection (20.4 per 100,000; ‘Approximately 40% of the HIV and AIDS cases in Indonesia are located in the province of Papua, even though that province has less than 1% of the population’, quoting Butt *et al.*), 42. For further depressing statistics, see Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 21-22.

⁶⁵ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 162-164.

According to West Papuan theologian Martinus Mawene, there exists among the Christian congregations of the Biak region a spirituality and theology of liberation, and one of its roots is the Mansren movement, one of the earliest recorded cargo cults.⁶⁶ In its present form the cult identifies Jesus with Manseren Koreri, i.e. the ‘Papuan Christ’ of the Koreri, or ‘Manseren Manggundi’, the Lord and Master, also known as the Morning Star and thus associated with the independence flag of West Papua.⁶⁷ Another component of Papuan Christology, according to Mawene, is the identification of Christ as the ‘peace child’ (*tarop tim*), a child offered by a warring tribe to its enemies as a way of ending the cycle of payback killings. Having this special status, the peace child may not be harmed, but Jesus, as God’s ‘peace child’, was betrayed and executed. This demonstrates both the depth of human perversity and God’s desire to bring about the reconciliation of humankind.⁶⁸ For Mawene, the issue is whether a theology fed by both Papuan and Christian sources can be both ‘critical’ and ‘prophetic’ in the sense of “a critical statement containing the word of God”.⁶⁹

There is another powerful influence at work, however, which complicates these developments still further. Together with forced Javanisation (*Javanisasi*) there has been an equally relentless Islamisation (*Islamisasi*) of West Papua.⁷⁰ The *transmigrasi* programme, in practice, is for Muslims only, although Christians and others from different parts of Indonesia may migrate freely to West Papua, and the lines of demarcation between Muslim and Christian by no means coincide with those between Malay and Melanesian. Transmigrants, of whom there are estimated to be some

⁶⁶ Marthinus Th. Mawene, “Christ and Theology of Liberation in Papua”, *Exchange* 33 (2004), 153-179. The Mansren cult was recorded in 1857 and may be much earlier; see Friedrich Steinbauer, *Melanesische Cargo-Kulte. Neureligiöse Heilsbewegungen in der Südsee* (München: Delp, 1971), 199-206; May, “The Religions and the Powers”, 207-210; and, on the phenomenon in general, Garry Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, esp. chapter 4.

⁶⁷ The link between Jesus and Mansren is reported as early as 1863; see Mawene, “Theology of Liberation”, 163-164.

⁶⁸ Mawene, “Theology of Liberation”, 168-171. The offering of a peace child to end conflicts was a practice of the Sawi people, famously documented by the missionary Don Richardson.

⁶⁹ Mawene, “Theology of Liberation”, 178, see 175-178.

⁷⁰ See Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 25, 63, 81, 85.

770,000 in a total population of over two million, are given priority in every respect.⁷¹ In Jayapura, 80% of inhabitants are non-Papuan, while 90% of civil servants in the province are Muslim. Since 1980, the central government has actively supported Islam through the ICMI and *dakwah* or Islamic propagation groups, giving *madrasahs* and mosques an estimated ten times the funding available for Christian evangelisation.⁷² It is becoming more common for women to wear the *jilbab* in public, there are tensions at markets between ‘curly hairs’ (Papuan) and ‘straight hairs’ (*pendatang*, outsiders, newcomers), and mosques are routinely used for public announcements, thus reinforcing the impression that the promised New Society is for Indonesian Muslims only.⁷³ There is a sense, however, in which Islam can be an attractive alternative for West Papuans, quite apart from the inducements offered to ‘rice Muslims’ to convert and notwithstanding the presence of extremist groups from elsewhere in Indonesia, such as *Laskar Jihad* or *Jamaah Islamiya*. *Laskar Jihad* is considered to be

operating with consent by the Indonesian military. Papuans contend that since 2001 members of *Laskar Jihad* had been training on mosque properties throughout the province. It is important to note that *Laskar Jihad* ... were not supported by the vast majority of Muslims living in West Papua.⁷⁴

⁷¹ See Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 60, 197, n. 8. Statistics relating to West Papua are often approximate, but Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 16-17, gives figures most likely to be reliable: total population at the end of 2002 was 2,387,427 (from 736,700 in 1960), of whom 1,241,462 (52%) were indigenous Papuans and 1,145,965 (48%) were non-Papuans or migrants. In towns and near large mines, however, the disproportion is more marked: 70% migrant to 30% indigenous in Merauke, 80% to 20% in Jayapura.

⁷² See Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 72, 77, 81.

⁷³ See Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 80-81.

⁷⁴ Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 175; see 81-85. Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 37, estimates that 2% of Papuans are Muslim; on the confusion surrounding possible military support for *Laskar Jihad* and nationalistic militant groups, see 19-20.

Reciprocal conversions, in fact, contribute to the new experience of religious and cultural pluralism on both sides, and while Islam continues to exert pressure, a sense of ecumenism is growing among the Christian churches.⁷⁵

These comparatively recent developments have led to what may justly be called a 'peace offensive' with the proclamation, in the face of continued military violence and all-pervasive racism, of 'Papua, Land of Peace'.⁷⁶ The Christian churches initiated the Forum for Reconciliation of the People of Irian Jaya (*Forum Rekonsiliasi Masyarakat Irian Jaya*, FORERI) on 24 July 1989; it was the so-called 'Team 100' from this body who eventually met with President Habibie to ask for Papuan independence. A pastoral letter followed, issued by the three main churches (Roman Catholic and the Protestant GKI and GKII).⁷⁷ These were timely steps, because the promise of Special Autonomy for West Papua has been thrown into doubt by the subsequent announcement – without any apparent coordination or consultation – of the division of the territory into three separate provinces (only one of which, *Irian Jaya Barat*, has so far been established), a step which was vehemently opposed by both bodies.⁷⁸ The supreme cynicism of the Indonesian military towards peace initiatives is documented by the murder of Theys Eluay, a leader of the Papuan Presidium Council (PDP), which was presenting itself as a non-violent alternative to the OPM, by members of the elite KOPASSUS Special Forces unit immediately after a military dinner given by

⁷⁵ A West Papuan chapter of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) was founded in February 2003, and "[a] growing body of educated Papuans and the emerging unity of the churches in Papua may represent hope on the horizon", Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 176; see Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 37-38..

⁷⁶ The expression originally chosen and cited by Farhadian, 175, 'Zone of Peace', was rejected, according to Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 35-36, because it suggested a demilitarised zone alongside continued military occupation, whereas West Papuans wanted to stress their indissoluble unity not only among themselves but with the land as such.

⁷⁷ For details, see Farhadian, *Christianity, Islam, and Nationalism*, 171-173.

⁷⁸ "Despite this rejection, the central government allowed West Irian Jaya province to conduct its own gubernatorial election on 11 March 2006. Papua province conducted its gubernatorial election on 10 March 2006", Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 25, see 22-25 on the whole confused situation. The so-called Second Papuan Congress, i.e. after the abortive attempt to form an indigenous government at the first such congress in October 1961, was actually endorsed and part-funded by President Wahid, Farhadian, 174.

them in his honour in November 2001.⁷⁹ In response to these “continuing violations of human rights in West Papua, the Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist religious leaders have repeatedly issued joint statements calling for justice” which, they insist, are “not motivated by any political interest”.⁸⁰

Calls for justice in a structurally unjust situation, however, have unavoidable political overtones, and it must be assumed that the Muslim leaders who lent their voices to these affirmations of human rights in the face of blatant injustice were implicitly criticising those aspects of their own government’s policies which make forced Islamisation the vehicle of oppression in West Papua. Alongside economic empowerment, support for education and improved health care, Catholic, Protestant and Muslim bodies acknowledge growing plurality as a positive value but note “an absence of democracy”.⁸¹ As values they share in common the religious leaders recognise plurality, justice, unity – on the understanding that “no particular religion or culture is taken as the foundation of unity or as a criterion of judgement”⁸² – harmony (“with God, one’s neighbours and the whole of creation”⁸³), solidarity, togetherness, sincere fraternity and welfare.⁸⁴ It is because “a lack of justice constitutes a threat to

⁷⁹ On the convoluted relationship between Theys Eluay, a long-time collaborator with the Suharto regime, and his rival Tom Beanal, who accepted a seat on the board of Freeport Indonesia, which helped to fund the Papuan Presidium Council, see Leith, *Politics of Power*, 227-230.

⁸⁰ Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 27, a sentiment reinforced by a statement of Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar: “We reaffirm that this is a mission inherent in our faith and not one motivated by any political goal”.

⁸¹ Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 32, see 27-32. Tebay warns that the churches and the growing religious pluralism can be manipulated by both the government and the separatist movement, 4, 18. He gives figures of 1,235,670 Protestants, 543,030 Catholics, 498,329 Muslims, 7,249 Hindus and 4,123 Buddhists, noting that though “there have been no violent conflicts between adherents of the different religions in West Papua ... [t]here is a lack of communication and coordination within and between religions ... There is theological conflict within religions and a tendency to exploit religion for political purposes” as well as “signs of the misuse of pluralism in Papua”, 18.

⁸² Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 39.

⁸³ Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 40, emphasising that “a harmonious relationship with nature is of fundamental importance for peace”, whereas “a damaged relationship with nature destroys not only the material and spiritual habitat of many people, the ecosystems of forests and resources such as food and water, but also human life”, 40-41.

⁸⁴ See Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 36-42 for a fuller description of these values.

peace”⁸⁵ that interfaith collaboration becomes credible as a means of preventing violent conflict and drawing on cultural resources for building peace.⁸⁶ The religious leaders thus regard the ‘Papua, Land of Peace’ initiative as a platform for development and a rejection of militant fundamentalism, leading them to call for an independent enquiry on human rights violations, consistent implementation of the Papuan Special Autonomy law and the promotion of democracy.⁸⁷ They stress that in helping indigenous Papuans to become agents of development they are not advocating separatism: “The peace campaign in West Papua clearly has nothing to do with what the Indonesian government calls the ‘Papua separatist movement’”⁸⁸

The statement issued by the religious leaders from a workshop on “Religions as Agents of Justice and Peace” notes “the tendency to exploit religion for political purposes and the theological conflict created by government policy”, “the lack of any commitment to promote development in Papua” and the prevailing “culture of corruption”:

We strive to ensure that the people are made the actors in the process of development... We stress the importance of ethics in decision making as well as the importance of employing peaceful means and upholding human dignity in addressing problems.⁸⁹

Each religious tradition has its cherished exhortations to peace, but in a situation as fraught with injustice as West Papua these cannot afford to remain mere platitudes. However, if they are to have any political effect they must be mediated to

⁸⁵ Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 44.

⁸⁶ See Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 44-47.

⁸⁷ According to the Indonesian human rights organisation ELSHAM, far from improving the human rights situation in West Papua, the introduction of Special Autonomy five years ago has facilitated local corruption and led to an increase in abuses, “No human rights improvement under special autonomy”, *Tapol* No. 185, January 2007, 8-9; see also No. 186, April 2007, 9-11, on the depredations of the TNI in the interior: “The result is a military fiefdom, with all the illicit spoils of control over the mining and logging industries, as well as the broader economy, being the TNI’s reward”, 9, citing Sydney University’s West Papua Project.

⁸⁸ For detailed accounts of these positions see Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 48-56, 4.

⁸⁹ Full text in Tebay, *Interfaith Endeavours*, 65-68.

governments through civil society. To what extent is this actually happening in Muslim-dominated Indonesia? The criminal justice system is riddled with corruption and inconsistencies; the military derives about 75 per cent of its revenue from business ventures, including security services to mining operations such as Freeport in West Papua; these in turn supply a major proportion of state income; and the government seems to have only limited influence on both the economy and the military.⁹⁰ As the mining industry accounts for approximately 14 per cent of GDP and 20 per cent of total export earnings,⁹¹ it is evident that no Indonesian government could contemplate letting go of West Papua. In addition, the offer of Special Autonomy has effectively polarised resistance into an M-group (pro-independence) and an O-group (pro-autonomy), adding to tensions between factions in the OPM and between it and the Papuan Presidium Council.⁹² The question remains whether the ‘social Tawhid’ of Indonesian theologians or the ‘liberation theology’ of West Papuan intellectuals are capable of being or actually are the driving forces behind initiatives which, while ecumenical in intent, are inescapably political.

Conclusion: ‘Fundamentalist’ and ‘Ecumenist’ Modalities of Christianity and Islam in West Papua

Even though it seems obvious that both the Muslims advocating violent repression and the Christians in favour of violent resistance are tiny minorities in their respective religious and political communities in West Papua, it remains true that peace initiatives such as the more secular Papuan Presidium Council and the avowedly religious FORERI have political implications, even if they are not directly political in intent. Human rights advocacy and resistance to exploitation imply radical changes in political structures, judicial standards and economic distribution in Indonesia. One could perhaps organise the factors involved along three axes, as follows:

⁹⁰ Leith, *Politics of Power*, offers the first comprehensive analysis of the extent to which the Suharto dictatorship fed off the willing collaboration of the Freeport McMoRan mining venture to fund its vast system of patronage, while the company paid the TNI to quell local resistance.

⁹¹ 1999 figures cited by Leith, *Politics of Power*, 44.

⁹² See Olive Towey, *Papua: An Analysis of a Conflict, its Origins and Outcomes* (M.Phil. thesis, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin, 2002), 47-48.

1. *Indigenous* (or ‘biocosmic’) vs. *universal* (or ‘metacosmic’) religion,⁹³ combinations of which characterise both Indonesian Islam, with its tension between *adat* and *santri*, *abangan* and *agama*, and Melanesian Christianity, which tries to accommodate indigenous practice and thinking within a ‘contextualised’ theology.
2. *Politics* itself in its overlap with economic priorities and military prerogatives, vs. *religion* proper as faith commitment, whether Christian or Muslim, which transcends politics.⁹⁴
3. *Ecumenism* as an interactive pluralism which, while involving tolerance, goes beyond it to practice interreligious engagement, vs. *fundamentalism* properly so called, which regards scriptural sources as inerrant and beyond criticism while elevating religious certainty into an unchallengeable ideology.

The religion that transcends politics may – but need not – issue in fundamentalist absolutism; it may just as easily inspire political commitment precisely *as* authentic faith commitment. This in turn may – but need not – take the form of an orthodoxy abstracted from localised cultural practices and mentalities, but it may also interact with these to yield a recognisably Indonesian Islam and Melanesian Christianity – and perhaps even an Indonesian Christianity and a Melanesian Islam? Only time will tell.

One of the key transformations of both Christianity and Islam in West Papua has been their emergence from denominational isolation in the one case and cultural homogeneity in the other into the public sphere of a fragile civil society, where the experience of pluralism and the challenge of working for peace with justice have ‘objectified’ them in their own eyes and made them, whether they like it or not, ‘political’ factors in Indonesian public discourse. It is at this point that the bifurcation into ‘ecumenist’ and ‘fundamentalist’ modalities tends to occur, according to whether religious leaders and their communities willingly accept pluralism or retreat into the

⁹³ See J.D. May, *Transcendence and Violence: The Encounter of Buddhist, Christian and Primal Traditions* (New York and London: Continuum, 2003), 57-60, 121, 147-150.

⁹⁴ See J.D. May, “Political Religion: Secularity and the Study of Religion in Global Civil Society”, Alia Imtoul and Basia Spalek, eds., *Religion, Spirituality and Social Science: A Reader* (London: Polity Press, 2007) [forthcoming].

security of absolutism. The extent to which an accommodation with indigenous cultures has played a part in each tradition's development would seem to exercise a crucial influence over this decision. It must also be asked whether the option for fundamentalism goes hand in hand with a preference – or at least a toleration – of violence as a means of solving problems and maintaining stability, whereas the option for ecumenism deliberately renounces violence and seeks dialogue. A further issue concerns the definition of goals: autonomy or independence? Those engaged in ecumenical dialogue seem to be quite clear that they do not support separatism, though they insist on human rights and just economic development. If these really are the operative factors in 'Papua, Land of Peace', then the initiative by religious leaders in this remote and neglected province could turn out to be exemplary for the whole Asia-Pacific and beyond.