

Sojourning on Mecca's Verandah:
Place, Temporality, and Islam in an Indonesian Province

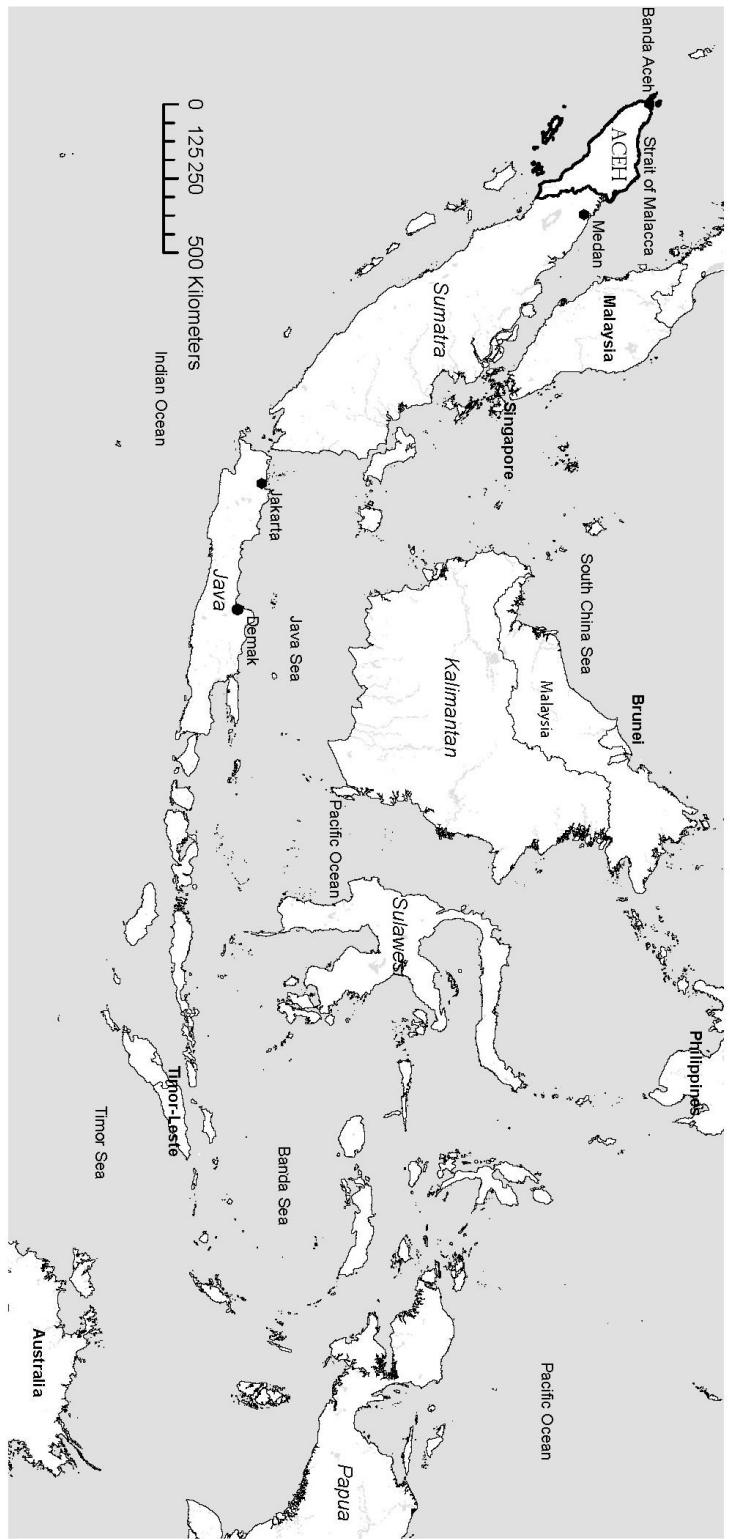
by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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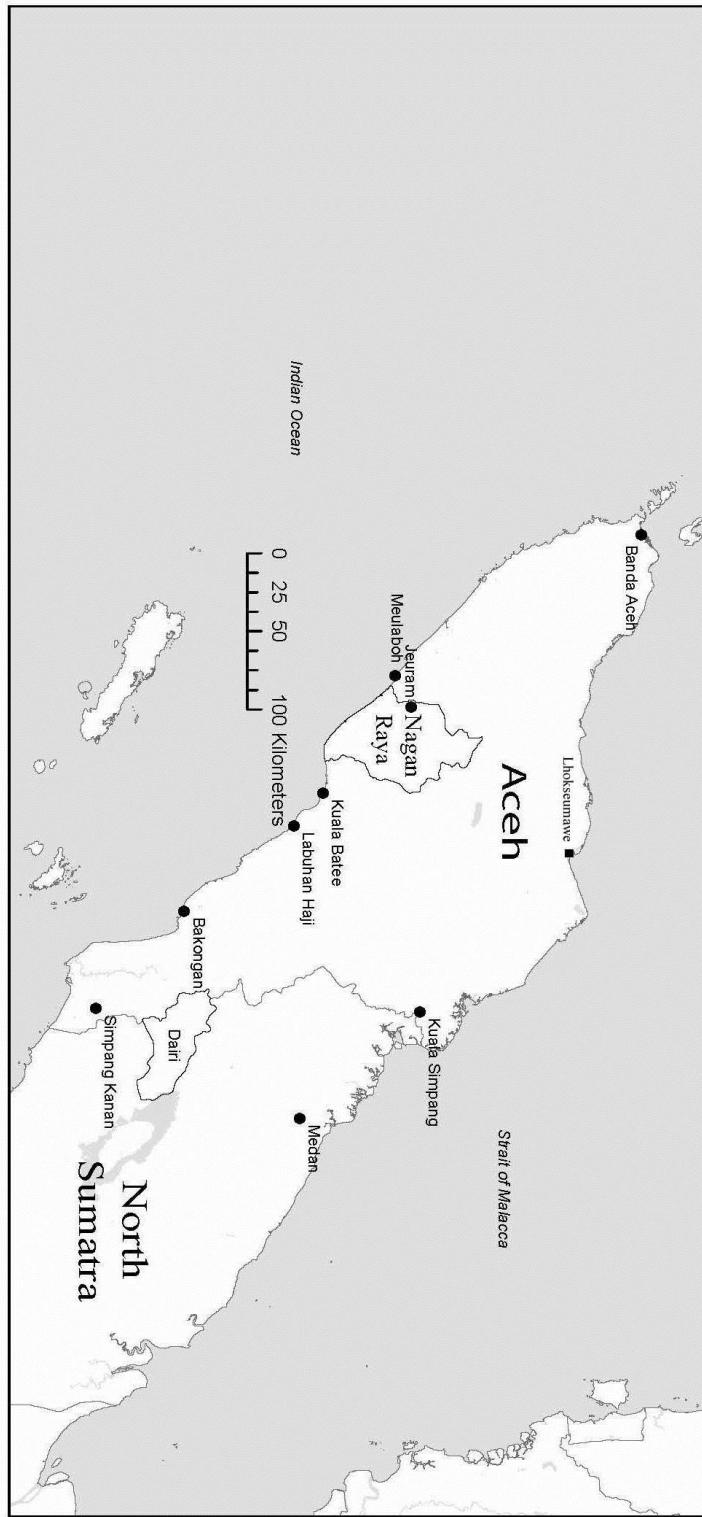
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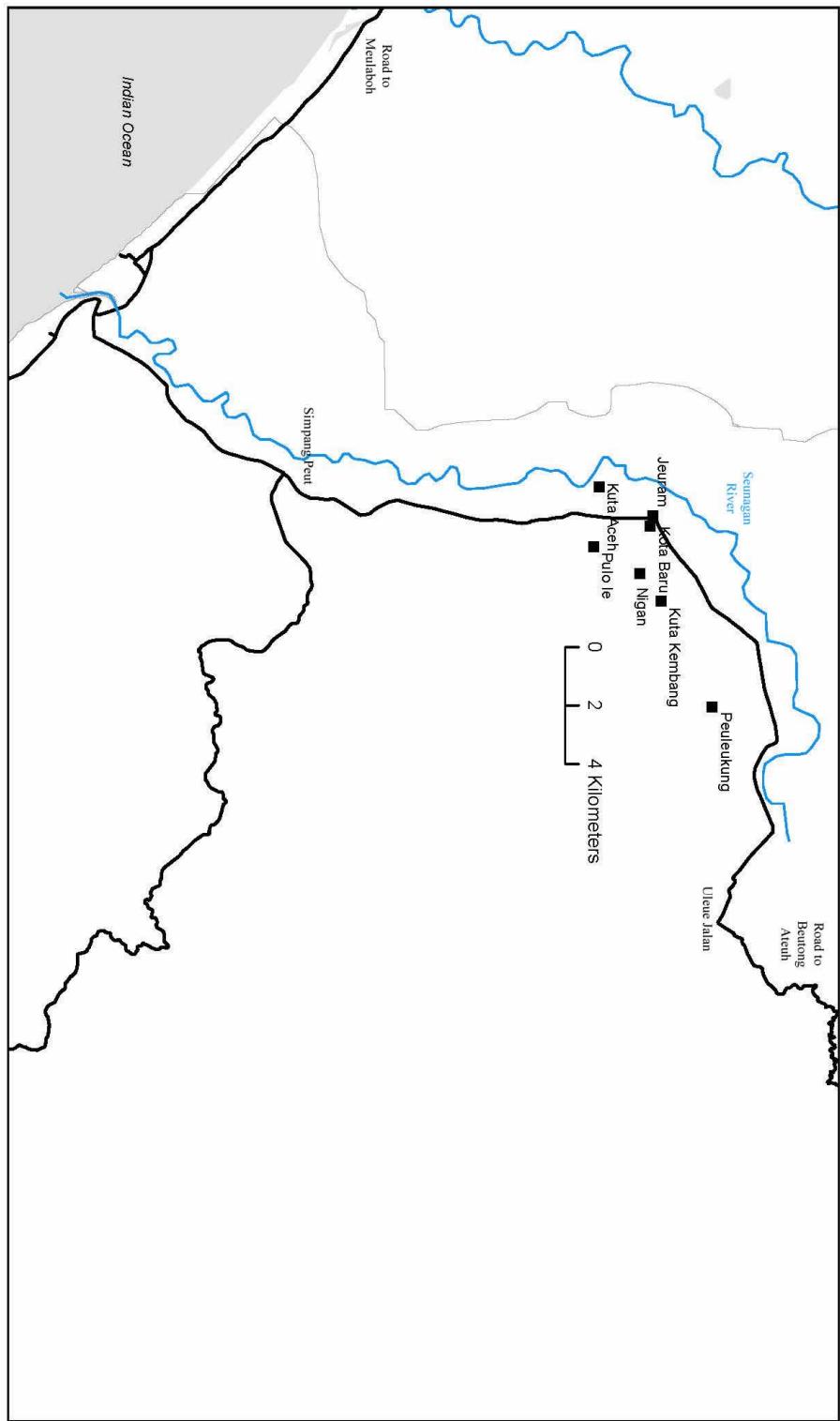
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Map 1: The Indonesian Archipelago (2013)

Map 2: Aceh (2013)





Map 3: Nagan Raya (2013)

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I cannot imagine that anyone ever reads the acknowledgements of a dissertation or monograph in the same way once he or she has written his or her own. For me, the trail of debts—intellectual, personal, even medical—began to accumulate from the moment I arrived at Michigan as an MA student in Southeast Asian Studies. It is with deep-felt regrets that it is only some of the most outstanding of these debts that I can acknowledge on these pages.

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Writing a dissertation can be emotionally trying as it is. Doing it with a family involves a never-ending quest for balance in which I found myself falling increasingly short of my ideal during the final stages of writing and revision. Lori has been there from the beginning, and has seen me through all of the various shades of insecurity, arrogance, excitement, disinterest, despair, reengagement, and exhaustion that inflect the life of a graduate student. The fact that she is still here through all of that, not to mention the challenges of being separated during research, says all anyone needs to know about her character and love of me. I can only hope that I have and continue to prove an equal partner. I could not have asked for a more well-timed gift than Anna, who in arriving a year after my return from research made the dissertation more important by making it less important. James shared his older sister's impeccable timing by joining the party just in time for the defense, but not before I had finished much needed revisions to Chapter 2. I look forward to the many joyful distractions he and his sister are sure to provide in the coming days, months, and years.

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Note on Anonymity of Informants

In the ethnographic portions of this dissertation, I identify most people using pseudonyms. There are important exceptions to this, including instances in which the person in question is a well-known public figure, is discussed in relation to the public historical record, or explicitly expressed to me that he or she wanted to be identified by name. For religious teachers, who can and frequently do fit the role of public figure, I sometimes have decided to use pseudonyms, and sometimes real names, depending on the context and the wishes of these teachers. Generally, I have not replaced place names with pseudonyms. This is in large part because of the importance of historically specific places to my account, and the difficulty of discussing aspects of these places' importance without identifying them. However, I sometimes have omitted place names altogether if in my own judgment or in that of my informants it is better that a place be kept anonymous. I have, of course, always followed the express wishes of my informants when these wishes were that a name of a person or place not be used in my account.

Note on Language and Orthography

In this dissertation, I identify Acehnese and Indonesian terms and phrases with the abbreviations “Ac.” and “I.” Both languages were used fluently during my fieldwork and archival research by the overwhelming majority of my interlocutors, who often switched back-and-forth between languages mid-sentence. For orthographic purposes, I follow Hoesein’s Djajdiningrat’s *Atjehsch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek* (Djajadiningrat 1934) for Acehnese; for Indonesian I follow the standard orthography used by the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Tim Redaksi Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia 2002). In instances in which an interlocutor switched between both languages during a single string of discourse, I have either marked these passages “Ac. and I.” or identified individual words and phrases using the language to which I deemed they belonged. This suggests one further orthographic difficulty, namely, that some terms are shared between both languages. This is especially the case as Indonesian loan words and Indonesianized spellings and pronunciations of Acehnese terms have found their way into the everyday speech of most Acehnese. In these cases, I have made decisions about how to identify a word or phrase based on the context of its iteration.

Indonesian is a standardized dialect of Malay, a language used widely throughout Islamic Southeast Asia for centuries before the advent of the Indonesian nation. For the sake of simplicity, I have identified Malay terms that I take from the pre-nationalist period as Indonesian. However, I do sometimes refer to “Malay” in my analysis when writing about literature originating in the period before the twentieth century.

The use of Islamic technical terms and Arabic-derived words and phrases pronounced in manners that are clearly meant to highlight their Arabic derivation presented still further orthographic challenges. Generally, I follow standard Indonesian spellings of such terms, both in order to reflect Indonesian pronunciations that may be revealed through these spellings and to suggest that Indonesian usages of such terms involve semantic fields that are not identical with, and in fact often quite distinct from, usages originating in either Arabic-speaking or Islamic technical contexts. For Islamic technical terms, however, I have sometimes included an Arabic equivalent and marked it with an “Ar.” There are two exceptions to my preference for Indonesian orthographic conventions for these terms. When speaking of an Islamic technical term or, for example, the name of a mystical order or some other collective entity in a context that is primarily concerned with translocal Islamic discourses and practices, I have used the Arabic variation. I also have transliterated the names of Southeast Asian figures who wrote in Malay using the Arabic script as one would transliterate these names in Arabic. For all Arabic transliterations, I have followed Hans Wehr’s *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Wehr 1994).

I recognize that the orthographic choices I have made at times involve a significant level of arbitrariness. When this conceals things that are important for the reader’s understanding of the material in question, I have noted this in my analysis.

Note on Research

Most of the research on which this dissertation is based was carried out between October of 2007 and July of 2009. Before conducting this research, however, I had engaged in several years of ethnographic research among Acehnese refugees living in the United States. I also went on two preliminary research trips of three months each, the first in the North Sumatran city of Medan in 2005, and the second in Aceh in 2006. These trips were valuable not only for helping me to establish contacts who would later aid me in my ethnographic research, but also gave me the opportunity to examine at least two archives. These included the complete collection of the North Sumatran daily newspaper *Waspada*, held at the estate of the late Mohammad Said in Medan, and the collection of various sources at the Ali Hasjmy Library and Museum in Banda Aceh (Yayasan Perpustakaan dan Museum Ali Hasjmy).

From October until early December of 2007, I lived in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta (see Map 1). In Jakarta, I conducted archival research at the Indonesian National Archives (Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia) and the Indonesian National Library (Perpustakaan Nasional Republik Indonesia). I then traveled to Banda Aceh (see Maps 1 and 2), where my primary focus until June of 2008 was archival research in the Acehnese Provincial Archive (Arsip Propinsi Aceh). In the Acehnese Provincial Archive I focused my attention on the large collection of the Indonesian Ulama Council for the Special Area of Aceh from the late 1960s until the end of the 1980s. I also studied the smaller collections of some of the regency and sub-regency-level governments on Aceh's west coast, including the collection for the region that

would became the regency of Nagan Raya. In at least one case, these regency and sub-regency-level collections included documents from the Dutch colonial period. Finally, I examined select materials from collections of provincial-level executive and legislative offices.

While in Banda Aceh, I also engaged in some ethnographic research. For example, I spent several days with the Banda Aceh morality police (Wilayatul Hisbah, WH), and even joined them on a “raid” (I., *razia*) in which they issued warnings to motorcyclists who were not dressed by Islamic standards.

In July of 2008, I moved to the regency of Nagan Raya, where I would conduct ethnographic fieldwork until the end of June 2009 (see Map 2). I rented a house in the town of Kota Baru, adjacent to the market center of Jeuram (see Map 3). This location, and the fact that I lived alone, allowed me to travel around the Nagan Raya countryside via motorbike, which I did frequently.

My most basic ethnographic method was to make myself available to those around me. I attended Jeuram’s coffee houses on a daily basis, making new acquaintances. Some of these acquaintances wanted little to do with me. But those who were interested in me and my research tended to involve themselves in my project in one of two ways, both of great value. One group was interested primarily in incorporating me into their networks of social reciprocity. These people invited me to family events, introduced me to relatives, and sought me out on later occasions for the purposes of keeping up on each other’s business. The other group took themselves to be cultural or historical experts on certain topics. They invited me to a range of places and events related to their expertise: tours of Nagan Raya’s many graves, Qur’ān recitation competitions, Nagan Raya’s beach and mountain retreats, etc.

I took it upon myself to be as actively involved in the social and ritual life of my Nagan Raya neighbors as they would allow. I learned much from the ways in which I was allowed to participate in social and ritual events, as well as in the instances when I was restricted from doing so. In practice this meant attending near daily ritual feasts (Ac., *kandoeri*) held for births, marriages, funerals, major holidays, the opening of fields, the collection of the harvest, etc. A large percentage of my time was spent attending these ritual feasts. Other aspects of local Islamic practice, however, were off limits to me. Except on one occasion, which sparked controversy in my neighborhood in the months following it, I never was allowed to enter a mosque. In Aceh, it is legally required that all people leave the streets during Friday communal prayers, and a similar custom is observed for evening prayers. This made it difficult for me to observe these activities, although for occasions not involving the five daily prayers it was usually not a problem for me to observe activities going on inside mosques as long as I did so from outside the building. Given the open-air quality of nearly all mosques in Nagan Raya, this was not difficult.

Conducting research among women in Nagan Raya was difficult. Speaking with older women, and even conducting interviews with them, generally was not a problem. But spending extended periods of time with women my own age or younger, especially if they were unmarried, quickly raised unsavory suspicions among neighbors. Further, contexts in which men and women socialized together in Nagan Raya were circumscribed. Even when attending the same events, men and women tended to do so in a segregated fashion. Thus, my interactions with women tended to be with older women whom I could use local terms of address to identify as “mother” or “older sister,” and the wives and sisters of male friends, with whom I could only socialize in the presence of their male relatives.

Upon arriving in Nagan Raya, I intended to try to conduct participant-observation at the lessons taught to young students at Islamic boarding schools in the region. This proved impossible. The heads of a few of these schools refused me access to them, a refusal they based on their concerns that I might be an agent of the U.S. government bent on the destruction of Islam. But even those who were least threatened by me, and with whom I came to have warm and trusting relationships, felt that it was inappropriate for me, as a non-Muslim, to join boarders in their lessons. Instead, I was channeled to *majlis taklim* (I.), more general religious studies held for villagers. The way in which I became assimilated to the category of ordinary villagers was, in itself, telling. It suggested both how the teachers at these schools understood the relative level of Islamic knowledge among ordinary villagers, and what they thought was the most appropriate way for me to begin my study of Islam. By attending these lessons, I learned much about the ways in which villagers understood the transmission and usefulness of Islamic knowledge, and knowledge more generally, in the contexts of their daily lives.

Creating records of what were days exhaustingly full of motorbike rides, religious lessons, interviews, ritual feasts, multiple cups of coffee, tours of mosques and graves, and the occasional excursion to a beach or mountain stream proved one of the most difficult challenges of fieldwork. Every evening I sat at my computer for at least an hour and took notes on the day. I tried to take as detailed notes as possible, but even the course of a few minutes has a way testing the limits of memory. Did he say that in Acehnese or Indonesian? How many women attended the feast? What was the name of God used in the recitation? I also traveled with a notebook, which I frequently pulled out in the midst of a discussion, event, or ritual, when this seemed appropriate. Upon beginning to draft this dissertation, I found that some of my most valuable materials were hand-written notes in these notebooks, especially notes that I had

produced in partnership with ethnographic interlocutors, passing the notebook back-and-forth between each other, responding to each other's scribblings and diagrams.

If the problem with note taking is that even in the course of a few minutes details slip from one's memory, the problem with audio recordings is often the way their creation gives rise to an especially contrived and fraught social context. Aware of this, I created three different kinds of audio recordings. The first were recordings of ritual practices, sermons, recitations, and other contexts in which discourse was central. In these contexts, structured by ritual and homiletic forms, my recording usually seemed to have few effects on the event in question. The second type of recording that I made were oral history interviews, which were structured around questions that I asked regarding Nagan Raya's past. I tended to conduct oral history interviews among Nagan Raya's elders, men and women in the sixties and older. The third kind of recording that I made were ethnographic interviews in which I asked interlocutors to discuss topics of interest to my research. These interviews often were sparked by more informal conversations with acquaintances that either they or I felt should be added to the corpus of materials that I was accumulating. I made a point of trying to anchor the questions I asked during ethnographic interviews in concrete instances of speech, ritual, or social practice that I had observed.

I conducted both oral history and ethnographic interviews with local elites, but also made a point of speaking with non-elites as well. Most often, I conducted interviews with someone whose particular combination of characteristics (e.g., age, occupation, gender, genealogy) seemed to have significance for the topic of the interview. In total, I made just over one hundred recordings, split evenly among the three types described above.

Glossary of Foreign Terms, Organizations, and Institutions

adat (I.; Ar. ‘āda)- local customary practice; in classical Islamic jurisprudence often taken as legally binding upon Muslims, but in twentieth and twenty-first century Indonesia widely taken as local practices outside of or in opposition to Islam

agama (I.)- religion

ajal (I.)- the moment of one’s death, determined and known by God before one’s birth

akaj (Ac.; I., *akal*)- reason, rationality, or cleverness

akhirat (I.)- the afterlife, beginning with the period in the grave after one’s death and ending with the eternal period following the day of reckoning

aliran sesat (I.)- “lost streams;” used to refer to groups believed to be heretical

amalan (I.)- good work, often consisting of ritual action

assailaimualaikum-wailaikumsalam (I.)- Arabic greeting, “Peace be upon you-And upon you be peace,” widely taken in Indonesia as an Islamic greeting

auliyā’ (Ar.; I., *wali*)- “friends of God;” usually used in reference to Islamic mystical teachers thought to have the ability to intercede with God on behalf of devotees; often glossed as “saint”

autad (I.; Ar., *autād*)- in Islamic mystical discourses the four “pegs,” individuals that support the *qutub*; together these figures, along with others below them in a mystical hierarchy, are believed by many Islamic mystics to keep the world from falling asunder

budaya (I.)- culture

daerah istimewa (I.)- “special area;” one of Aceh’s four common toponyms, referring primarily to legal changes that gave the province special autonomy beginning in the late 1950s and underpinned by narratives of Aceh’s history as unique in when compared with the Indonesian archipelago’s broader history

daerah modal (I.)- “area of capital;” one of Aceh’s four common toponyms, referring primarily to the financial and other support provided by Acehnese in service to the Indonesian Republic during the national revolution (1945-1949)

dakwah (I.; Ar., *da’wa*)- activities undertaken by Muslims towards other Muslims in an effort to persuade them to live more properly Islamic lives; on extremely rare occasions, *dakwah* can include efforts to convert non-Muslims to Islam

Darul Islam (I.)- “Abode of Islam;” armed rebellion that occurred against the Indonesian Republic in various parts of the archipelago between 1947 and 1962; in Aceh it lasted from 1953 to 1962; Also known as Darul Islam-Tentara Islam Indonesia (Abode of Islam-Indonesian Islamic Army), Negara Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic State), DI, and DI-TI

déah, dayah (Ac.)- buildings erected for the collective recitations of litanies and other mystical practices; also can be used to indicate Islamic boarding schools, especially in recent years; note: the second spelling represents common recent orthographic convention

Dinas Syariat (I.)- the Syariat Department, charged in Aceh since 1999 with the designing and administration of Islamic legal statutes

dōnja (Ac.; I., *dunia*)- the world; in eschatological discourses, the space and time of one’s life before death

èleumèë (Ac.)- knowledge

fana (I.; Ar., *fanā’*)- in Islamic mysticism, the annihilation of an individual human being in mystical communion with God

fatwa (I.; Ar., *fatwā*; plural *fatāwā*)- an Islamic legal opinion

Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (GAM) (I.)- the Free Aceh Movement; from 1976 until 2005 this group struggled for an independent Acehnese nation-state using guerrilla tactics

gereja liar (I.)- “wild churches;” used to denote buildings used as churches without the appropriate legal permits

Habib (I.)- title used to denote a Sayyid; often used as a term of address or as a title in front of a Sayyid’s name

hадис (I.; Ar. *ahādīt*, singular *hadīt*)- reports of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions; used as a source in Islamic jurisprudence

hikayat (I.)- poetic histories written in Malay or Acehnese verse

kandoeri (Ac.; I., *khenduri*)- ritual feasts involving prayers and often the recitation of litanies; these are held in Aceh for a variety of occasions including life passage rituals, major holidays, the opening of fields, harvests, and others; *kandoeri* have been a major site of polemics between Acehnese Muslims about proper Islamic practice

ka'ōj (Ac.; I., *nazar*)- vows made to God, often through the mediation of a powerful mystic; *ka'ōy* usually involve the promise that one will recite certain versus or litanies or sacrifice an animal if a particular wish is granted

kaphé (Ac.; I., *kafir*; Ar., *kāfir*)- a nonbeliever, i.e., a non-Muslim

keistimewaan (I.)- specialness

keramat (I., Ar., *karāma*)- preternatural abilities of people, often Islamic mystics, thought to reveal their closeness with God and purity of heart

khalafiyah (I.)- divisive opinions, often over questions of Islamic ritual or doctrine

khalfah (I., Ar., *kalīfa*)- “deputy;” someone in an Islamic mystical order who has been granted a license to direct the mystical seeking of others

koeboe (Ac.; I., *kubur*)- gravesite

Kristenisasi (I.)- “Christianization;” a reputed effort by Christians to progressively take control of or convert to Christianity the Indonesian archipelago; several influential late-twentieth century Indonesian Islamic intellectuals saw Christianization as an imminent threat to the Indonesian nation

Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (MPU) (I.)- Consultative Council of Religious Scholars; since 1999 the official government body that, in Aceh, has taken over the duties of the provincial Majelis Ulama Indonesia

Majelis Ulama Aceh (MUA) (I.)- Acehnese Council of Religious Scholars; founded in 1966 to fulfill Aceh’s autonomy in religious affairs; the council eventually was merged into the Majelis Ulama Indonesia Daerah Istimewa Aceh

Majelis Ulama Indonesia Daerah Istimewa Aceh (MUI-DISTA) (I.)- Indonesian Council of Religious Scholars for the Special Area of Aceh; branch of the national Indonesian Council of Religious Scholars; created from the Majelis Ulama Aceh; came to be involved in the drafting of Islamic legal statutes in addition to a more general “socialization” (I., *sosialisasi*) of Islamic norms; in 1999 transformed into the Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama

majlis taklim (I.)- public lessons, often for non-religious specialists interested in increasing their religious knowledge

maulid (I.)- the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday in the Islamic month of Rabiul Awal; in Aceh *maulid* is celebrated for a three month period

mengislamkan (I.)- to “make something Islam;” this verb is commonly used to indicate the process of converting a person or a place to Islam or the activity of making a person or place more thoroughly Islamic

meunasah (Ac.)- community house

meuratéb (Ac.)- to recite litanies

Muhammadiyah (I.)- an Islamic social and education organization founded in Yogyakarta, central Java, in 1912; in the Acehnese regency of Nagan Raya, “Muhammadiyah” was commonly used to denote anyone who was critical of any of a number of common village ritual practices (i.e., kandoeri, meuratéb)

nafsu, hawa nafsu (I.)- desire

Naqsyabandi (I.; Ar. Naqshabandī)- an Islamic mystical order

oelèëbalang (Ac.)- hereditary territorial chief

orde baru (I.)- “new order;” period of the dictatorship of Soeharto from 1966 until 1998

pahala (I.)- units of heavenly reward one gains through good works (I., *amalan*)

Persatoean Oelama Seloeroeh Atjeh (POESA) (I.)- All Aceh Religious Scholars Union; prominent Acehnese Islamic reform organization of the late 1930s through the early 1960s; came to be led by the religious teacher and political leader Daud Beureueh

Perti (I.)- Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah; an organization of religious teachers who opposed the dominant strands of Islamic reformism of the twentieth century; widely associated with such teachers outside of the Island of Java; in Aceh most closely associated with the religious teacher Muda Waly

pesantren (I.)- Islamic boarding school

puasa (I.)- a fast, most often the Islamic fast during the month of Ramadan, or the process of fasting

qutub (I.; Ar., *qutb*)- in Islamic mystical discourses, the central “pole” around which a hierarchy of mystical adepts are focused; along with the lesser figures in this mystical hierarchy, the *qutub* is believed by many Islamic mystics to keep the world from falling asunder

Ramadan (I.)- the Islamic fasting month

raja (I)- king; in Aceh, another word commonly used for an *oelèëbalang*

ratéb (Ac.)- religious litany

rezeki (I. and Ac.)- livelihood; blessing; windfall; earnings; often used to refer to legitimately earned or acquired money, knowledge, or children in a manner intended to highlight the joint agency of humans and God

salam-couplet- the Islamic greeting pair *assailaimualaikum-wailaikumsalam*

samadiyah (I.)- litanies recited at funeral feast in order to lessen the suffering of the deceased in the grave

sayyid- descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through his daughter Fatimah and son-in-law ‘Ali; the term is often added as a title in front of a Sayyid’s name

sedekah (I.)- alms; freely given gifts, the giving of which is considered a pious act

serambi Mekkah (I.)- “Mecca’s verandah;” one of Aceh’s four common toponyms, referring primarily to Aceh’s prominent history in the coming of Islam to the archipelago and historical importance as a site of Islamic scholarship and study

seulaweuët (Ac.; I., *selawat*; Ar., *salawāt*)- praises to the Prophet Muhammad

silaturahmi (I.)- friendship

silsilah (I.; Ar., *silsila*)- a chain of names, usually representing the transmission of the esoteric knowledge of an Islamic mystical order, most often traced from student to teacher back to the founding member of the order and often to the Prophet Muhammad; in Indonesia the term is sometimes used in an expanded sense to refer to any similar form of chain of transmission expressed in a genealogical-idiom

sirr (Ar.)- in Islamic mystical discourse a “subtle organ” through which one perceives and responds to mystical experience

surat pengislaman (I.)- certificate of conversion

syariat Islam (I.)- the Islamic path; often used to refer to Islamic law; in Aceh “syariat Islam” is the most common way to refer to the program of Islamic legal reforms that began to be introduced in the province in 1999

Syattariyah (I.; Ar., *Shat̄arīya*)- an Islamic mystical order

syiar Islam (I.)- in Indonesian Islamic revivalist discourses, the positively-valued distinctive characteristics of Islam

tanah rencong (I.)- “land of the Acehnese dagger;” one of Aceh’s four common toponyms, referring primarily to Aceh’s vigorous resistance to colonial powers and, after independence, the Indonesian state

tarekat (I.; Ar., *tarīqa*)- an Islamic mystical order or path

taubat (I.)- repentance

teungku (Ac.)- term used for a religious teacher; *teungku* can be used as a title before the name of such a teacher; also sometimes used as a general title of respect for an Acehnese man

teungku meunasah (Ac.)- religious official in many Acehnese villages who administers to the daily religious needs of villagers, especially life-passage and seasonal rituals

teuku (Ac.)- title for a hereditary territorial chief (*oelèëbalang*)

Thionghoa (I.)- respectful term indicating a person of Chinese ethnicity or a Chinese ethnic object

ulama (I., Ac., and Ar.)- religious teachers; in Indonesian and Acehnese, *ulama* can also be used as a singular, although sometimes the Arabic *alim* is also used

Wilayatul Hisbah, WH (Ar.)- in Aceh, the vice-police charged with enforcing certain legal statutes derived from Islamic law

wujudiyah (I.)- a type of Islamic mystical philosophy; it often has caused controversy between its adherents and their critics

zakat (I. and Ar.)- the Islamic religious tax

ziarah (I., Ar., *ziyāra*)- the ritual or devotional visiting of graves

ziké, dike (Ac., I., *zikir*, Ar., *zíkr*)- “remembrance;” mystical litanies, usually consisting of the repetitive recitation of one or several of the ninety-nine names of God

Introduction

Place, Temporality and Islam in an Indonesian Province

It was well after dusk when I noticed the gathering crowd outside the mosque down the street from my house in Kota Baru, a village in the regency of Nagan Raya in the Indonesian province of Aceh (see Maps 1, 2, and 3). As I made my way to the mosque courtyard to find out what was going on, I discovered that Teungku Hasani, a young and popular traveling preacher from a regency to the south, would be giving a sermon later that evening. It was early in October 2008, just after the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, and this would be the second time in a month that I had heard Teungku Hasani speak.

Upon beginning his sermon, Teungku Hasani worked the crowd as I had seen him do before. He alternated between open admonishment of those present and humorous sequences that aimed simultaneously at ethical edification and comic relief. For a while, he role-played stereotypical villagers, using different accents to mock their moral foibles. Suddenly, he turned to the topic of Acehnese history. Before long, he was employing a bellowing screech that he reserved for moments in which he clearly did not want his audience to miss the forcefulness of his point:

Only a speck of dust, a speck of dust in this universe, at the tip of the island of Sumatra! But however small Aceh is, the world knew Aceh. The world once laughed. Aceh made the Islamic world smile[...] When Islam was strong in Aceh at the moment it was led by Iskandar Muda, the world smiled to look upon Aceh.

This dissertation examines the ways in which Muslims in the Indonesian province of Aceh have engaged local Islamic pasts over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (see Maps 1 and 2). The excerpt from Teungku Hasani’s sermon quoted above is an apt example of one such instance of Acehnese engagement with a local Islamic past, namely, the period of the seventeenth-century Acehnese Sultanate.¹ In his sermon, Teungku Hasani went on to describe a period of moral decay in Aceh that had reached its nadir in the present era, which he depicted as a time in which unmarried members of the opposite sex socialized freely and Acehnese children ignored the needs and wishes of their parents. He exhorted his listeners to return to the ways of the seventeenth-century sultanate, when Islam was “strong” (*I., kuat*) and justice was the norm.

One of the striking aspects of Teungku Hasani’s sermon is the way in which it expressed a call to proper Islamic ethical practice in terms of a local Islamic past. During research in Aceh from 2007 until 2009, I found such framings common. In fact, Acehnese like Teungku Hasani were just as likely to orient themselves towards instances of local Islamic pasts as they were to turn to the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. In order to understand Acehnese engagement with an “Islamic tradition” (Asad 1986), I had to be attuned to historical episodes and periods beyond those of the founding period of Islam. Thus, I argue in this dissertation that orientations to local Islamic pasts are often of central importance to Islamic practice. Further, such local Islamic pasts have been central to the ways in which Islam has mediated the relationship between Acehnese people and the Indonesian nation.

The Pasts of Islam

Talal Asad famously challenged anthropologists of Islam to “begin, as Muslims do, from[...] a discursive tradition[...] that relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur’ān and the

¹ The history of the seventeenth-century sultanate is described in Chapter 1 as part of a broad sketch of Acehnese history.

Hadith” (Asad 1986, 14).² Yet, Asad’s formulation left some ambiguity as to whether approaching Islam as a discursive tradition requires one to begin such an inquiry with the orientations of Islamic practitioners to the prophetic period in which Islam’s founding texts originated. Undeniably, the Islamic discursive tradition relates itself to the Qur’an and the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, and thus the prophetic period. But do the Muslims who engage this tradition always take these texts, and this period, as the exclusive spatial-temporal frame for their Islamic practice?

Orientations among Muslims to the person, words, and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad have been undeniably central to Islamic discourse and practice since the early centuries of Islam. Thus, much scholarship on Islam has made orientations to the Prophetic period central to its analysis. Islamic jurisprudential traditions and other practices that take the life and words of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions to be paradigmatic, and thus the basis for justifying actions in the present, have been especially important (Bowen 1993b; Halevi 2007; Hodgson 1974, I, 315-392; Mahmood 2005; Messick 1993; Metcalf 1993). Further, the vast array of devotional practices oriented to the person of the Prophet Muhammad and his family have been a popular topic of scholarly accounts (Ho 2006; Hodgson 1955; Hoffman 1995; Hoffman-Ladd 1992; Katz 2007; Sila 2001). All of this scholarship suggests the centrality of the prophetic period of history for Muslims engaged in Islamic practice.

The Acehnese whom I studied, however, offer an interesting counterexample. In pursuits ranging from the enforcement of Islamic law to private religious study, Acehnese Muslims often seemed more moved by appeals to local Islamic pasts, for example, narratives of Aceh’s Islamization or invocations of the justice and prosperity of the seventeenth-century Acehnese

² “Hadith” refers to the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions (I., *hadis*; Ar., *ahādīt*; singular, *hadīt*), which are studied by Islamic scholars and ordinary Muslims alike, and are among the most basic sources used in the determination of Islamic jurisprudence.

Sultanate, than they were by Qur’anic verses or examples drawn from prophetic precedent. Although they almost always could, and would, provide justifications for their acts drawn from the example of the Prophet Muhammad’s life and time, it often was a different group of pasts that underpinned the manners in which they engaged in narrative, social, and ritual practices tied to Islam.

Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr has argued that “public piety means more than an active and visible religious practice... it means to position believers in a specific historical context, creating a web of associations and co-occurrences between persons, events, and landscapes” (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007, 534). Precisely which persons, events, and landscapes frame Islamic practice in specific instances is one of the questions that lie at the heart of this dissertation. This work thus joins in scholarship that has explored the varied spatio-temporal paths Muslims take to participate in an Islamic tradition writ large (Florida 1995; Grewal 2006; Ho 2006; Rogozen-Soltar 2012; Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007; Werbner 2003).³ None of this scholarship rejects the idea that the period of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions is a primary frame through which Muslims engage Islamic discourse and practice, something no one with any basic acquaintance of Islam could reasonably do. However, it does suggest that the prophetic period enters into relationships with the present of different Islamic practitioners through varied, and often local, spatial-temporal paths.

Spatial-Temporal Orientations and Spatial-Temporal Frames

³ Such works have examined American Muslim student-travelers in the Middle East (Grewal 2006), Muslim converts in Grenada who use the medieval history of the city to distinguish themselves from Muslims who are Moroccan immigrants (Rogozen-Soltar 2012), a Javanese poet drawing on exclusively Javanese Islamic historical episodes to write “history as prophecy” (Florida 1995), Pakistani laborers in Manchester transforming their urban neighborhoods through recitation practices modeled on the reclaiming of a Pakistani frontier region by a mystical adept (Werbner 1996), and other topics.

At its most basic, then, this dissertation examines the spatial-temporal orientations of Acehnese Muslims to local Islamic pasts. By spatial-temporal orientations, I mean the ways that Muslims engage in narrative, social, and ritual practices in manners that are framed by “co-occurrences between persons, events, and landscapes” drawn from Islamic pasts, presents, and futures (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007, 534). These orientations are simultaneously spatial and temporal because of how they establish relationships between Islamic practitioners and the past in ways that are underpinned by different notions of space and time. They resemble other instances in which the past comes to be recognizable and meaningful through practices of reading signs of the past in the present (Derogatis 2003; Ho 2006; Kelleher 2003; Rogozen-Soltar 2012; Shryock 1997).

How, exactly, do such spatial-temporal orientations manifest in Islamic practice? I argue that Muslims bring constellations of people, events, and places to bear on their Islamic practice through conceptual framings in which and through which such practice is carried out. These spatial-temporal frames serve as interpretive devices through which Muslims place themselves into relationships with the past. They are thus a means through which Muslims situate themselves within what Asad described as a discursive tradition, which “addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present” (Asad 1986, 14).

As suggested in the previous section, the most common spatial-temporal frames examined by scholars of Islamic practice have been those connected to the prophetic period. The words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad have been a particularly important spatial-temporal frame in and through which Islamic practice has been carried out. The Prophet’s words and deeds and the revelations recorded in the Qur’an are the two most basic sources of Islamic

jurisprudence. As such, they have long provided examples for Muslims to emulate as part of legal and ethical practices (Bowen 1993a; Mahmood 2005; Masud, Messick, and Powers 1996; Metcalf 1993). To use a classic example, a Muslim might turn to the words and the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad to seek guidance regarding the division of an inheritance for whom the proper distribution to heirs is unclear. For many Muslims, the jurisprudential frame provided by the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad is not simply legalistic, but deeply emotional and personal, tied to the regulation of one's public and private conduct (Mahmood 2005; Metcalf 1993). Thus, the prophetic period frames the acts of Muslims in a variety of ways.

If the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad provide a spatial-temporal frame for Islamic practice that is thought by Muslims to be applicable in all places and times, other spatial-temporal frames for Islamic practice are more parochial. They remain Islamic frames because the people, places, and events that they bring into relationships are in some way tied to the founding period of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. However, their greatest resonances derive not from the prophetic founding period, but from the ways in which they bring the significance of *local* Islamic pasts into relief.

Two types of spatial-temporal frames that have been central to the orientations of Acehnese Muslims to local Islamic pasts over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries recur at multiple points in this dissertation. The first type is composed of genealogical idioms. The second type is comprised by narratives of Islamization. Both genealogical idioms and narratives of Islamization have provided frames within and through which Acehnese Muslims engage in narrative, social, and ritual practices.⁴ In doing so, they have facilitated processes through which Acehnese Muslims link themselves to local Islamic pasts. Many of the

⁴ These two types of spatial-temporal frames frequently were entwined. Narratives of Islamization could be expressed in genealogical form (Bowen 1989a). Genealogies often were traceable to local periods of Islamization.

genealogies discussed in this dissertation, and all narratives of Islamization, conceptually stretched to the period of the Prophet Muhammad. However, such prophetic origins rarely were their focus. Instead, these genealogies and narratives of Islamization drew attention to local pasts, often within the frame of the Indonesian nation. They thereby linked Acehnese simultaneously to the Indonesian nation and Islamic history.

Genealogy

It should not be surprising that Acehnese Muslims have linked themselves to Islamic pasts via genealogical idioms. Genealogy has long been one of the most important ways Muslims have reckoned the transmission of Islamic knowledge. Thus, for example, reports of the Prophet Muhammad's words and deeds are arranged in chains of transmission (I., *sanad*; Ar., *sanad*), the strength of which Muslims use to determine the relative validity and legal applicability of particular reports. The transmission of esoteric knowledge is similarly recorded in the form of chains linking generations of students and teachers (I., *silsilah*, Ar., *silsila*). Networks of Islamic teachers and their students often relate to each other using genealogical idioms (Dhofier 1999). In many parts of the Islamic world, the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, reckoned through patrilineal genealogies from the Prophet's daughter Fatima and son-in-law Ali, remain key figures in devotional practices tied to the veneration of the Prophet and his family (Ho 2006; Hodgson 1955; Hoffman-Ladd 1992).

Beyond the commonplace status of genealogy as an idiom within the Islamic tradition, there are several characteristics of genealogical forms that have made them ideal conduits for connecting Acehnese Muslims to local Islamic pasts. Many of these characteristics involve the ways that genealogies link people to the past in fashions that allow for creative shifts in spatial and temporal scale.

As a conceptual chain stretching back in time, a genealogy encourages narrators to move back-and-forth along its links, stressing different points of its temporal expanse (Ho 2006; Shryock 1997). In the case of genealogical idioms linking Muslims to the period of the Prophet Muhammad, this has a number of important advantages. Such genealogies remain conceptually linked to the prophetic period of Islamic history. Nonetheless, by sliding up and down such a genealogical chain, Muslims can highlight local links within it. Narratively moving along a genealogical chain in this manner can bring powerful constellations of people, places, and events into relief (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007). Further, the social relationships expressed in genealogical idioms often come to be inscribed on geographic space (Evans-Pritchard 1940; Ho 2006; Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007; Shryock 1997). This can have the effect of tying the memory of people and events to material features of a landscape (e.g., graves, rivers, battlefields). All of this facilitates the development of spatial-temporal orientations to local Islamic pasts expressed in a genealogical idiom.

Many of those whom I studied in the Acehnese regency of Nagan Raya used locally-recognized genealogies to link themselves to a period in Nagan Raya's past when the regency was widely believed to have been Islamicized. These genealogies tied important local figures in the regency to ancestors who had participated in the conversion of Nagan Raya's inhabitants to Islam. Many in the regency described these genealogies to me by drawing attention to objects that dotted the Nagan Raya countryside. These were most commonly graves, but also included points at which key historical figures had defeated Dutch colonial forces, as well as mosques and shelters set aside for the recitation of Islamic litanies. Using narrative and ritual practices that occurred in relation to these objects, those whom I studied connected themselves and Nagan Raya to broader histories of the coming of Islam to the Indonesian archipelago. These histories

ultimately stretched to the period of the Prophet Muhammad, but had as their focal point local episodes in the history of Nagan Raya's Islamization.

Narratives of Islamization

In Aceh, genealogical idioms often went hand-in-hand with narratives of Islamization, the second common spatial-temporal frame described here. Narratives of Islamization recount the process through which the majority of the peoples who inhabit the Indonesian archipelago came to adopt Islam (Bowen 1989a; Drewes 1968; Florida 1995, 150-157, 319-351; Hasymy 1989; Johns 1961, 1995; Laffan 2011).⁵ During the colonial period, Dutch officials became interested in narratives of Islamization in connection with the political and legal administration of the archipelago.⁶ Perhaps most notable in this regard was colonial-era scholarship on local customary practice (I., *adat*). Dutch scholarship on *adat*, especially by the late nineteenth century, cultivated the idea that the vast majority of Indonesia's inhabitants remained enmeshed in local custom, having never undergone a thorough acceptance of Islamic legal norms, social patterns, or ritual practices (Benda 1958; Bowen 2003; Florida 1997; Hurgronje 1906; Lev 1985; van Vollenhoven 1981).

⁵ While there is no consensus on either how this process of conversion occurred or when it did, most scholars take the conversion of the archipelago to have been a process that began by the thirteenth century. However, the date of the beginning of Islamization is highly contested. I use the thirteenth century because it represents the period for which there is significant archeological and historical evidence of an Islamic polity existing in Southeast Asia, namely, the Sultanate of Samudra-Pasai on what is today Aceh's north coast. However, there almost certainly were Muslims traveling in the Indonesian archipelago before this.

⁶ Beginning in the seventeenth century, traders of the Dutch East India Company established bases in various parts of the Indonesian archipelago. These bases were founded as outposts on maritime routes over which the spices of what is today eastern Indonesia were brought westward to Europe. From these initial efforts to control the spice trade, Dutch involvement in the region became heavily entwined with local politics. By 1800 this had resulted in authority over Dutch East India Company outposts being shifted to the Dutch government. The following century saw a series of military campaigns to expand and consolidate Dutch power throughout the archipelago. The colony thus formed was called the Netherlands East Indies, and it was the government of this colony that the Indonesian Revolution successfully overthrew from 1945 to 1949. My decision to limit this discussion of narratives of Islamization to the period of late-Dutch colonialism and its aftermath should not be taken to mean that concern with when and how Islam came to the archipelago only began in the colonial period. While not always framing their narratives in terms of a pan-archipelagic entity, Southeast Asians have long been concerned with Islam's arrival into their region, and narratives of Islamization have long been tied to questions of polity and communal identity.

Note how an implicit narrative of Islam as having originated outside of the archipelago underpinned the idea that Islam had yet to take root in much of Indonesia. Scholarship on *adat* recognized varying degrees to which different peoples and regions of the archipelago had adopted Islam, suggesting Islam's movement from one place to another within the archipelago as well. Colonial officials made administrative policy based on such models of comparative Islamization, for example, codifying family law differently in different parts of the archipelago depending on their understandings of the extent Islam had been adopted in each region (Benda 1958; Lev 1985; von Vollenhoven 1981).

Narratives of Islamization espoused by Dutch officials thus created value-laden geographies of the archipelago.⁷ Some regions, like Aceh, tended to be portrayed as having been Islamicized earlier than others. As a result, these narratives took Islam to have deeper roots in these regions, and to have more thoroughly influenced social life there than in other parts of the archipelago. The people of more recently Islamicized regions, for example the inhabitants of Java (see Map 1), were usually portrayed as being impure in their religious practice, mixing Islam with Hinduism, Buddhism, or indigenous spirit beliefs, as a result of their relatively late adoption of Islam (Laffan 2011, 65-121).⁸ This established hierarchies between different regions of the archipelago based on the relative Islamization of these regions. Further, it did so squarely within the frame of the Dutch East Indies (i.e., the eventual Indonesian nation) through a master narrative of Islamization.

⁷ By value-laden geographies, I mean something akin to the ways in which scholars have found spaces to come to be “imbued with value” as a result of narrative and social practices that “layer together place, value, and time” (Wendland 2012, 110-111). See, among others, Derogatis (2003), Kelleher (2003), and Wendland (2002).

⁸ But see C. Snouck Hurgronje (1906) for a conflicting opinion about Aceh’s relatively more thorough Islamization when compared to Java.

Given the ties of these narratives to Dutch colonial policy, it may come as little surprise that after independence some Indonesian intellectuals began to give narratives of Islamization an explicitly nationalist politics. An influential group of Islamic intellectuals and activists, among them some of newly independent Indonesia's most important public figures, came to see correcting Dutch-propagated distortions in the history of Islam's coming to the archipelago as an act of decolonization (Hasmy 1989). This frequently meant altering Dutch versions of these narratives by stressing Islam's deep-rootedness in Indonesian history and society. Some of the rhetorical moves these intellectuals made to accomplish this end included moving the date of Islam's arrival in the archipelago to the century immediately following the period of the Prophet Muhammad, as well as insisting on an Arabic source, implicitly taken as being closer to Islam's center, for Islam's original entry into the archipelago (Bowen 1989a; Hasmy 1989).⁹

While Islamic intellectuals altered the valences of these narratives of Islamization, many aspects of the narratives remained the same. Most significantly for this discussion, the narrative device of Islam's singular movement through the archipelago from one place to another remained an important feature of them (Bowen 1989a). Thus, the value-laden geographies discussed above were bequeathed to the independent Indonesian nation. Post-colonial narratives of Islamization continued to create hierarchies that placed different regions of Indonesia in unequal relationships with each other, even as they asserted that the peoples of the archipelago as a whole had been Islamicized to a much greater extent than Dutch officials had recognized. Post-colonial narratives of Islamization were organized under the master frame of an Indonesian nation undergoing a positively valued process of progressive Islamization. Most importantly for

⁹ These efforts to recast Dutch narratives of Islamization were not, of course, uncontested. Some Indonesians continued to favor Dutch interpretations by which Islam was taken as a foreign influence, less authentically Indonesian than either *adat* or Hindu and Buddhist traditions that had predated Islam's coming to the archipelago (Ricklefs 2012, 102).

this dissertation, they provided a spatial-temporal frame that highlighted local Islamic pasts associated with the Islamization of the archipelago.

Broadening Studies of Islamic Practice

What are the stakes of examining the relationships Islamic practitioners cultivate to local Islamic pasts? In the remainder of this introduction, I suggest three contributions that the arguments in this dissertation make to the scholarly study of Islam, Indonesian history, and the history of the broader Islamic world. I begin by suggesting that attention to the orientations of Muslims to local Islamic pasts might expand the range of practices scholars can effectively study as Islamic practice.

Much historical and ethnographic scholarship on Islam has taken as a central focus the legal and ethical practices tied to the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. This has been especially true of scholarship focused on Islamic reform movements and practices of ethical self-formation (Bowen 1993b; Deeb 2006; Geertz 1960; Hirschkind 2006; Laffan 2003; Khan 2012; Mahmood 2005; Metcalf 1982, 1993; Noer 1973; Peacock 1978). Such a focus has not been without good reason. As discussed above, the words and the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, drawn from the foundational period of prophetic history, undeniably lies at the heart of much Islamic practice, especially its jurisprudential traditions.

However, such a focus often is tied to a particular analytic emphasis. This emphasis draws attention to the ways in which Islamic practice is a site of contestation for Muslims. Certain ways of performing prayer, for example, are taken as correct or incorrect by different groups of Islamic practitioners, depending on each group's interpretation of Islam's sacred texts. Muslims debate what kinds of contact between members of the opposite sex are considered proper, basing their arguments on the example of the Prophet Muhammad, and so on.

Underpinning such debate in many of these accounts are two attitudes, one to the past, and the other to the future. The first of these attitudes I will call an authenticating relationship to the past; the second, a striving temporality.¹⁰ Authenticating relationships to the past are underpinned by an orientation to the foundational historical period of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, which are read as proof texts used to determine proper belief and practice. Striving temporalities are geared towards the future, and they are underpinned by an ideal of ongoing moral improvement of self or society.

I have no quarrel with studies that examine authenticating orientations to the past or striving temporalities. These are, indeed, important modes in which Muslims engage the Islamic past. This certainly was true of the Acehnese Muslims whom I studied. However, authenticating orientations and striving temporalities often assume a specific, and rather narrow, relationship between Muslims and the Islamic past. Because Islamic practice is taken in these studies to be primarily something over which Muslims debate, the authenticating sources of the prophetic time period take center stage. Muslims may engage local Islamic pasts with great enthusiasm, and even use them to justify their actions in the present, as this dissertation argues. But in disagreements over proper practice, there is no question that the prophetic period trumps all others in providing source texts authorizing or condemning specific acts.¹¹

Thus, I argue that in order to account for the local pasts that frame Islamic practice, one must move beyond an exclusive focus on the arguments of Muslims over what kinds of practices are proper. Such a move has been characteristic of scholarship that has fashioned the most

¹⁰ The resemblance of this terminology to that found in recent work by Lara Deeb and Naveeda Khan is not accidental, although this does not mean that I intend simply to follow their usages (Deeb 2006; Khan 2012).

¹¹ What does remain in question, however, is which of the prophetic sources are valid in a given situation and how these sources are to be interpreted. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this often has been tied to a question of whether or not such an interpretation should be carried out through the mediation of an established school of jurisprudence (I., *mazhab*). Because the established schools of jurisprudence were founded several centuries after the prophetic period, one could argue that those who turn to them turn to a local Islamic pasts.

evocative glimpses of the local Islamic pasts that frame the acts of Muslims (Florida 1995; Grewal 2006; Ho 2006; Ricci 2011; Rogozen-Soltar 2012). These studies have been attuned to the ways in which Muslims argue over what is proper Islamic practice, but they have also emphasized the multifaceted ways that Muslims have cultivated relationships to Islamic pasts in manners that are not simply concerned with authenticating action in the present or ethical striving into the future. Characteristic of this literature is attention to the use of genealogy, literature, ritual, social practices, and other means, besides the jurisprudential, through which Muslims forge links with Islamic pasts.

This dissertation takes its cue from such studies and examines the orientations of Muslims to local Islamic pasts through an expanded group of practices that it takes as Islamic. These include narrative practices such as authoring published histories or reading signs of the past in one's surroundings, social practices such as the recognition of someone's genealogical links to an Islamic historical figure, and ritual practices such as attending religious feasts (Ac., *kandoeri*) or making vows at the graves of powerful Sufis. I do not consider these practices Islamic simply for the sake of expanding the fields in which one can study Islam. Not all narrative, social, and ritual practices carried out by Muslims are Islamic. However, I consider the narrative, social, and ritual practices examined in this dissertation to be Islamic by virtue of the fact that they serve to tie Acehnese Muslims to Islamic pasts, both local and universal.

Aceh and the Indonesian Nation

A second contribution of my account of how Acehnese Muslims have engaged local Islamic pasts rests on the place of this dissertation within popular and scholarly histories of Indonesia and Aceh. At the time of my research, it had been almost sixty-five years since Indonesians declared themselves an independent nation. For more than half of those years, Aceh

had been involved in violent conflicts pitting Acehnese guerrillas against the Indonesian armed forces (Aspinall 2009; Kell 1995; Sjamsuddin 1985; Tiro 1984; van Dijk 1981, 269-339). In that time, Aceh had become synonymous with antagonism to the Indonesian nation. During my research, which occurred a full two to four years after the signing of the most recent peace agreement, I regularly met people in Jakarta, the Indonesian capital, who still assumed that Acehnese guerrillas were at war with the Indonesian government. These same people linked Acehnese antagonism to the Republic with Acehnese devotion to Islam, especially the idea that Acehnese have long sought the status of martyr through death in holy war.

Some astute observers of Acehnese history have recognized that Islam has not always been tied simply to Acehnese armed resistance to the Indonesian Republic. Instead, Islam actually has bound Aceh and Acehnese to the nation in powerful ways. Edward Aspinall, for example, writes a history of Acehnese political movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that takes the categories Islam, Aceh, and Indonesia as primary markers of identity within the province of Aceh (Aspinall 2009). He deftly shows how in different time periods these three markers of identity combined to produce different kinds of political goals and projects: an independent Indonesia, an Indonesian Islamic state, and a nominally secular Acehnese independent nation.

Aspinall's account reflects broader approaches to the history of Islam and nation in studies of twentieth- and twenty-first century Indonesian history. These approaches have taken Islam primarily as a marker of group identity in the context of political struggle over national sovereignty (Anderson 1972; Kahin 2003; Shiraishi 1990). They point to Islam's role in providing "a common bond[...] a sort of in-group symbol" for nationalist sentiments (Kahin

2003, 38), and suggest the importance of Islam for both representational politics and the kinds of national “imagined communities” famously described by Benedict Anderson (Anderson 1991).

Aspects of this dissertation no doubt intersect with these approaches. The spatial-temporal frames and orientations that are described in the chapters that follow clearly help to produce notions of belonging in the Indonesian nation that have been tied to both representational politics and imaginings of Indonesian national communities. Indeed, one of the arguments of this dissertation is that Islam has mediated the relationship between Acehnese people and the Indonesian nation in powerful ways. My primary focus is not the nation, however, but the ways in which Acehnese as Muslims have been oriented to local Islamic pasts. Because local pasts have been refracted through the twentieth-century founding of the Indonesian nation, they have become entangled with it. To argue that Islam is “a sort of in-group symbol” that helps to constitute the identity of Indonesian Muslims in a national imagined community, however, is something altogether different than to say that Indonesian Muslims can be oriented to Islamic pasts that are entwined with the Indonesian nation.

I have drawn from approaches that attend to how participation in Islam has at times facilitated participation in the nation through fostering sensibilities and imaginaries that reflect affinities between certain kinds of Islamic and national practices (Bowen 1993b; Laffan 2003). The politics of representing Islam and nation are no doubt a central part of the story in the pages that follow. However, my primary interest lies in how, through day-to-day narrative, social, and ritual practices, Acehnese Muslims have come to simultaneously participate in local Islamic pasts, Acehnese locality, and the Indonesian nation.

All of this serves as a counter-narrative to the idea that Islam has been linked inextricably to Acehnese political resistance, and to the notion that Aceh has been locked permanently in an

antagonistic relationship with Indonesia. To scholars working on the relationship between Islam and politics elsewhere in Indonesia, it also suggests the utility of examining the spatial-temporal orientations of Muslims to local Islamic histories. The narratives of Islamization discussed in this dissertation cover the entire archipelago. Paying attention to how other Indonesians engage these narratives (or not) could be useful, for example, for reimagining the ways Indonesians have understood the relationship between different regions of the archipelago.

Approaching Islamic Locality

Examining the spatial-temporal orientations of Muslims to pasts besides those of the prophetic period has a third benefit. Such an examination can provide a ground for reconsidering common hierarchies of global and local, as well as center and periphery, in scholarship on the Islamic tradition. Many projects aiming to destabilize these hierarchies have sought to do so by documenting ties between Southeast Asian Muslims and the broader Islamic world (Al-Attas 1966, 1970; Azra 2004a, 2004b; Feener and Laffan 2005; Feener and Sevea 2009; Ho 2004, 2006; Laffan 2003; Reid 1972, 2010; Riddell 1990, 2001, 2005; Roff 2005; van Bruinessen 1989, 1990). I, however, have chosen a different analytic tactic. My research adopts single-sited ethnographic and archival methods. While Aceh's cosmopolitan past regularly recurred in the discourse of my archival and ethnographic interlocutors, very few of those about whom I write in this dissertation had ever left the Indonesian archipelago.

I see my project as a step towards a new kind of anthropology and history of Islamic locality. My focus on how local pasts frame Islamic narrative, social, and ritual practice allows one to see how locally situated Islamic practitioners reconfigure hierarchies of global, local, center, and periphery. Further, it illustrates that Muslims need not be cosmopolitan to effectively reconfigure these hierarchies.

Rather than seek “multiple Islams” (El-Zein 1977; Geertz 1968; Gilsenan 2000), or meditate on the tensions between idealized universal norms and local iterations of practice (Beatty 1999; Bowen 1993b; Geertz 1960), my anthropology and history of Islamic locality takes its cue from my Indonesian interlocutors. These interlocutors contextualized their narrative, social, and ritual practices through reference to Islamic histories of the archipelago. In doing so, they made the local not a type of practice, but a relationship to the Islamic tradition that depended upon shifting configurations of people, places, and pasts.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 of this dissertation, entitled “History, Practices, and People,” introduces the reader to key events and themes of the Acehnese past and offers a description of the regency of Nagan Raya, where I conducted most of my ethnographic fieldwork from 2008 to 2009. The dissertation then moves to two chapters that address how narrative practices in post-colonial Aceh have tended to inscribe Acehnese territory and its people within value-laden geographies underpinned by Aceh’s relationship with Islam and the Indonesian nation. Chapter 2, entitled “Making Aceh Special,” examines two kinds of post-colonial narrative practices. The first kind of narrative practice consists of the writing of histories of Aceh by Indonesian intellectuals beginning in the 1950s. The second involves popular practices of reading signs of the past in the present in ways that invoke and evoke the major narrative themes of the histories developed in the 1950s. Chapter 3, “‘Wild Churches’ and Muslim Converts,” describes interest in Aceh’s southern border among various groups of Acehnese and Indonesian elites in the 1970s. The movement of non-Muslims across the Acehnese border worried these parties, who expressed their concerns in terms of the themes of Acehnese history developed in the 1950s. The expression of these concerns thus reinforced the value-laden geographies established by the narrative themes.

Chapter 4, entitled “Placing Islamic Reform in Context,” begins the second half of the dissertation, which is a historical ethnography of the Acehnese regency of Nagan Raya. Chapter 4 contrasts two ways that Muslims in Nagan Raya conceptually organized different kinds of Islamic practitioners at the time of my field research. The first way was based on the relative adherence of practitioners to locally-recognized standards of reformed practice, while the second was based on practitioners’ genealogical relationships to paradigmatic figures in histories of Nagan Raya’s Islamization. Chapter 5, “Young People Are Seeking their Blessings,” explores how Muslims in Nagan Raya were interested in how their life circumstances placed them in relationship to two nodes of ethical risk and responsibility, namely, “this world” (Ac., *dōnja*; I., *dunia*) and “the hereafter” (I., *akhirat*). I argue that these orientations to the world and the hereafter represented a sort of “contingent” temporality (Bledsoe 2002), one that can be contrasted with the striving ethical models common in much recent literature on Islamic eschatological literature and ethical practice. Chapter 6, “Putting the Habib Seunagan in their Place,” examines how the Habib Seunagan, a group at the center of a mystical complex in Nagan Raya who claim to descend from the Prophet Muhammad, have placed themselves in prestigious histories of the Islamization of Nagan Raya and Indonesia. Key to how they have done so is the way ritual practices at their graves reinforce their narrative and genealogical claims for their thousands of followers.

I began this introduction by describing a sermon of Teungku Hasani, a young and popular traveling preacher from Aceh’s southwest coast. In that sermon, Teungku Hasani inversely linked an alleged decline of morality in Aceh to a moment in Aceh’s Islamic past, the golden age of the Acehnese Sultanate. In fact, in his two-hour sermon, he spent more time discussing

Acehnese history than he did the Qur'an or the life of the Prophet Muhammad. I find this significant. It provides the reader with an opening illustration of the expansive range of spatial-temporal orientations to local Islamic histories through which Acehnese Muslims engaged in Islamic narrative, social, and ritual practices.

Chapter 1

History, Practices, and People: Aceh and Nagan Raya

Aceh is a particularly interesting place to engage in a study of Islam, locality, and the spatial-temporal orientations that frame Islamic practice. Acehnese have had a long engagement with the wider Islamic world and have practiced a range of genres of historical writing and performance. Much daily Islamic practice in the province is full of allusions, both implicit and explicit, to local and global Islamic histories. This is true, for example, of feasts held to commemorate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, the reckoning of genealogical ties to paradigmatic Islamic figures, and visitations to the graves of Sufi adepts.¹² In order to contextualize the narrative, social, and ritual practices that are described in the chapters that follow, this chapter introduces the reader to some of the most important themes of Acehnese history over the past eight centuries. The chapter then turns to a sketch of the Acehnese regency of Nagan Raya, where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork.

The Long and Short (Durée) of Acehnese History

I begin where many of the histories of my archival and ethnographic interlocutors began, with the rise of a series of Islamic kingdoms on the northwestern end of the island of Sumatra, the site of present day Aceh (see Map 1). While some Acehnese historians have suggested that there were Islamic kingdoms established in what is today Aceh as early as the ninth century

¹² I use the adjective “Sufi” to refer to people and things associated with the mystical practices of the Islamic tradition, whether involved in institutionalized mystical orders (I., *tarekat*; Ar., *tarīqa*) or carried out more popularly among Muslims. For three classic introductions to Sufism, see Hodgson (1974, I, 359-364, 392-409; 1974, II, 201-254), Schimmel (1975), and Trimingham (1971).

(Hasmy 1989), the best evidence available, in the form of gravestones, coins, and references in the historical record, indicate the existence of a sultanate on Aceh's north coast, near the site of present day Lhokseumawe, from the thirteenth century (see Map 2) (Alfian 1999; Said 1981, I, 83-130). This sultanate, most commonly referred today as Samudra-Pasai, is mentioned in the travel narratives of both Marco Polo and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (Batuta 1829, 199-202; Polo 1855, 248-251). By the sixteenth century, however, it was the port of Aceh Dar as-Salām, at the site of present-day Banda Aceh (see Map 2), that had become the political center of the region. Indeed, for at least the first half of the seventeenth century, Aceh Dar as-Salām was the preeminent port linking Southeast Asia to Indian Ocean networks of trade (Lombard 1986; Reid 2010; Said 1981, I, 157-376).

Many aspects of this early history of Islamic kingdoms in what is today Aceh could be presented in detail. For the purposes of this sketch, I simply note that by the reign of the Sultan Iskandar Muda (r. 1607-1636), the Sultanate of Aceh Dar as-Salām was a central node in circuits of international trade driven, in part, by the entrance of Portuguese, Dutch, and English traders into the Indian Ocean. The Acehnese Sultanate was one of a succession of maritime polities that dominated trade in Southeast Asia by providing a secure port for economic activity while taking profit generated via this trade in the form of port duties (Lombard 1986; Reid 2010). These profits enriched the sultanate, and both fueled its expansion over much of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula and inspired multiple failed attempts to conquer the sultanate's primary rival in this period, Portuguese-held Malacca (Reid 2010). Dominance of this trade also had other effects. Aceh became a site of literary production, especially religious scholarship and debate. Today the best-known episodes in the history of this scholarship include mid-seventeenth century purges of mystics adhering to a strain of thought termed *wujudiyah* (Al-Attas 1966, 1970). The production

and circulation of scholarship in various branches of Islamic knowledge in seventeenth-century Aceh, however, also had lasting influence within networks of religious scholars in the Indonesian archipelago beyond these well-known clashes (Azra 2004a, 2004b).

By the end of the seventeenth century, other ports elsewhere in Southeast Asia had begun to displace the Acehnese Sultanate in Indian Ocean trade networks (Andaya 1993), yet nominal Acehnese rule over the northwestern tip of Sumatra continued for three more centuries. During this period, the sultanate continued to legitimize the rule of Aceh's powerful local hereditary chiefs (Ac., *oelèëbalang*) by issuing letters of appointment (Hurgronje 1906, 4-15; Siegel 2000, 35-37). These chiefs actually often dominated the sultans and sultanesses of these centuries, playing direct roles in deposing and bringing to power claimants to the throne, roles described in Malay- and Acehnese-language historical literature (Hurgronje 1906, 4-15, 120-151; Iskandar 1958; Siegel 2000, 35-37).¹³ Ironically, this decentralized political arrangement brought Aceh to the center of world trade yet again in the early nineteenth century.

Between 1800 and 1830, the territories under the nominal control of the Acehnese Sultanate underwent an economic transformation and became the most lucrative pepper growing area in the world.¹⁴ Hereditary chiefs on Aceh's west coast acted as regional strongmen with little interference from the sultanate. These chiefs oversaw pepper plantations that produced this commodity of central importance in international markets. The chiefs traded primarily with United States shippers, nearly all from Salem, Massachusetts, who had developed special ocean vessels capable of anchoring in the narrow shoals off Aceh's west coast (Gould 1956; Putnam

¹³ Mention of sultanesses is not an instance of anachronistic political correctness. From 1641 until 1699 the Acehnese Sultanate was ruled by four successive female sultans. The rise to power of these sultanesses was, itself, the result of the great influence of hereditary chiefs and of infighting among them. See Said (1981, 377-423). At the time of my fieldwork, these sultanesses, along with the female admiral Malahayati, were important rhetorical figures in debates about the proper role of women in Acehnese society.

¹⁴ Reid notes that by the 1820s Aceh was producing over half of the world's pepper (Reid 1969, 7).

1922; Reid 1969, 6-17). The chiefs who owned the plantations grew rich, and some of this wealth trickled down to Acehnese who worked on the plantations or were involved in the client networks of these chiefs (Drewes 1980). The sultanate itself, however, was cut out of this trade, as it was not carried out in the sultan's port.

Ironically, this trade, dominated not by the sultan but by hereditary chiefs, helped to protect the sultanate from Dutch colonial invasion until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. When a war broke out over control of the pepper trade, pitting Sultan Jauhar al-Alam Shah (r. 1795-1823) against one of the main pepper-growing hereditary chiefs of the west coast, British officials, heavily invested in trade between Aceh and the British-controlled island of Penang, threw support behind the sultan. Both parties signed an 1819 treaty that established a defensive alliance between the Acehnese Sultanate and Great Britain. Even after the 1824 Treaty of London effectively restricted Britain's territorial claims in Southeast Asia to the Malay peninsula, and the Netherlands' to the Indonesian archipelago, the 1819 treaty between Great Britain and the sultanate continued to prevent the Netherlands from claiming a right of sovereignty over independent Aceh. Only in 1871, when British officials legally altered Great Britain's relationship with the Acehnese sultanate so as to make clear that they believed they had no obligations to defend Aceh militarily, did Aceh become an open target of the last wave of Dutch colonial expansion in the archipelago (Reid 1969, 6-78).¹⁵

When the Dutch finally moved decisively to incorporate Aceh into their colonial holdings, they did so by attacking the sultanate in 1873. This initial assault on the sultan's capital in what is today Banda Aceh, however, was routed by the sultan's forces in short order. The attack precipitated three decades of guerrilla conflict, in what was to become one of the

¹⁵ This is a grossly oversimplified account of seven decades of diplomatic, economic, military, and political maneuvering on the part of Acehnese, British and Dutch officials. For what remains the most comprehensive account of these events, see Reid (1969).

costliest and deadliest wars of Dutch colonialism. James Siegel estimates that a total of 12,500 Dutch soldiers, most of them native Indonesians from Java and the Moluccas, lost their lives, while Acehnese deaths may have ranged from 60,000 to 70,000 out of a total population of only 750,000 (Siegel 1979, 229).¹⁶ Acehnese resistance to the Dutch invasion and occupation very quickly came to be articulated in an Islamic idiom. Most famous in this regard were the “histories of the holy war” (I., *hikayat prang sabi*), often deeply esoteric poetry meditating on the glories of the afterlife for Muslims who die fighting nonbelievers (Alfian 1987, 1992; Hasjmy 1976; Hasjmy 1971; Siegel 1979, 229-265). These texts are known to have been recited by Acehnese guerrillas before going into battle (Siegel 1979, 262), and they remained at the time of my research powerful symbols evoking Aceh’s history of pious resistance to colonialism.

As the Dutch-Aceh War dragged on, leadership changed on the Acehnese side. Dutch officials made efforts to bring Acehnese hereditary chiefs under their authority, often through handsome salaries and military support. This policy met with ever variable success as many of these chiefs, perhaps most famously the west coast *oelèëbalang* Teuku Umar, periodically shifted their loyalties between Dutch forces and Acehnese resistance fighters (Reid 1969, 187-283). In 1903, Tuanku Muhammad Daud Shah, the man whom most Acehnese recognized as sultan following the 1874 death of his grandfather, surrendered to Dutch authorities. Previously he led his own resistance, along with a circle of advisors and the support of loyal hereditary chiefs (Reid 1969, 187-282). Religious teachers (I. and Ar., *ulama*) also played important roles in leading guerrillas against Dutch forces, especially as more and more hereditary chiefs came under Dutch sway (Reid 1969, 250-283).¹⁷ This last point is important to developments in Aceh

¹⁶ For a compilation of official totals according to Dutch colonial sources, see Reid (1969, 296).

¹⁷ *Ulama*, which I here gloss as “religious teacher,” is a general term for the Islamically-learned, although the exact nature of its proper referent is not infrequently contested in discourses on Islamic knowledge and authority.

in the post-independence period, discussed below. Specifically, the increasing participation of religious leaders in resisting the Dutch helped to reinforce the perception that the hereditary chiefs as a class were more interested in their own power and wealth than living properly moral lives, and allowed some to claim the *ulama* as the last bastion of uncompromised resistance to the Dutch.

Sporadic resistance to the Dutch occupation continued until 1942, often in the form of suicide attacks by individual Acehnese assailants who burst into densely populated buildings or markets and attempted to kill as many Dutchmen as possible before being killed or arrested themselves (Siegel 2000, 82-83). But from at least the end of the first decade of the twentieth century until the Japanese invasion of the archipelago in 1942, relative peace prevailed, and the Dutch succeeded in establishing the foundations of a bureaucratic colonial state. These foundations included the building of schools, the development of transportation networks, support for agricultural infrastructure projects, and even the organization of government-administered game parks, though given Aceh's reputation for pious and fierce resistance to Dutch rule, one wonders which brave souls might have planned a hunting expedition to the rather remote locations this office oversaw (anonymous 1931; Controleur 1935). This period also saw the immigration of large numbers of Chinese and Chinese-Indonesians, as well as Indonesians from other parts of the archipelago. The former worked as laborers or opened small businesses, while the latter tended to come to Aceh as soldiers, administrators, and school teachers. These two to three decades of relatively peaceful occupation were extremely significant, even though they have often been overlooked by both Acehnese historians and non-Acehnese scholars of Acehnese history (Taylor 2011).

In Arabic the term is plural, the singular being '*alīm* (Ar.). In Indonesian *ulama* or *alim* (I.) may be used as a singular, dual, or plural. I follow the Indonesian usage in this dissertation.

Scholars of Acehnese history have not, though, overlooked the growth of Islamic reform movements, especially in the last decades of the Dutch occupation. The most dominant of these movements in lowland Aceh was the Persatoean Oelama Seloeroeh Atjeh (POESA, All-Aceh Religious Scholars Union), founded in 1939, although branches of the national reformist organization Muhammadiyah had already been founded more than a decade earlier (Feener 2013). Pioneering work by James Siegel and Eric Morris has focused on POESA's uniquely Acehnese expression of Islamic reform and engagement with Acehnese history beginning in the 1930s, especially under the leadership of the charismatic religious teacher Daud Beureueh (Morris 1983; Siegel 2000). Similarly, the anthropologist John Bowen has illustrated how between 1930 and 1960 Islamic reform movements of various kinds instilled practices and sensibilities that were closely tied to the adoption of Indonesian nationalism in this period (Bowen 1991, 1993b). The development of these reformist movements was of central importance to later developments in Acehnese history. One unfortunate effect of these studies, however, has been the circulation of the notion that Aceh has been dominated in the twentieth century by such reformist sensibilities. This dissertation is, in part, meant to challenge that presumption.

By the time of the Japanese invasion of Aceh in February 1942, the extended Dutch-Aceh War and the Dutch occupation had already deeply impacted the region. The sultanate had been dismantled, along with the pepper plantation economy that had seen Aceh rise to economic prominence for a second time in three centuries. A devastating war had left as many as sixty to seventy thousand dead and countless others displaced. A new Dutch colonial state had begun to lay down infrastructure, bringing with it Chinese and Indonesian migrants who in some cases

quite literally built new, relatively urban centers where there had been none before.¹⁸ Local authority came to rest in the hands of hereditary chiefs paid by the Dutch colonial government. Islamic reform movements were busy founding educational and social organizations throughout the region, while engaging in polemics with their rivals who resisted their programs of reform. Thus, on the eve of the Indonesian Revolution, which began with the August 17, 1945 declaration of the Republic of Indonesia by the nationalist leaders Sukarno and Muhammad Hatta, Aceh had already undergone a series of radical transformations.

The period from the Revolution to the early 1960s brought yet a new round of turmoil and violence to Aceh. Most important for this study, this was a period in which Aceh's legal status as a "special area" (I., *daerah istimewa*) was solidified. This status resulted from events in Aceh that included the development of certain standardized narratives of Aceh's history during a guerrilla conflict that pitted Acehnese against each other and the Indonesian Republic.

Just months after the declaration of Indonesian independence by Sukarno and Hatta in August 1945, several key Acehnese public figures, including the charismatic religious teacher Daud Beureueh, declared the support of the Acehnese people for the Revolution. Because Aceh was never reoccupied by the Dutch, it became a staging ground for the smuggling of arms and other revolutionary activities. Perhaps the best-known episode in the history of Aceh's contributions to the Revolution is the story of how Daud Beureueh collected the gold of Acehnese, especially the jewelry of Acehnese women, to purchase two airplanes that smuggled weapons into the archipelago through Aceh during this period.

During the Revolution, Aceh also was among the sites of a relatively wide-reaching social revolution in which local elites who were presumed to have been allied to the Dutch were

¹⁸ For an example, see documents related to the leasing of land to Chinese merchants in the South Aceh commercial town of Blang Pidie (Archive of the Sub-Regency of Blang Pidie, South Aceh (1953-1972), Folder 2, Bundle 1).

attacked in different parts of the archipelago at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946. In Aceh, these attacks involved the killing of hundreds of hereditary chiefs, especially on Aceh's north coast, by a coalition of Islamic youth groups allied to Daud Beureueh and POESA (Reid 1979, 185-217; Sjamsuddin 1985, 24-31; van Dijk 1981, 270-286). The political vacuum these killings helped to create was filled by Daud Beureueh, who declared himself "Military Governor of Aceh, Langkat, and the Surrounding Regions" (van Dijk 1981, 270-286).¹⁹ The killing and expulsion of these north coast hereditary chiefs was accompanied by Islamic reformist-inflected discourse, which evaluated these chiefs not only as suspect for their dealings with the Dutch, but as obstacles to a more properly Islamic Aceh as a result of their own allegedly impure Islamic practice.

Daud Beureueh's rise to political power during the Revolution would come to have significant consequences for subsequent Acehnese history. A series of administrative changes affecting the borders of Indonesian provinces in the final years of the Revolution led to Aceh's absorption into the neighboring province of North Sumatra (van Dijk 1981, 286-293; Sjamsuddin 1985, 34-82). These changes effectively ended Daud Beureueh's reign, for Aceh came to be administered from the city of Medan, just across what is today the Acehnese border (see Map 2). The administrative changes also raised the ire of many Acehnese, both those who supported Beureueh and those who felt that the loss of an independent administrative status for Aceh represented an affront to both the region's long and prestigious history and its contributions to Indonesian independence. This anger was compounded by on-going turmoil over the killing and expelling of hereditary chiefs during the Revolution, and a popular sense that absorption into North Sumatra would result in the political and economic marginalization of Acehnese (van Dijk

¹⁹ "Langkat" is a region today just south of the Acehnese border along Sumatra's east coast (see Map 2). Daud Beureueh claimed authority over Langkat during the period in which he was military governor of Aceh.

1981, 284-286, 293-299). As a result of growing discontent related to these issues, Daud Beureueh declared his support for the Darul Islam-Indonesian Islamic Army (Darul Islam-Tentara Islam Indonesia, DI-TII or Darul Islam, DI), a guerrilla movement that nominally supported the dissolution of the Indonesian Republic and the founding of the Indonesian Islamic State (Negara Islam Indonesia) (Formichi 2012; Saleh 1956; Sjamsuddin 1981; van Dijk 1981).

Darul Islam, both in Aceh and the archipelago at large, merged often vague commitments to an explicitly Islamic political order with concerns over domination by a central government in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, a government often construed by non-Javanese Indonesians as dominated by Javanese political elites. In the case of Aceh, Darul Islam would have long and lasting effects in terms of both the ways that Islam came to mediate the relationship between Acehnese and the Indonesian state, and broader questions of Acehnese autonomy.

Darul Islam came to follow a pattern that had no doubt become familiar to many Acehnese over seven decades of Dutch occupation, namely, that of regular but sporadic guerrilla war and military stalemate. After initial successes in taking over some of Aceh's urban centers in 1953, Darul Islam guerrillas quickly were beaten back to Aceh's rural interior by the Indonesian armed forces. From there they continued to launch raids, but, despite planning political arrangements predicated on their eventual victory, Darul Islam in Aceh never moved beyond the short-lived victories of 1953 (Gelanggang 1956; Sjamsuddin 1985, 83-161, 197-253; van Dijk, 306-330) The Indonesian central government adopted a strategy of treating pockets of Darul Islam guerrillas in different parts of the archipelago (i.e., Aceh, West Java, Central Java, South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi) as separate “gangs” (I., *gerombolan*), and in Aceh this policy allowed for a unique and consequential end to the conflict beginning in the late 1950s. With the help of the Acehnese intellectual and nationalist leader Ali Hasjmy, who himself had been

arrested at the beginning of Darul Islam because of his connections to youth groups associated with Daud Beureueh's POESA, the cabinet of Indonesian prime minister Ali Sastromidjojo agreed to grant provincial status to Aceh in 1957. Then, in 1959, the cabinet of Prime Minister Djuanda Kartawidjaja agreed to a unique special autonomy arrangement for the province (Hasjmy 1967, 1974; Sjamsuddin 1985, 254-318; van Dijk 1981, 330-336). The new province came to be named the "Special Area of Aceh" (Daerah Istimewa Atjeh).

Aceh's special autonomy, in theory parallel to that of the Special Area of Yogyakarta located on the island of Java, was justified explicitly in terms of Aceh's historical connections to Islam and the nation's debt to the region during the revolution (Bowen 1989a; Hasjmy 1974; Panitia Persiapan Pendirian Universitas Negeri Sjiah Kuala 1961a; Sjamsuddin 1985, 273-294).²⁰ The arrangement guaranteed provincial authorities autonomy in three areas: education, customary practice, and Islam. The new arrangement was successful in getting many Darul Islam guerrillas to come down from the mountains. Daud Beureueh himself eventually surrendered and was allowed to retire to his home in the regency of Pidie in 1962 (Sjamsuddin 1985, 294-310; van Dijk 1981, 336-339). In practice, perhaps because this special autonomy was so closely linked to Aceh's Islamic history, Islam became the central focus of efforts at implementing Aceh's new autonomy. However, only when radical and violent changes in Indonesia as a whole took place in the mid-1960s did these efforts really begin in earnest.

²⁰ The Special Area of Yogyakarta (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta) is a region of central Java with provincial status that has enjoyed political autonomy within Indonesia since 1950. Yogyakarta's special autonomy entails the rule of the territory by the region's sultan, and was awarded partly in recognition of the service of the Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX during the Indonesian Revolution, when he served as the Defense Minister for the nascent Indonesian Republic. Thus, the pairing of a pre-colonial history with service to the nation that was a central aspect of Aceh's claim to special status as it came to be recognized in 1959 had already served as a basis of such a status for Yogyakarta almost a decade earlier. Indeed, as early as 1953, before Darul Islam had broken out, some Indonesians were already championing the idea of recognizing Aceh as a special area modeled on Yogyakarta (Djuruwarta keliling 1953c, 1953d).

In precisely the same period when Aceh was gaining its special autonomy, Indonesian national politics were beginning what, in retrospect, might be identified as a long authoritarian turn. The 1955 elections for delegates to the constitutional assembly, charged with authoring a new and permanent Indonesian constitution, resulted in a legislative body split among numerous and competing parties, and thus unable to fulfill its mandate (Lev 2009, 95-152). In addition to Darul Islam, a second major rebel movement, loosely based on a coalition of Islamic reformist and non-revolutionary socialist parties, broke out between 1957 and 1959 (Lev 2009, 43-60, 153-192). As cabinet after cabinet fell, Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, found himself attempting to balance two major competing entities, the large Indonesian Communist Party and the Indonesian Army. He progressively assumed more and more legislative power himself, pushed in this by both the Communist Party and the army, and disbanded the parliament in 1960, decreeing a return to the 1945 Constitution that concentrated powers in the hands of the president. This period, which he named "guided democracy" (I., *demokrasi terpimpin*) would end in one of the most tragic political bloodbaths of the twentieth century.

Although the details remain unclear, on the evening of September 30, 1965, a small group, apparently from within the Communist Party, assassinated six of Indonesia's top generals in an attempted coup (Anderson and McVey 1971; Cribb 1990; Crouch 1988, 97-157). Whatever the goals of the group that carried out these assassinations, the result was a seizure of power by the Indonesian army and violent purges of anywhere from five hundred thousand to two million suspected leftists and leftist sympathizers. The violence was widespread and grotesque, especially in Central Java, East Java, and the island of Bali (Cribb 1990; Robinson 1995, 235-303). Much of the killing was carried out by Islamic youth groups, especially on Java where the youth wing of the mass organization Nahdlatul Ulama was mobilized through

clandestine ties to military officers (Crouch 1988, 135-157). While the killings in Aceh were not as numerous as they were on Java and Bali, they involved similar kinds of brutality. During my field research, I interviewed a man who claimed to have been wrongly accused of being a Communist. During the violence following the attempted coup in Jakarta, he was hacked across the face and neck with a machete, along with tens of other suspected party members, before being left to die. He survived this ordeal and was reintegrated into his village, in part through the patronage of a local military official. In fact, he was one of two such survivors in the same regency, both of whom had long scars across their cheeks, jaws, and necks attesting to their ordeal. In addition to the legacy of such violence, which continued to haunt Indonesian social and political life well into the twenty-first century, the lasting result of this period was the displacement of Sukarno by the general Soeharto in 1966. This ushered in a political regime that named itself the “New Order” (*I., orde baru*).

The effects of the New Order on Acehnese society were many and complex. Although Aceh had been granted special autonomy in 1959, little was done to implement this autonomy until after the killings of 1965 and 1966. At this point, somewhat ironically, Aceh’s special autonomy began to be administered by New Order bureaucrats at both the national and local levels. While in certain cases this new form of control undoubtedly reflected the interests of some Acehnese in connection with, for example, the implementation of statutes on Islamic taxes and religious courts, it gave the New Order central government an entry point into the daily governance of Acehnese affairs. In particular, a series of bureaucratic institutions, the most prominent and important example being the Acehnese Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Atjeh), was founded in the decades after the 1965 coup attempt.²¹ Those associated with these

²¹ The Acehnese Ulama Council, which became the Indonesian Ulama Council of the Special Area of Aceh (Majelis Ulama Indonesia Daerah Istimewa Aceh) in the 1970s, and then the Consultative Council of Ulama

institutions legitimated many of them in terms of Aceh's special status, and several involved the legislation and regulation of Islam. As R. Michael Feener has shown, they created a legal and bureaucratic infrastructure that melded Aceh's special autonomy with the imperatives of New Order rule. Feener argues convincingly that Aceh's special autonomy thus actually allowed the province to become a sort of New Order "laboratory" in which bureaucratic forms could be developed and tested before being adapted to other parts of the archipelago (Feener 2012; 2013).

Not all in Aceh would find these new bureaucratic forms, or the visions of nation and society that accompanied them, compelling. In 1976, the intellectual and Indonesian exile Hasan Tiro declared Aceh an independent state (Tiro 1984). The declaration precipitated a new guerrilla movement, the Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM). The rise of the Free Aceh Movement in the late 1970s has been attributed to the voracious extraction of resources, especially oil and natural gas, by the Indonesian central government in this period, and the minimal recompense for such extraction returned to the province and its population (Kell 1995; Sukma 2003, 149-151). Indeed, complaints about resource extraction were featured prominently in the literature of the Free Aceh Movement itself (Tiro 1984). But the movement also highlighted the political and economic importance of the historical sultanate, Aceh's long anti-colonial struggle against the Dutch, and other themes of Acehnese history.

Especially at its inception in the 1970s, a significant portion of the Free Aceh Movement leadership was drawn from networks of former Darul Islam fighters, and throughout its existence the Free Aceh Movement would continue to draw on these networks (Aspinall

(Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama) in 1998, has played an official advisory role to the Acehnese provincial government since its founding in 1965. Beyond this advisory capacity, however, the Council has been involved in the drafting of legislation related to such matters as the religious tax (I., *zakat*), the monitoring of orthodoxy in the province, and the "socialization" (I., *sosialisasi*) of government programs. See, for example, Feener (2012; 2013). The Ulama Council played an important role in the controversies discussed in Chapter 2. I describe its history in more detail in that chapter.

2009). Nonetheless, while the Free Aceh Movement's political aims evolved throughout its three decade-long history, the movement remained consistent in its demand for an independent Acehnese nation-state, differentiating it from the Darul Islam rebellion (Aspinall 2009; Kell 1995). While at first relatively small and unknown even within the province, the Free Aceh Movement would become widely popular among Acehnese by the 1990s, especially along Aceh's north and east coasts. This support came in the wake of a brutal counterinsurgency, beginning in 1989, in which human rights violations abounded, the Indonesian army made little distinction between civilians and guerrillas, and military officials systematically attempted to take over Aceh's most lucrative economic sectors. These developments pushed much of Aceh's overwhelmingly rural population to side with the guerrillas.

The end of the New Order and the beginnings of democratic reform in 1998 at first seemed to provide promise for Acehnese hoping for independence or, at least, an end to the by then almost decade-long counterinsurgency. Indeed, military operations stopped for a time. After a historic referendum vote for independence in East Timor, Acehnese support for a similar referendum for Aceh burgeoned, culminating in a large demonstration in which, supporters claimed, anywhere from five hundred thousand to two million people descended on the provincial capital of Banda Aceh in November of 1999 (Aspinall 2009, 129-134). But despite an initial positive reaction from Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid, the idea of independence was squashed by political elites in Jakarta. Military operations, according to some even more brutal than those that had come before, were carried out between various short-term peace agreements from 1999 until 2005. It took the devastating December 26, 2004 earthquake and tsunami to finally bring about an end to this conflict.

If almost three decades of conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian army had claimed between twelve and twenty thousand lives, the earthquake and tsunami exceeded this total by at least a multiple of seven in the span of just an hour, killing more than one hundred forty thousand people (Aspinall 2009, 2, 221). The tsunami thus has come to be a major event in common narratives of Acehnese history, in fact, even serving as a protagonist in some historical narratives. The tsunami was almost immediately incorporated into narratives of Acehnese suffering, caused previously as a result of war, and now by natural disaster. These narratives often were tied to notions of Aceh's special relationship with Islam, sometimes through describing the tsunami as a trial from God, and sometimes through interpreting it as a divine punishment and warning to Acehnese as a result of their alleged moral decline and the conduct of the on-going war.

Aceh's relationship to Islam was also invoked in narratives of the tsunami by identifying the disaster as a bittersweet divine gift, one that brought international pressure to bear on a peace process that eventually ended the conflict in August of 2005, eight months after the devastating waves crashed on Aceh's shores.²² The implementation of this peace process has been, at the time of this writing, remarkably successful. There have been moments of political tension and violence, and armed and organized crime tied to networks of military and former guerrillas on Aceh's north and east coast remains a problem (World Bank 2008a, 2008b; World Bank/DSF 2007). But there has been no resumption of open hostilities, and the Free Aceh Movement has successfully transformed itself into a local and electorally successful political party, although much work remains in transforming Acehnese political culture into a more thoroughly democratic entity.

²² Edward Aspinall points out that notwithstanding the important role of the tsunami, significant steps towards peace already had been taken in the months before the disaster. See Aspinall (2009, 220-236).

Aside from the obvious changes in the political and military status quo, perhaps the greatest transformations since the signing of the 2005 peace accords have involved the development of a series of religious bureaucracies in the province. These received their legal mandate from a new round of religious autonomy that began with legislation at the national level in 1999 after the fall of Soeharto. Not unlike the legal autonomy promised Acehnese as a means to end Darul Islam in the late 1950s, these legal changes were in part an attempt to appease guerrillas and their supporters through the promise of a fuller implementation of Islamic law in the province.

There were many ironies involved in these legal reforms. Primary among them was the fact that the 1999 legislation promised very little that had not been promised in the earlier legal autonomy of the late 1950s, and that the Free Aceh Movement never demanded the implementation of Islamic law, but rather an independent Acehnese state. Still, since the end of the conflict, the implementation of Islamic law has become an increasingly popular cause among a large number of Acehnese, at least in the abstract.²³ Even more importantly, it has resulted in the development of a new and expanding layer of religious bureaucracy that, while substantively changing little about the ways in which Islamic law has been legislated and juried in Aceh since the 1950s, has made the enforcement of Islamic law a central and highly visible feature of Acehnese legal and public life (Feener 2012).

Aceh in 2007-2009

Aceh sits at the northwest tip of the island of Sumatra, the western most point of both the Indonesian archipelago and the modern Indonesian nation (see Map 1). At the time of my research, most of which was carried out between 2007 and 2009, the province had a population

²³ As will become apparent in Chapter 5, this support is complicated by a variety of factors that challenge assertions by those who claim the legal reforms are wildly popular, but also for those who would claim that most Acehnese find the reforms unnecessary and oppressive.

of just over 4.4 million, not quite two percent of Indonesia's total population of just over two hundred thirty-seven million (Baden Pusat Statistik 2013a).²⁴ Geographically, Aceh consists of a flat, and in many places narrow, coastal plain that runs into a highland mountain range, the Bukit Barisan. The majority of the population lived on this plain, especially its north and east coasts, and consisted of Acehnese-language speakers. The province was overwhelmingly rural. If one included all Acehnese cities having regency status (I., *kota madya*), only slightly less than fifteen percent of the province's population could be said to live in relatively large urban areas (approximately six hundred forty thousand people).

Aceh's highlands, its off-shore islands, and parts of its coast also were home to non-Acehnese populations who spoke their own languages. In addition to one or more local languages, nearly everyone in Aceh spoke the national language of Indonesian. The majority of Aceh's population was Muslim, with less than two percent of the province's residents adhering to other religions, mostly Indonesians of Chinese descent who lived in Aceh's urban centers and market towns and who were Buddhist, Catholic, or Protestant.

Narrators of Acehnese Pasts

The first part of this dissertation, consisting of Chapters 2 and 3, examines and analyzes Islam and narrative practice in the province of Aceh in the immediate post-colonial period. These chapters focus especially on the period from the 1950s to the 1970s. Driving the events described in this account was a group of provincial elites, many of them associated with the figure of Ali Hasjmy, Aceh's governor from 1957 until 1964, and the holder of several other key government and university posts over his long career. These elites published histories of Aceh beginning in the 1950s that both drew from older historical traditions and forged new narrative content and styles. Working in tandem with these provincial elites was a second group, namely,

²⁴ Nonetheless, this made Aceh the fourteenth most populous of Indonesia's thirty-four provinces.

nationally-known Islamic intellectuals who also authored versions of these histories. These included well-known figures on the national political scene, for example, the prominent intellectual HAMKA, and local intellectuals from outside of Aceh such as the nationalist journalist Mohammad Said. The histories that these intellectuals helped to propagate were central to the creation of value-laden imaginaries of Aceh's place in the Indonesian nation, and they have served as one of the most important spatial-temporal frames through which Acehnese have engaged in narrative, social, and ritual practice in the post-colonial period.

The third group about which I write in the first part of this dissertation is hardly a group at all, except by virtue of not being the provincial or national elites just described. The histories written by the intellectuals described above gained wild popularity in Aceh in the decades after which they began to be published. I offer a range of examples of how these histories have been narrated outside of the works of the elite intellectuals who published some of the most authoritative versions of them. I look at professional drivers, school teachers, religious scholars, anti-Christian activists, journalists, and others. Bringing attention to the wide-range of narrators who have recounted these histories, and the wide-range of contexts in which they have done so, suggests something of the extremely wide resonances of the narratives themselves, and illustrates that these narratives have not simply been the historical projects of twentieth and twenty-first century political and intellectual elites.

Nagan Raya

Nagan Raya, the regency on Aceh's southwest coast where I conducted field research beginning in 2006 and for a year in 2008 and 2009, was among the most rural of Aceh's regencies (see Map 2). The majority of Nagan Raya's 140,000 inhabitants lived on the eastern bank of the Seunagan River in a landscape of gently rising hills between the flat coastal plain and

the Bukit Barisan mountain range (see Map 3) (Badan Pusat Statistik 2013b; Pemerintahan Kabupaten Nagan Raya 2013). This area to the east of the Seunagan River had been the center of population in this region since at least the early twentieth century (Controleur 1935).

Nagan Raya's wide band of rising hills, crossed at several points by natural and human-made streams and irrigation ditches, provided an ideal environment for rice cultivation. This rice cultivation began around the town of Simpang Peut and continued up river to the town of Uleue Jalan, whose name literally means “the end of the road,” in this case the end of the road before one reached the pass to Aceh’s mountain highlands (see Map 3). Halfway along the road between Simpang Peut and Uleue Jalan was the town of Jeuram (see Map 3).

Although the administrative offices of the regency moved to a brand new complex to the south in 2007, Jeuram remained the symbolic center of the Nagan Raya heartland for most of those with whom I spoke in 2008 and 2009. The town was organized around a two-story concrete market place. This market place was enclosed in a square formed by a row of shops facing the market on three sides and the local military post on the fourth. In 2009 the town’s population sat at just around one thousand, but swelled to many times that during the day, as farmers, traders, school children, bureaucrats, denizens of coffee houses, and travelers on their way to or from Meulaboh, the closest relatively urban center (see Map 2), came to do business (see Figure 1). At night, however, once all but a handful of late-night coffee houses had closed, Jeuram’s central market could feel like an abandoned ghost town, with only the occasional motorbike whirling around the central square (see Figure 2).²⁵

²⁵ Jeuram, by all oral accounts I received, was founded in the early twentieth century as a military garrison during Dutch colonialism. During the colonial period it housed a barracks in which lived four battalions of military police (Controleur 1935). Oral histories that I collected indicate that, in addition to these Dutch military and administrative personnel, Jeuram was inhabited at that time by Chinese shop owners and at least one school teacher from Padang, a port several hundred kilometers to Aceh’s south, as well as a handful of other Padang-speaking merchants. The out-going Dutch administrator of Nagan Raya in 1935 also mentioned traders of South Asian descent, although curiously no Chinese shop owners (Controleur 1935).



Figure 1: On market day men gather around a traveling medicine seller, Jeuram, Nagan Raya



Figure 2: Food stall outside of public market at night, Jeuram, Nagan Raya



Figure 3: Rice field in Nigan, Nagan Raya

Directly adjacent to Jeuram were a few relatively urban villages that, in daily conversation, could be considered part of Jeuram itself. I resided, in 2008 and 2009, in a house I rented in one of these adjacent villages, named Kota Baru. From there I was able to travel by motorbike to all of Nagan Raya's villages, while returning most nights to Kota Baru for evening coffees at a neighbor's coffee house, an establishment frequented by those living in Kota Baru and men from the villages located just a few kilometers to Kota Baru's east along a partially-paved road leading to the village of Nigan (see Map 3 and Figure 3). It is probably not a coincidence, then, that I ended up focusing much of my ethnographic research on the people who lived on either end of and along this road between Jeuram and Nigan.

Many families that I knew in Nagan Raya were involved in rice cultivation, as well as other agricultural pursuits, including the development of small-scale palm oil and chocolate groves. To the south and east of Nagan Raya's heavily populated rice-growing region, and

increasingly in the coastal regions to the west of Simpang Peut, were large palm oil plantations, most of which were held by the Socfindo corporation, a formerly government-owned company that was privatized in 2001 and is today controlled by a Belgium-based multi-national corporation. Most who worked on these plantations, some the children and grandchildren of those who worked on them in the late colonial period (Controleur 1935), were of Javanese descent (Java is Indonesia's political and population center; see Map 1). These people had relocated to Aceh, some under the auspicious of government-sponsored transmigration projects, in order to work on the palm plantations, and they maintained a Javanese social and cultural identity. When local mini-buses stopped in the area just to the south of Simpang Peut, the area where the majority of these people lived, one most often heard Javanese, rather than Acehnese or Indonesian, spoken on the street. To the west of the Seunagan river was a landscape almost completely empty of residents (see Map 3). This area had become the site of relatively large-scale industrial coal mining operations owned and run by Chinese companies. This region was also the site of illegal logging and the unauthorized clearing of forest for the purposes of planting small, freely-held palm oil groves.

During my fieldwork, those not involved in rice cultivation or other agricultural-related fields were mostly employed in the government bureaucracy, found work in the service sector, or engaged in petty trade, owning shops or traveling as shipping agents or traveling salesmen. While itinerant traders were overwhelmingly male, the bureaucracy and sedentary trading sector included both men and women, and I knew at least one fairly wealthy female shop owner. Around four or five of Jeuram's shops, including a gold dealership and small grocery, were owned and operated by Chinese Indonesians.²⁶ At least one man from Padang owned a tailoring

²⁶ In the past there seems to have been many more Chinese-Indonesians who owned shops in Jeuram. The oral histories that I collected suggest that, beginning in the 1960s, many from what was once a significantly larger

business.²⁷ Some local business ventures had proven quite successful, and at least one Nagan Raya businessman I knew, an Acehnese, had become very wealthy through investing in large trucks used in the transportation of stones and soils extracted from local river beds for the purposes of making concrete. In addition, a handful of young men had traveled great distances, to seek work, for example, to Malaysia or Jakarta (see Map 1). These men returned to Nagan Raya after several years, in some cases with considerable wealth, but in others with only their experience to show for their troubles.²⁸

In the pre-colonial and colonial periods, Nagan Raya had been ruled by several hereditary chiefs (Ac., *oelèëbalang*; I., *raja*), all with their own territorial domains (Controleur 1935). Unlike on Aceh's north coast, there were very few purges of these chiefs following the 1945 Declaration of Indonesian Independence. However, at the time of the Japanese invasion in 1942,

Chinese population in Jeuram moved to Meulaboh, a nearby coastal town and the closest relatively urban center (see Map 2). The reasons for this move, rarely stated explicitly but implied in the context of historical narratives, included national legal changes in the status of Chinese and Chinese-Indonesians, anti-Chinese violence in Nagan Raya, and the individual desires of Chinese and Chinese-Indonesians to relocate to areas where larger numbers of Chinese lived.

²⁷ Aceh's west coast south of Meulaboh (see Map 2) was home to a large group of Padang-speakers, often referred to in Aceh as *aneu' djamèë* (Ac.), i.e., "children of the guests." The origins of these people were ascribed locally to the Acehnese Sultanate's seventeenth-century conquests of Sumatra's west coast, where Padang-speakers are thought to originate. But it is clear that large numbers of Padang-speaking people were migrating to Aceh in the nineteenth century as traders, religious teachers, and refugees from political and religious unrest (Controleur 1935; Ddajadiningrat 1934, I, 321; Suryadi 2001). This included the father of the religious teacher Muda Waly, who may be the most important figure in lineages of Islamic knowledge espoused in Aceh today, and whom I discuss in more detail below (Waly 1993). In Nagan Raya, however, there were not very many of these *aneu' djamèë*, unlike in the coastal regions elsewhere to the north and south where entire villages were known to be dominated by them. The few Padang-speakers that I knew did not even count themselves as *aneu' djamèë*, claiming that they were very recent migrants to Aceh and, thus, "Padang people" (I., *orang Padang*). In the colonial period there also seems to have been a relatively small number of *aneu' djamèë* in Nagan Raya when compared to other parts of Aceh's west coast (Controleur 1935).

²⁸ One man's story was particularly tragic. He had worked at a lucrative business in Jakarta as a mid-level clerk and manual laborer for many years, meeting his wife, who also happened to be from Nagan Raya, and starting a family. He claimed to have entrusted his savings to a friend upon preparing to return to Nagan Raya. This friend was supposed to transport his savings to him at a later date. The friend never arrived with the savings, and at the time of my fieldwork the man's wife and in-laws were growing increasingly impatient with his lack of resources and unemployment. What he had anticipated as a comfortable return home with a reasonable amount of wealth and some prestige not only had failed to materialize; he had come to experience relative poverty, became the object of regular gossip by neighbors, and was feeling pressure from his wife and in-laws as a result of his lack of ability to support his family.

the chief Pon Ben, who had ruled Nagan Raya's heartland under Dutch colonialism, disappeared.²⁹ For a short period after Indonesian independence, the head of what was then the sub-regency of Seunagan (i.e., roughly what would become the regency of Nagan Raya) was held by a man with no apparent affiliation to any of Nagan Raya's chiefly families. But when this man took the hills to join Darul Islam in 1953, the post fell to Teuku Azman, a descendant of the chiefs of Nagan Raya's mountainous region of Beutong. Teuku Azman ruled the sub-regency until the early 1960s. Upon his resignation, the position passed to a relative of his wife, who was a descendant of the locally prestigious family of the Habib Seunagan, discussed below. During the New Order the position of head of the sub-regency fell into the hands of a series of technocrats unrelated to either Teuku Azman or the Habib Seunagan. By the time of this writing, however, the post has come to be occupied by none other than Teuku Azman's son, who won the first free elections for local officials in Nagan Raya's history, held in 2007, and then reelection in 2012.

Social and Ritual Life in Nagan Raya: *Kandoeri* and *Silaturahmi*

Social and ritual life in Nagan Raya, as in much of the rest of Aceh, revolved around periodic feasts known as *kandoeri* (Ac.; I., *khenduri*).³⁰ These feasts closely resembled the well-documented Javanese *slametan* (I.) (Beatty 1999; Geertz 1960). They came in many shapes and forms, depending on the occasion for which they were held and the particular beliefs and religious sensibilities of those holding and attending them. At the most basic level, *kandoeri* entailed the gathering together of Muslims for the purposes of sharing food and reciting prayers. They were held for yearly cyclical occasions such as the major Islamic holidays, to mark

²⁹ Decades later, in the 1980s, Pon Ben's body was found buried in a part of Meulaboh that had been a Japanese military barracks during the Japanese period.

³⁰ See C. Snouck-Hurgronje (1906) for descriptions of *kandoeri* of various kinds in the late nineteenth century.

seasonal transitions such as the opening of fields or the collection of the harvest, and life passage rituals ranging from birth and death to the buying or building of a house (see Bowen 1993b; Hurgronje 1906).

From the 1930s through the 1960s, *kandoeri* had been a major site of sometimes vociferous disagreement over proper religious practice in Nagan Raya and elsewhere in Aceh (Abdurrahman, Amin, Berueuh, and Indrapuri 1948; Bowen 1993b; Feener 2013). This was in large part because these feasts could be associated with local spirits and, perhaps more importantly, could be construed as what John Bowen identifies in Aceh's Gayo highlands as "transactional" rituals, that is, rituals the completion of which are believed to bring about specific effects (Bowen 1993b). Perhaps most important among these transactional rituals, both in the past and at the time of my fieldwork, were the *samadiyah* litanies recited at funeral *kandoeri*. These litanies were believed by most of those whom I knew in Nagan Raya to lessen the suffering of the deceased during his or her afterlife.³¹ For some Muslims, the idea that the ritual actions of the living could alter the fate of the deceased seemed an affront to the notion that humans are responsible for their earthly actions. Transactional rituals were seen by some in Nagan Raya as underpinned by the idolatrous assumption that ritual could place limitations on God's agency.

As a result, some Muslims in Nagan Raya stopped attending *kandoeri* around the mid-twentieth century. Others began to hold their own *kandoeri*, which did not include the transactional rituals and other elements of more traditional *kandoeri* that they found objectionable. Nonetheless, most feasts held in Nagan Raya during my research entailed transactional prayers and long-standing patterns of *kandoeri* ritual. This was especially the case

³¹ As described in more detail in Chapter 5, Islamic eschatology includes a period following one's death, but before the day of reckoning, in which the deceased are made to suffer for their earthly sins before they are allowed to enter paradise. One site of this suffering is widely believed to be the grave itself.

for funeral feasts, which were by far the most common *kandoeri* held in the regency; the death of a family member entailed an initial week in which a *kandoeri* of some kind was held each night, and then further feasts, usually on the fortieth day after burial, then the forty-fourth, one hundredth, and one thousandth. Given such a rigorous schedule, anyone who wanted to could attend a funeral *kandoeri* somewhere in Nagan Raya almost every night.

Kandoeri were such a central part of social life in Nagan Raya that even those who had moral scruples about attending these feasts found it difficult not to attend. I once saw a verse on the wall of an office in Nagan Raya:

Eat cakes (Ac., *timphan*)
[With] drums (Ac., *rapa'i*) as entertainment
The five daily prayers [we] can take or leave
What is important is *kandoeri*
(This is Nagan, Brother!!!)

The person responsible for the posting of this verse stressed that it was tongue-in-cheek, and was meant in part as a subtle criticism of those who neglected their religious duties (i.e., the five daily prayers) in order to instead attend *kandoeri*. This was not a criticism of *kandoeri* per se.

“*Kandoeri* reflect the social aspect of Nagan Raya life,” he told me. “It is how we have cordial social relations (I., *bersilaturahmi*). And cordial social relations are part of Islam. So *kandoeri* are part of Islam.” To refuse to be present at *kandoeri* meant isolating oneself from the ritual and social life of one’s neighbors. Such anti-social behavior was widely taken to be un-Islamic. As I overheard one bewildered elderly woman tell another while sitting on a minibus leaving Jeuram early one morning, “You know, I hear there are people who do not go to *kandoeri*. I have never met anyone like that!”

Institutional Networks: Habib Seunagan, Naqsyabandi, and Muhammadiyah

While general ritual and social life in Nagan Raya revolved around *kandoeri*, there were three institutional networks of Islamic practitioners widely recognized within the province. The group taken locally as having the deepest historical roots in the region was an extended family of Sayyids whom I will refer to as the Habib Seunagan.³² The Habib Seunagan, whose eponymous ancestor was credited with Islamicizing the Nagan Raya countryside, were at the center of a ritual, mystical, and devotional complex with tens of thousands of followers. Aside from engaging in spiritual guidance and mystical healing, their religious practice focused heavily on periodic *kandoeri* at which prayers were recited and food distributed to the sometimes thousands who attended these feasts. These *kandoeri* were held at the graves of deceased members of the family's patriline. Certain of these deceased family members were widely thought by followers to have the power to mediate between the human and divine realms, and devotees visiting their graves often came with requests in the form of a vow made to the deceased. All of this took place under the institutional auspices of the Syattariyah (I.; Ar., *Shaṭṭāriyah*), an Islamic mystical order (I., *tarekat*; Ar., Ar., *tarīqa*) with a long history in the Indonesian archipelago.³³

The Habib Seunagan were also widely known to have a penchant for practices that most Muslims other than their followers found startlingly unorthodox. Over the years such practices had included beginning the Ramadan fast several days early, allowing the family's devotees to break their fast before sundown, and holding that the Qur'an allowed a man a maximum of nine wives, instead of the four that are almost universally recognized as the limit by Islamic jurists (Bowen 1989b; Snouck Hurgronje 1906, II, 14). In 2006, while conducting preliminary research

³² Sayyids are descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, usually traced via a patriline to the Prophet's daughter Fatimah and son-in-law 'Ali.

³³ On the Syattariyah elsewhere in Indonesia see Fathurahman (2008).

in Meulaboh (see Map 2), it was stories that I heard of a strange family in the hills (i.e., the Habib Seunagan) that sent me to the eastern bank of the Seunagan river for the first time.

If the Habib Seunagan were well known for their large *kandoeri* at the graves of the family's deceased ancestors, the second group of practitioners widely recognized in Nagan Raya was most commonly associated with the religious boarding schools that dotted the Nagan Raya countryside. These were the religious teachers who traced their intellectual lineage to the South Acehnese religious scholar Muda Waly (1917-1961). At their schools, full-time boarders, part-time day students, and adult community members participated in studies of basic subjects such Qur'anic recitation and Arabic grammar, followed by progressively more advanced topics like Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and mysticism.

Many aspects of Islamic practice were shared by the Habib Seunagan and the intellectual descendants of Muda Waly. Both groups, for example, advocated participation in *kandoeri* and engaged in Islamic mysticism. There were also important differences between them, however. Muda Waly's protégées tended to be teachers and members of the Naqsyabandi mystical order, and their mystical practices varied from those of the Habib Seunagan. While both stressed the recitation of litanies, especially the names of God (Ac., *ziké* or *dike*; I., *zikir*, Ar., *zíkr*) and praises to the Prophet Muhammad (Ac., *seulaweuët*; I., *selawat*, Ar., *salawāt*), the Habib Seunagan and their followers tended to use loud and flamboyant recitation styles in large communal recitations. Teachers of the Naqsyabandi, on the other hand, preferred much less flamboyant and often silent recitations at secluded and relatively small retreats. The bookish knowledge of rural Naqsyabandi teachers had allowed them in the past to robustly defend their practices from critics. They were known as scholars of Islamic law who defended *kandoeri* on

principled grounds, but rejected some of the strange practices associated with the Habib Seunagan.

The final institutional group of practitioners recognized widely in Nagan Raya was commonly referred to as “Muhammadiyah,” the name of a Java-based Islamic social and educational organization founded in 1912.³⁴ There had existed an influential branch of this organization in Nagan Raya since the late colonial period. But when most in Nagan Raya used the term Muhammadiyah, they did so to indicate those who, whether affiliated with Muhammadiyah or not, engaged in the active reform of Islamic practices common in the region, especially practices like *kandoeri* that were associated with daily village social and ritual practice.

Those who identified themselves or were identified by others as Muhammadiyah, whether they were official members of the Muhammadiyah organization or not, tended to be inspired by strands of Islamic reformist thought traceable to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Cairo-based thinkers Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Ridā. Both ‘Abduh and Ridā were well-known for their opposition to what they took as local accretions to Islamic practice and a general rationalist ethic tied to a turn towards direct interpretation of scripture (Adams 1968; Hourani 1983). ‘Abduh and Ridā’s thought underpinned the religious activism of POESA, discussed in the sketch of Acehnese history above. Chapter 4 discusses in greater detail what twentieth- and twenty-first-century ‘Abduh-style reform entailed in Nagan Raya. Here I simply note that at the time of my fieldwork, Muhammadiyah-style religiosity seemed to be on the wane. Most active Muhammadiyah members were in their sixties or older. Those who embraced this style of religiosity tended to do so privately, in their own religious practice, while

³⁴ On Muhammadiyah, see Geertz (1960, 121-224), Noer (1973), and Peacock (1992).

participating in circumscribed manners in practices such as *kandoeri* that in the past Muhammadiyah activists had criticized and avoided.

While these three institutional networks of Islamic practitioners were widely recognized in Nagan Raya, and many ordinary Muslims in the regency felt an affiliation with one of them, the majority of Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya engaged in an eclectic style of religious practice. This is not to say that they were undiscerning in their pursuit of Islamic knowledge and participation in Islamic ritual. Many people with whom I spoke criticized what others had said or done, decide not to participate in a particular practice, or begin a new Islamic aesthetic or ritual discipline based on what they took to be consistent with their needs and sense of proper practice. This was consistent with a sensibility that I found throughout Aceh, one that took the pursuit of different forms and kinds of knowledge (Ac. *èleumèë*) to be a primary occupation of daily life. The pursuit of Islamic knowledge, from whatever its source, was perceived by most as an unequivocal good.

Thus, public lessons for elderly villagers held at boarding schools run by Naqsyabandi teachers, for example, sometimes were attended by those who conscientiously took themselves to be Muhammadiyah-style reformers in their sensibilities. Some villagers who had been initiated into the Naqsyabandi mystical order attended *kandoeri* at the graves of the Habib Seunagan, engaging in the demonstrative litanies of the Syattariyah. A noodle stall owner with no apparent affinity to the Naqsyabandi sent his daughter to a Qur'anic school run by a well-known teacher of this affiliation because of the high quality of the classes. And when preachers were invited to speak at village events, most villagers attended, regardless of how they perceived their own affiliations or that of the preacher.

Further, there were other ways in which those in Nagan Raya understood themselves to be organized into different kinds and classes of Islamic practitioners. One of the most common involved claims of genealogical ties to eponymous ancestors who were thought to have played a central role in the history of Nagan Raya's Islamization. The ways in which Muslims in the regency linked themselves genealogically to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization is a central concern of the second half of this dissertation. Here I simply note that these genealogical ties to Nagan Raya's Islamization could both reinforce and run against the grain of the networks of affiliation of the Habib Seunagan, Naqsyabandi, and Muhammadiyah. Further, they were entwined with local politics in vitally important ways. In 2007, for example, it became clear that many in the regency were viewing the first free elections for local officials in Nagan Raya's history through the idiom of genealogies linking candidates to Nagan Raya's Islamization. Most of the serious candidates could claim such a genealogy, and all who could do so highlighted their genealogical pedigree. As mentioned above, the eventual winner, Teuku Zulkarnainy, was the son of the hereditary chief who had ruled the sub-regency of Seunagan from 1953 until the early 1960s. Teuku Zulkarnainy held a clear advantage because he was the descendant of both local hereditary chiefs on his father's side and the Habib Seunagan on his mother's (Clark and Palmer 2008, 38).³⁵

Non-Muslims in Aceh

As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, Aceh's non-Muslim populations have been central in Acehnese historical discourses of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

³⁵ This raises important questions about the ways in which Acehnese, and the people of Nagan Raya in particular, reckon descent. Classic ethnographic treatments of kinship and family life in Aceh, most notably James Siegel's *The Rope of God*, have stressed a pattern of matrifocality through which women come to control rice land and homes, while men frequently leave homesteads for long periods in search of wealth (Siegel 2000). It is important to recognize, however, that these patterns remained formally underpinned by patrilineal patterns of inheritance. As John Bowen has pointed out for Aceh's Gayo highlands, rice land and houses were given as gifts to daughters before death rather than bequeathed as inheritance after death (Bowen 2003; Siegel 2000). Still, most Acehnese continue to recognize different kinds and levels of descent from both patrilineal and matrilineal lines.

In these discourses they have served as rhetorical figures in portrayals of Acehnese cosmopolitanism, in controversies over alleged Christian missionary activities, and in other contexts. But it is important to note that, aside from these portrayals, non-Muslims native to Aceh have long considered themselves part of Acehnese society, even if they sometimes have been ambivalent about doing so given what many non-Muslims have taken as discriminatory attitudes and practices shown towards them in the post-colonial period. Many Chinese Indonesians in Aceh's urban centers spoke Indonesian, dialects of Chinese, and Acehnese relatively fluently.

In Nagan Raya, the non-Muslim population was exceptionally small, in part because the regency had no major urban centers. There were a handful of non-Muslim families who lived in the market towns of Jeuram and Simpang Peut. With the exception of a few bureaucrats and policemen, these consisted of Chinese Indonesians who were Buddhist, Protestant, and Catholic. In Jeuram there were four or five such Chinese-Indonesian households. In nearby Meulaboh, however, there was a sizable Chinese-Indonesian community. Nagan Raya's non-Muslim Chinese Indonesians tended to commute to Meulaboh to engage in worship and other religious activities. As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, however, these activities, especially those of Christians, had to be carried out in a subtle fashion, as local concerns over Christian missionary activities had led to tensions and violence in the past.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced some of the major events and themes of Acehnese history, as well as described the historical, social, and religious context of the regency of Nagan Raya at the time of my research. In the next chapter, the discussion turns to how some Indonesians have narrated elements of the Acehnese past. These narrators have drawn on many of the historical

events and themes discussed above. In doing so, they have developed spatial-temporal frames that have placed Aceh within the broader histories of the Indonesian nation and the Islamization of the Indonesian archipelago. The ways in which some of these spatial-temporal frames have come to inflect popular Acehnese narrative practices, encouraging Acehnese to seek signs of the past in their daily lives, is central to my analysis in later chapters of the spatial-temporal frames through which Acehnese orient their Islamic practice.

Chapter 2

Making Aceh Special: Narrative Practice in Post-Colonial Aceh

Only a speck of dust, a speck of dust in this universe, at the tip of the island of Sumatra! But however small Aceh is, the world knew Aceh. The world once laughed. Aceh made the Islamic world smile[...] When Islam was strong in Aceh at the moment it was led by Iskandar Muda, the world smiled to look upon Aceh.

-Teungku Hasani, Halal-Bi-Halal Sermon, Kota Baru,
Nagan Raya, October 2008

This chapter begins my account of Acehnese engagement with local Islamic pasts by focusing attention on twentieth- and twenty-first-century narrative practice in Aceh. Of particular interest are four narrative strands of Acehnese history that a group of Acehnese elites and influential Indonesian Islamic intellectuals began to author and publish in the 1950s. These narrative strands took the entwined histories of Islam, Aceh, and Indonesia as their objects. The four strands came to serve as powerful spatial-temporal frames through which Acehnese Muslims placed themselves within the conjoined histories of Aceh, Islam, and the Indonesian nation.

While cultivated by provincial and national elites in the 1950s, these narrative strands came to resonate widely among ordinary Acehnese. At the time of my research, the four narrative strands regularly appeared in public discourse. Most importantly for the arguments in this dissertation, they had come to permeate day-to-day practices through which Acehnese read signs of the past in the present on the Acehnese landscape and on the bodies of Acehnese neighbors. Such embodied and emplaced practices of reading the Acehnese past in the present

have been central ways through which Acehnese orient themselves to local Islamic pasts. Without knowledge of these narrative practices, and the four narrative strands associated with them, it would be impossible to fully make sense of, for example, Teungku Hasani's sermon described briefly in the introduction, re-quoted as the epigraph to this chapter.

Four Narrative Strands

Beginning in the 1950s, a group of influential Indonesian elites, including both Acehnese and non-Acehnese, began to author and publish histories of Aceh. These histories focused on four narrative strands that congealed around common toponyms for the province: “Mecca’s verandah” (I., *serambi Mekkah*), “land of the Acehnese dagger” (I., *tanah rencong*), “region of capital” (I., *daerah modal*), and “special area” (I., *daerah istimewa*). By the end of the decade, in a bid to end the Darul Islam rebellion in Aceh, Aceh had been named a “special” (I., *istimewa*) area of the Indonesian nation, with autonomy in the fields of education, customary practice, and religion. These four narratives were mobilized by their authors to support this autonomy and provide evidence for the claim that Aceh was, indeed, special.

More important than Aceh’s legal status, however, is how the four narrative strands cultivated by these intellectuals rhetorically placed Aceh in histories of Islam and the Indonesian nation. These narratives, like the narratives of Islamization described in the Introduction, positioned Aceh in a value-laden geography of the nation. Indeed, one of these four narrative strands marked Aceh as the first place in the archipelago that Islam had taken root. It thereby bestowed prestige on the province and its inhabitants, at least for anyone who had adopted the anti-colonial project of reversing Dutch emphases on the archipelago’s pre-Islamic past. Thus, the four narratives discussed in this chapter placed Aceh squarely within the new Indonesian

nation, but in a manner that stressed Aceh's locality through a comparative frame that used the province's historic relationship with Islam as its primary analytic.

The four narrative strands cultivated by Acehnese elites in the 1950s very quickly resonated among the Acehnese population at large.³⁶ This was not simply because they gave Aceh a prestigious place in the history of the coming of Islam to the archipelago. The Indonesian intellectuals who authored them had drawn on long-standing narrative traditions of wide popularity in the region. These included centuries-old poetic histories as well as performance traditions that drew on the Acehnese past for their subject matter.

Pre-Colonial Historical Narrative

Post-colonial narrative practice in Aceh has drawn heavily upon long-standing pre-colonial Acehnese narrative traditions. Some of these pre-colonial traditions were tied to the sultan's court in Aceh Dar as-Salām. Others had been much less the product and purview of the sultanate, originating and circulating outside of the court. Both court literature and more popular genres of historical narrative continued to inform Acehnese narrative practice following Indonesian independence in 1945. Further, a pattern of cross-resonances between court literature and popular narrative practice continued in a slightly altered form in the post-independence period, as histories published by authors closely aligned to the state influenced and were influenced by more popular practices of history-telling.

Perhaps best known among Aceh's pre-colonial narrative traditions is a genre of historical writing known as *hikayat* (Braginsky 2004, 2006; Drewes 1979, 1980; Iskandar 1958; Siegel 1979), traceable in Aceh to at least the seventeenth century. Often written in verse, *hikayat* tended to be narrative accounts of royal courts and lineages, usually focused on the heroic deeds of the most important members of these courts. In this sense they complimented

³⁶ Although see Bowen (1989a) for a counter-example.

other common genres of Acehnese court literature, such as chronicles of Aceh's successive sultans (Salleh 1992). Until the eighteenth century, Acehnese *hikayat* were written almost exclusively in Malay using Arabic script (Drewes 1979; Feener 2011, 11-16). In this, as well as in much of their subject matter and many of their narrative motifs, they resembled similar instances of court literature being authored elsewhere in Southeast Asia in the same period. They thus, in part, reflected the Acehnese Sultanate's place in a larger Malay-speaking political world (Andaya 2001; Braginsky 2004; Feener 2011, 11-16).

In the eighteenth century, however, an important transformation occurred in this historical genre. Alongside older Malay-language court chronicles, *hikayat* written in Acehnese-language and inscribed in Arabic script began to appear. This shift seems to have been tied to turmoil following the seizure of the Acehnese throne by a Bugis dynasty, resulting in an increasing devolution of political power from the sultanate to regional hereditary chiefs (Ac., *oelèëbalang*) (Feener 2011, 12). The transformation from Malay-language to Acehnese-language *hikayat* accompanied a change in some of this genre's subject matter. The court histories that were the most common topics of the earlier Malay *hikayat* remained important themes in some of these Acehnese-language texts (Drewes 1979). But other events began to be inscribed in this narrative form as well. For example, at least two *hikayat* describing aspects of the nineteenth-century pepper trade survive into the present, one describing moral degradation alleged to have been caused by the trade itself, the other focused on the exploits of a local hereditary chief on Aceh's west coast (Drewes 1980; Hurgronje 1906, II, 120-121).

For whom were these seventeenth through nineteenth-century histories written? It is known that by the time of the Dutch invasion of Aceh in 1873, the audience for *hikayat* literature was quite wide and included a broad cross-section of Acehnese society. As has been shown for

similar genres of Southeast Asian literature, access to these narrative forms has never been limited to the strictly literate. This is in large part because they are narrative forms that depend upon recitation and performance, allowing them to be “read” even by those unable to read their textual inscriptions (Florida 1995, 1-51; Sweeney 1987).³⁷ The eighteenth-century turn to Acehnese-language *hikayat* may have further contributed to the familiarity of non-elite Acehnese to the forms and themes of the *hikayat* tradition (Feener 2011, 13-15). Snouck Hurgronje recorded the recitation of *hikayat* as a popular amusement in the 1890s (Hurgronje 1906, II, 268). Alongside such recitations were traveling troupes of various kinds of performing artists who drew upon this literature in their performances (Hurgronje 1906, II, 216-268). This suggests that the audiences for Malay and Acehnese-language *hikayat* traditions almost certainly included Acehnese outside of immediate court circles, as well as those who themselves could not read the written texts.

Colonial Transformations

The transformations wrought in Aceh during the almost seventy years of colonialism following the initial 1873 Dutch assault on the sultanate affected narrative form and practice in the province in profound ways. Nonetheless, narrators of Acehnese history in this period continued to draw on older traditions even as they transformed them. I will examine three developments in Acehnese narrative practice in this time period: the creation of a new sub-genre of *hikayat* during the Dutch-Aceh War, the historical themes cultivated by a group of influential Islamic reformists in the 1930s, and the transposition of *hikayat* literature into print media forms in the late-colonial period.

Histories of the Holy War

³⁷ See Mir (2010, 91-122) for a similar observation in the South Asian context.

The four-decades-long Dutch-Aceh War served as a catalyst for the elaboration of a genre of *hikayat* that today usually is referred to as the “history of the holy war” (Ac., *hikayat prang sabi*). These texts involved historical and mystical discourses that drew much of their significance from the context of the Dutch invasion and subsequent Acehnese resistance to it. Most of these histories of the holy war revolved around the stories of young men who chose to join a military expedition after experiencing visions of the paradise that awaits Muslims who die as martyrs. These visions described the afterlife using fantastic imagery of light, radiance, and jewels (Siegel 1979, 229-265). Many of these texts devoted less attention to the stories of these young men, than to their elaborate visions of paradise.

Scholarly analyses of the histories of the holy war have ranged from sophisticated treatments of their mystical significance and symbolism, to scholarship linking the intensity of armed Acehnese resistance in this period to these poetic works (Alfian 1987, 1992; Hasjmy 1976; Hasjmy 1976; Siegel 1979, 229-265).³⁸ What I want to draw attention to here is how they constituted texts concerned with pasts and futures. Although almost all of these texts were written during the Dutch-Aceh War, not all of them were set in the war’s immediate context. Instead they aimed to evoke reflection on multiple and entwined temporalities. These temporalities included the pasts and presents in which individual versions were set, and the eschatological futures that underpinned the visions of paradise that were often the central feature of the accounts.

Narrative of Moral Decline

By the late 1930s the Dutch-Aceh War had been decisively settled, and Aceh had been effectively incorporated into the Dutch East Indies. This period saw the founding of the

³⁸ I note here that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive alternatives. I would argue that *hikayat prang sabi* literature was clearly deeply esoteric and tied to the exigencies of war with the Dutch.

Persatoean Oelama Seloeroeh Atjeh (POESA), described briefly in the Introduction. POESA represented an Acehnese organization that embraced the styles of Islamic reformism that were becoming popular in many parts of the archipelago at the time, drawn from the thinking of the Cairo-based scholars Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā (Morris 1983; Siegel 2000). The organization would come to play a major role in post-independence politics, which is discussed in more detail below (Reid 1979, 7-37, 185-217; Sjamsuddin 1985; van Dijk 1981).

Eric Morris and James Siegel have analyzed historical narratives of Aceh's past as they appeared in the POESA journal *Penjoeloeh* beginning in 1939 (Morris 1983, 75-93; Siegel 2000, 98-133). Both of these analysts find a common narrative vision on the pages of *Penjoeloeh*, one that stressed Aceh's glorious past in a manner akin to the way Teungku Hasani did in the epigraph which opened this chapter. Following this glorious past, *Penjoeloeh* authors posited a period of decline, one both evident in and caused by the moral decay of the colonial period.³⁹ Their reason for doing so was to exhort their readers to take up the way of proper Islam, often identified with the forsaking of practices like *kandoeri* (Ac., ritual feasts) that these authors took to be innovations in proper Islamic practice. Along with forsaking these innovations, POESA further tended to stress rational self-discipline as a means to moral control and improvement (Siegel 2000).

The glorious past to which *Penjoeloeh* authors looked back on, however, tended to be expressed in manners that lacked detail. As in Teungku Hasani's quotation above, the period of the Sultan Iskandar Muda loomed large. This was, after all, the Acehnese Sultanate's high-water mark, and many of the best-known *hikayat* focused on this period. More important than historical specificity for *Penjoeloeh* authors, however, was the moral narrative itself, one of

³⁹ Similar themes had appeared in one instance of the histories of the holy war literature half a century before (Siegel 1979, 230-235).

decline that could only be reversed through Islamic renewal and reform. This moral narrative has continued to be employed in Aceh well into the present, as the example with which this dissertation opened, that of Teungku Hasani's sermon, attests. It also clearly informed the historical narratives of the Free Aceh Movement, which transposed it from one of moral decline and renewal to one of nationalist loss and recovery through a guerrilla struggle for an independent Acehnese nation-state.

Hikayat as Printed Prose

In addition to the development of the *hikayat* subgenre devoted to the mystical histories of the holy war and the narrative of moral decline common in POESA literature, a third development in Acehnese narrative practice in the colonial period deserves attention. It entailed the transformation of older *hikayat* literature from recited verse into printed prose. In Kutaradja (present day Banda Aceh), for example, the weekly newspaper *Bentara Negeri* experimented with serialized tales of unnamed kings and their courts. These stories maintained some of the most marked stylistic features of older *hikayat* literature, for example, the use of recurrent phrases such as “maka” to indicate the beginning of lines and other textual units (Ora et Labora 1916). But it presented these tales in a distinctly new form, on the pages of a printed newspaper in daily installments.

It is difficult to know how widely these serializations in *Bentara Negeri* may have been read. The newspaper was affiliated to the Javanese-based Islamic traders union, and early nationalist organization, Sarekat Islam, whose activities frequently were the main focus of *Bentara Negeri*'s news coverage. It was printed in Malay-language and Roman script. As such, the paper probably circulated primarily among self-consciously modern readers educated outside of Aceh or in Malay-language primary schools that had begun to be built in Aceh only in the

previous decade. Still, keeping in mind that the *hikayat* traditions on which such serializations were based were primarily oral and that classic *hikayat* were meant to be recited, one wonders if *Bentara Negeri*'s serializations may have found unintended audiences. Perhaps some were read out loud in Banda Aceh's coffee shops or in private homes. Regardless, given that the styles and episodes of *hikayat* literature had long found themselves circulating in a wide range of performance genres even before colonialism, it should not be surprising that they were adapted to this new form.

All three of these developments in narrative practice would influence Acehnese post-colonial narrative in profound ways. The histories of the holy war would find their way into powerful representations of the Acehnese past that the next few sections of this chapter describe. I already have suggested briefly how POESA's narrative of moral decline has influenced both the religious exhortations of teachers such as Teungku Hasani and political movements like the Free Aceh Movement. The transposing of *hikayat* literature into print media forms represented by the serialization of tales of kings and courts in *Bentara Negeri* represented a step towards the kinds of histories that began to be authored in Aceh in the 1950s.

The 1950s, Islamization, and Historical Narrative

Beginning in the 1950s a powerful new group of histories began to be cultivated and circulated in Aceh. As the anthropologist John Bowen has pointed out, these new histories heavily depended upon specific versions of narratives of the Indonesian archipelago's Islamization (Bowen 1989a). It was these narratives of Islamization that gave the new histories being produced in Aceh many of their specific spatial-temporal resonances. I argue that these resonances placed Aceh firmly within a value-laden geography of the archipelago, marking Aceh

as “special” (I., *istimewa*), but doing so in a manner that brought the Acehnese past within the broader history of the Indonesian nation.

The immediate context of the development of new histories of Aceh was the end of a period of great civil strife in Aceh. As described in the Introduction, within a month of the August 17, 1945 declaration of Indonesian independence in Jakarta, the charismatic religious teacher Daud Beureueh and his All-Aceh Religious Scholars Union (POESA, Persatoean Oelama Seloeroeh Atjeh), along with three other prominent Islamic scholars, had declared Acehnese support for the new Indonesian Republic.⁴⁰ Beginning in December of that year and continuing into the following January, violent clashes erupted in Aceh, known as the Cumbok War. These episodes pitted militias allied to factions supporting Daud Beureueh and POESA against several Acehnese hereditary chiefs (Ac., *oelèëbalang*). The POESA-affiliated youth groups attacking these hereditary chiefs claimed that they did so because the chiefs had collaborated with the Dutch during the colonial period, many of these chiefs administering their territories while on the colonial payroll. Further, these youth groups claimed to attack these chiefs as a result of their allegedly immoral and un-Islamic behavior, which stereotypically consisted of gambling, drinking alcohol, and cruelty towards their subjects. While these clashes remained limited to Aceh’s heavily populated north coast, they allowed Daud Beureueh to consolidate political power, so that by mid-1946 he had taken the title of Military Governor of Aceh, Langkat, and Karoland, and effectively held both civil and military executive authority in the region (Reid 1979, 185-217; van Dijk 1981, 270-286).

Daud Beureueh’s hold on power would be challenged, however, when between 1948 and 1950, as the Revolution came to a close, representatives of the nascent Indonesian Republic’s government engaged in a series of drawings and re-drawings of Aceh’s administrative

⁴⁰ Recall that POESA-affiliated authors had propagated narratives of Aceh’s moral decline in the 1930s.

boundaries. On April 15, 1948, the revolutionary Republic's Interior Ministry incorporated Aceh into the province of North Sumatra, effectively ending Daud Beureueh's claims to civil power by ending Aceh's provincial status. In 1949, Aceh's provincial status was regained when this decision was overturned. However, in 1950 the region again became a part of North Sumatra through a law that sought to simplify national administration by returning to the arrangements of 1948.⁴¹

The loss, regain, and re-loss of Aceh's provincial status sparked controversy within Aceh, and this controversy became linked to other complaints voiced by Acehnese in the early 1950s. Some Acehnese, especially those allied to POESA, leveled accusations against the central government in Jakarta, claiming that it was dominated by groups that were Communist, atheist, or "Hindu-Javanese." These critics decried the new government for actively working against the Islamization of Indonesian law and society while simultaneously thwarting the political and economic aspirations of Indonesians outside the island of Java. Opposing these POESA-allied voices were some of the former hereditary chiefs who, though now severely weakened, were challenging the loss of property and political power they had suffered during the blood-letting of December 1945 and January 1946 (van Dijk 1981, 273-299).

As a result of this turmoil, throughout the early 1950s rumors circulated in Aceh and the rest of North Sumatra about secret meetings of dissatisfied political factions, preparations for rebellion, and preemptive raids by the Indonesian Republic's Military Police Brigade (van Dijk 1981, 270-286; Sjamsuddin 1985, 47-63; Djuruwarta keliling 1953a, 1953b, 1953d). The primary object of speculation by 1953 was whether or not Daud Beureueh, disappointed with his loss of political power following the administrative reorganization of Aceh, would join the Darul Islam rebellion (Darul Islam). This rebellion, centered in West Java but with branches in several

⁴¹ For the text of these laws, see Ismail (1994, 106-112).

other locations in the archipelago, aimed to replace the Indonesian Republic with an Islamic state. On September 20, 1953 Daud Beureueh did, in fact, declare his support for this pan-archipelagic guerrilla movement (van Dijk 1981, 270-286; Sjamsuddin 1985, 47-63). In taking to the hills as a Darul Islam guerrilla, Daud Beureueh was accompanied by a significant following that included those who allied themselves with POESA's religious aims of more thoroughly Islamicizing Acehnese political and social life, as well as civil servants and politicians whose dissatisfactions were more closely tied to the administrative reorganizing of Acehnese territory (Sjamsuddin 1985).

By 1957, Darul Islam in Aceh had been on-going for four years. Several different political administrations, in both the national capital of Jakarta and the North Sumatran capital of Medan, had failed to move the conflict any closer to a viable resolution. Beginning in July of 1956, the sitting cabinet of Indonesian Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo drafted and approved the first of a series of political and legal reforms that went into effect between 1957 and 1959. These reforms were intended to end Darul Islam in Aceh through appealing to those guerrillas who were most concerned with Aceh's loss of provincial status and administrative autonomy. In 1957, Aceh was reestablished as a province. In 1959, this province was named the Special Area of Aceh (Daerah Istimewa Aceh), with unprecedented powers to govern its own affairs in three specific areas: education (I., *pendidikan*), local custom (I., *adat*), and religion (I., *agama*).

It was in the context of this period of civil strife and open violence that new histories of Aceh began to be developed. These histories drew on older Acehnese narrative traditions such as *hikayat* and court chronicles, as well as the recent history of the Indonesian revolution, for their content. John Bowen argues that the new histories were designed to strengthen provincial unity in the face of the violent struggles of the 1940s and 1950s (Bowen 1989a, 681). He draws

attention to one central feature of these histories, which taken together he terms “the Aceh history” (Bowen 1989a). For Bowen, the primary feature of the Aceh history was a narrative of Islamization that depended upon a temporally and spatially continuous process of conversion. This history posited chains of people and places, sometimes at the village level, meant to illustrate a progressive and continuous process of conversion that was alleged to have begun on Aceh’s lowland coast before winding through the rest of the province and, eventually, much of the rest of the archipelago.

Drawing on the work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin, Bowen identifies the narrative of Islamization underpinning the Aceh history as dependent upon a new chronotope, that is, a model of space-time underlying different narrative types (Bakhtin 1981, 84-258). One could identify the Aceh history as a systematic working out of the narratives of Islamization described in the Introduction. Indeed, some of the Acehnese intellectuals who wrote these histories articulated their project explicitly in terms of an anti-colonial politics intended to reverse errors in Dutch colonial understandings of Islam (Bowen 1989a; Hasjmy 1989). This suggests that, in addition to the desire to forge unity in a province bitterly divided after decades of internal civil strife, there were other reasons to author histories of Aceh and its Islamization in this period.

A Partnership of Local and National Elites: Ali Hasjmy, Mohammad Said, and HAMKA

While most authors of the new published versions of Acehnese history were Acehnese, some of the most influential versions of these histories were written by non-Acehnese Indonesians. Mohammad Said’s two-volume *Aceh Sepanjang Abad*, for example, was in its third printing and remained the most popular published work of Acehnese history in Aceh at the time of my research (Said 1981). Said, however, lived in Medan and was of Minangkabau ethnicity, a fact often remarked upon by Acehnese, who tended to take the interest that this historian showed

in Aceh as evidence of Aceh's general historical importance. This section turns to the biographies of three intellectuals who authored the new histories of Aceh described above. Only one of the three described here, Ali Hasjmy, was Acehnese. This is significant for understanding precisely how these new histories were effective in placing Aceh in a value-laden geography of the archipelago underpinned by narratives of Islamization.

Ali Hasjmy

At the time of my research between 2006 and 2009, there was probably no name in Aceh more closely associated with the writing of Acehnese history than that of Ali Hasjmy (1914-1998). An Indonesian Revolutionary as a youth, Hasjmy would serve as Aceh's governor (1957-1964), the rector of the State Islamic Institute in Banda Aceh (1968-1982), and the head of the Acehnese Ulama Council (1982-1998). In addition to penning and re-penning his own versions of Aceh's history over his decades-long career, he may have been the single most important figure in popularizing certain recurring narratives of Acehnese history (Bowen 1989a; Hasjmy 1978; Hasjmy 1976, 1989). Of particular importance for understanding Ali Hasjmy's history writing is the nature of his involvement in the end of the Darul Islam rebellion in Aceh.

At the time Darul Islam began in 1953, Hasjmy was arrested. He had been associated with POESA at various points in his career, serving as an activist and teacher, and was therefore suspected of involvement in the rebellion. Upon his release, he was given a minor government post in Jakarta. As Prime Minister Ali Sastroamidjojo's cabinet began to prepare to grant Aceh provincial status, they came to settle on Hasjmy as the best candidate to be appointed as the new province's governor. They did so because Hasjmy was popular in Aceh and, although he had cooperated with POESA in the past, Hasjmy had a rivalry with Darul Islam's Aceh commander Daud Beureueh (Sjamsuddin 1985, 254-273). Upon becoming governor in 1957, Hasjmy set

about his work with gusto. He joined in negotiations regarding Aceh's special autonomy, arranged for the surrender of Darul Islam leaders who were satisfied with the central government's granting of provincial status and autonomy to Aceh, and vociferously criticized those who remained in the hills (Hasjmy 1967).

As John Bowen suggests, histories of Aceh written and published in the 1950s were closely tied to the context of Darul Islam. For Hasjmy, this manifested itself in at least two ways. Hasjmy fashioned himself a peacemaker. He played upon this image after being appointed governor of Aceh as part of the central government's bid to end Darul Islam. More than one person with whom I spoke about Hasjmy remembered that he frequently repeated the phrase, "I bring water, not fire" (Ac., *Lōn ba iē, kòn apoej*), to describe this role of peacemaker.⁴² Thus, Hasjmy in many ways personified Bowen's observation that the development of histories of Aceh in the 1950s occurred in a context in which their authors sought to provide narratives that stressed unity following the violence and conflict of the previous decade. Further, Aceh's legal status as a "special area" (I., *daerah istimewa*), granted in 1959, depended upon being able to mark the province as different, indeed "special" (I., *istimewa*), in relation to the rest of the archipelago. Only one other provincial-level territory in Indonesia held this legal designation, the Special Area of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta had earned this status as a result of its sultan's service to the Republic during the Indonesian Revolution and in recognition of the Yogyakarta Sultanate's rich history. As will become apparent in the next section, the histories that Hasjmy and other Acehnese published, beginning in the 1950s, tended to stress similar themes,

⁴² Hasjmy saw his role as peacemaker extending to other arenas as well. For example, he famously sought compromise between Islamic reformers critical of Acehnese performing arts traditions involving women and the aficionados of these performances (Archive of the Indonesian Ulama Council for the Special Area of Aceh (1967-1982) held at Arsip Propinsi, Banda Aceh, Folder 201, Bundle 29).

meditating on Aceh's history and service to the nation. Hasjmy and others offered their histories explicitly as justifications for Aceh's special status.

Hasjmy was also a committed Indonesian nationalist. He framed the histories he authored and helped to circulate as part of an anti-colonial project. Indeed, as a young activist, Hasjmy had idolized the Indonesian nationalist leader, and eventual first Indonesian president, Sukarno, composing poetry about him.⁴³ It was, in part, the nationalist resonances of the histories authored by Ali Hasjmy that linked him to non-Acehnese intellectuals.

Mohammad Said

As mentioned above, Mohammad Said was of Minangkabau ethnicity and lived in Medan. Within months of Indonesia's declaration of independence he founded the newspaper *Waspada*, which remained at the time of my research one of Indonesia's largest independently owned newspapers. Said was a nationalist, and enough of an elite on the national scene that he socialized with the likes of Vice-President Muhammad Hatta in Jakarta. In this he clearly was aided by being Minangkabau. Nonetheless, he was primarily an intellectual of note on a local scale, based in North Sumatra, who would become the most well-regarded historian of Aceh among Acehnese.

Said first published his two-volume *Aceh Sepanjang Abad* [Aceh through the centuries] in 1961, but he had been experimenting with writing the history of Aceh as early as the 1950s. While accompanying the vice-president, Muhammad Hatta, on a trip to Aceh in 1953, for example, Said advocated, before Darul Islam had even broken out, that Aceh be granted a special autonomy status parallel to that of Yogyakarta (Djuruwarta keliling 1953c, 1953d).⁴⁴ His

⁴³ At the time of my research, one example of this poetry hung on the wall of the Ali Hasjmy Foundation in Banda Aceh, which houses a large library of works on Acehnese and Islamic history.

reasons for suggesting that such a status be granted rested on the Acehnese Sultanate's long Islamic history and the Acehnese people's service to the Republic during the Revolution.

Mohammad Said

If Mohammad Said was a prominent but relatively local intellectual, HAMKA (1908-1981) was one of Indonesia's most important Islamic intellectuals of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ The author of novels, political works, and influential philosophical treatments of such topics as Islamic mysticism, he rose to prominence as an Islamic reformer in the pre-colonial period and, in the post-colonial period, became involved in Islamic party politics and head the national Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia). His public influence and reputation was in part tied to his indefatigable efforts founding, editing, and writing in a series of periodicals, including *Pedoman Masyarakat*, *Panji Masyarakat*, and *Gema Islam*.

Unlike Mohammad Said, HAMKA was not particularly well-known as a writer of Acehnese history, especially considering the breath of his other interests and the sizable oeuvre which he left his readers. However, he had taken an interest in Aceh throughout his career, attending, for example, the meeting at which POESA was founded in 1939 (anonymous 1939). In 1981 he delivered a paper at a conference convened largely at Ali Hasjmy's initiative, on the topic of the coming of Islam and its spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago (Hasjmy 1989, 219-229). This returns the discussion to Bowen's chronotope of Islamization and its significance for authors such as Said and HAMKA.

⁴⁴ That it was Said who accompanied Hatta on this trip is never made explicit in the newspaper reports on which I draw here. However, Mohammad Said's daughter, Ida Tumengkol, who now oversees her late father's estate in Medan, suggested to me in a personal communication that it is almost certain that it was her father. She noted that in the early days of the paper Said would often undertake such assignments himself, in large part because he enjoyed them. Considering Said's interest in Aceh, his connection to Acehnese elites, and the fact that it was vice-President Hatta's visit that was the occasion for the trip, I find it most likely that it was Said who dispatched the reports.

⁴⁵ "HAMKA" is an acronym for Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. HAMKA was called by this acronym in daily interactions and almost always wrote under it.

What compelled non-Acehnese authors such as Said and HAMKA to write histories of Aceh? One answer to this question clearly lies in their anti-colonial politics, expressed in terms of a recasting of narratives of Islamization. Both men were involved in prominent Islamic reformist circles, HAMKA being at the center of several of these circles at the national level. Interest in the project of reversing the valences of Dutch authored narratives of Islamization, while by no means limited to Islamic reformists, was especially prominent among them. Further, the fact that both HAMKA and Mohammad Said were of Minangkabau ethnicity is significant as well. Javanese constituted approximately half of Indonesia's population and were dominant among Indonesian nationalist leaders, but people of Minangkabau descent had been disproportionately represented among the Indonesian Revolution's elite. They tended to play prominent roles in the Islamic political party Masjumi. I would argue that such intellectuals were drawn to histories of Aceh as a result of the ways in which such histories resonated with anti-colonial sentiment. Mohammad Said, for example, dedicated *Aceh Sepanjang Abad* "to the martyrs who have died resisting aggressors" (I., *kepada para syuhada yang sudah tewas menentang aggressor*) (Said 1980, vi).

There was much in Aceh's history that may have drawn non-Acehnese intellectuals to the writing of Acehnese history. This included the basic chronotope of Islamization, which could be turned to anti-colonial intellectual projects. But there were a range of other episodes and themes of Acehnese history that could be made to resonate with the kinds of nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments of authors such as Mohammad Said and HAMKA.

Four Narrative Strands: Or, How Aceh Got Its Names

In this section, I turn to the four narrative strands of Acehnese history that recurred in the writings of authors like Hasjmy, Said, and HAMKA. Each of these narrative strands drew on a

recognizable collection of historical episodes that shared similar themes. Within each strand, these episodes and themes came to congeal around common toponyms for Aceh: “Mecca’s verandah” (I., *serambi Mekkah*), “land of the Acehnese dagger” (I., *tanah rencong*), “region of capital” (I., *daerah modal*), and “special area” (I., *daerah istimewa*). Some of these toponyms and narrative episodes, for example those associated with the Mecca’s verandah toponym, already had been in common circulation in Aceh during, and probably before, the colonial period (Hurgronje II, 19). Nonetheless, the authors of published histories of Aceh that began to appear in the 1950s narrated these episodes in a new way. Employing narrative devices such as the chronotope of Islamization, these historians wove their histories within the frame of the Indonesian nation. Yet, they did so by stressing Aceh’s unique contributions to Indonesian history. They thus took Aceh to be an integral part of Indonesia, but in a manner that rested upon a value-laden geography of the archipelago in which it was Aceh “specialness” (I., *keistimewaan*) that linked it to the nation.

Mecca’s Verandah

Of the four narrative strands examined here, it was the strand associated with the toponym “Mecca’s verandah” (I., *serambi Mekkah*) that was most directly underpinned by the chronotope of Islamization described by Bowen. Authors writing histories of Aceh as Mecca’s verandah highlighted the importance of Aceh as the site of seminal events in the history of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. Chief among these was the initial “entry” (I., *masuknya*) of Islam into the region. The precise dates and places of this event varied in different accounts, and the question of precisely what was meant by Islam’s entry into the archipelago rarely was considered. Nonetheless, the claim of Acehnese primacy in the history of Islam’s coming to the archipelago has been central in published narratives of Aceh’s Islamic history, at least since the

decade following Indonesian independence (Hasmy 1989; Panitia Penyelenggara Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an 1981).

One of the primary means through which Aceh's place in narratives of Islamization came to be solidified in post-colonial history writing was the convening of a series of conferences on the question of Islam's coming to the Indonesian archipelago. The first, a 1963 conference held in Medan and attended by figures such as HAMKA and the Indonesian Minister of Information Roeslan Abdul Gani, concluded that Islam first arrived in the archipelago somewhere on the coast of Sumatra in the seventh century, and that the first Islamic kingdom in the islands was in Aceh (Hasmy 1989, 6-8). Two later conferences, held in Aceh in 1978 and 1980, were sponsored and attended by a group of intellectuals surrounding Ali Hasjmy. HAMKA submitted a paper at the 1980 conference, and Mohammad Said participated in both. The central findings of these conferences were perhaps best expressed in the title of a work published in Banda Aceh the year after the second conference, "From Here It Spread" (I., *Dari Sini Ia Bersemi*) (Panitia Penyelenggara Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an 1981). Indeed, papers delivered at the 1980 conference stressed the movement of Islam from Aceh to, among other places, Java, Ternate, and "the eastern parts of Indonesia" (Hasmy 1989).⁴⁶ Under Hasjmy's direction, participants in these latter two conferences took the early date for Islam's arrival in the archipelago that had been established at the previous conference as their starting point. Yet, they made Aceh's claims to be the site of this early arrival of Islam even more explicit, eliminating any ambiguity about precisely where on Sumatra's coast this arrival had occurred (Hasmy 1989).

⁴⁶ There was also a focus at the 1980 conference on Aceh's historic relationship with the Malay Peninsula. However, this interest usually was expressed by participants in terms of cultural, political, and economic exchange. In this sense, participants linked Aceh with the Malay Peninsula through the frame of a common Islamic culture and history. However, they rarely included the peninsula in narratives of Islamization, narratives of Islamization instead being focused on the archipelagic nation. See Hasmy (1989a).

The conferences just described focused explicitly on Islam's coming to the archipelago. Another common way historians of Aceh in the post-colonial period have expressed the Mecca's verandah narrative strand has been through genealogies of rulers of successive Islamic kingdoms in the territory that today constitutes the province (Bowen 1989a; Djamil 1968; Hasjmy 1978; Said 1981; Zainuddin 1961). A related genre has involved biographic and novelistic accounts of particular figures within these genealogies that flesh out particularly important links along it, especially the sixteenth century Sultan Iskandar Muda (Hasymy 1976; Zainuddin 1957). The authors of these works often have drawn explicitly on *hikayat* and court chronicles, borrowing both content from these sources and elements of their form (e.g., lists of successive rulers punctuated by these rulers' major accomplishments, themes from the biographies of the most important sultans).

In addition to sultans of Islamic kingdoms, the other key characters that appear in the Mecca's verandah narrative strand are those of Aceh's most famous *ulama* of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries. The origin of the term Mecca's verandah itself is attributed to one of these figures, the seventeenth-century court member Nūr al-Dīn ar-Ranīrī. A south Asian of Hadrami descent, ar-Ranīrī wrote, among other works, a universal history of Aceh entitled *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* that contains the earliest known usage of the term (Riddel 2005, 39; Salleh 1992). Ar-Ranīrī is most famous for his violent condemnation and purging of rival mystics. Ḥamzah af-Faṣūrī, in Indonesia widely taken as a founding figure of Malay literature, is often identified in these accounts as Ar-Ranīrī's flesh-and-blood rival, although recent evidence shows that his life and career occurred a century before Ar-Ranīrī's purges (Feener and Laffan 2005; Laffan 2011, 10-12). Together with the later figure 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, today widely credited in Aceh with resolving tensions resulting from Ar-Ranīrī's purges, Ar-Ranīrī and

Hamzah af-Fansūrī are essential characters in many versions of the Mecca's verandah narrative strand (Azra 2004b; HAMKA 1989; Said 1981; Zainuddin 1957).⁴⁷ Today most local discussions of Islam in Aceh, ranging from published volumes on the educational genealogies of twentieth-century *ulama* to informal chats over coffee about Aceh's morality police, sooner or later reference the great *ulama* of the seventeenth-century sultanate.

The term Mecca's verandah also has come to be associated with Aceh's role as a stopping point for pilgrims and scholars on their way to Mecca in past centuries, a usage recorded by C. Snouck Hurgronje in the last decade of the nineteenth century (Hurgronje 1906, II, 19). Indeed, the imagery of "Mecca's verandah" would seem most appropriate to this historical phenomenon, with Aceh serving as a sort of courtyard for those wishing to travel to Arabia. This theme also was stressed by those who cultivated histories of Aceh as Mecca's verandah beginning in the 1950s, although these authors tended to focus on the movement of Islam eastwards from Aceh to the rest of the archipelago (Hasymy 1989). That in histories of Aceh as Mecca's verandah the general narrative drive has been the eastward movement of Islam from the Indian Ocean to the archipelago was made clear in a conversation I had with a local school teacher in a café one evening. Upon finding out that I was interested in Acehnese history, this man proceeded to use salt shakers and plates to create a map of the Indian Ocean and its littorals in order to dramatize why Aceh is known by the term "Mecca's verandah." After using his fingers to draw the eastward motion of Islam's movement across the Indian Ocean he paused,

⁴⁷ In addition to the accounts cited here by authors participating in the development of the Mecca's verandah narrative strand, there has been a great number of works published on these three figures. See, for example, Al-Attas (1966, 1970), Azra (2004a, 52-86), and Riddel (1990, 2001). The history of Islamic scholars and debate in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Aceh is far more complex and involves webs of educational and familial ties all around the Indian Ocean and Indonesian archipelago. These three figures, to the extent they are the focal points of most histories of these networks and confrontations focused on Aceh, often are made to stand in for multiple other individuals and strands of thought. For a treatment that names and considers some of the other scholars and mystics that most often drop out of both popular and scholarly accounts, see Laffan (2011, 10-22).

looking confused. After a few moments of silence, he mused, “It is more like Indonesia’s verandah, isn’t it? Well, never mind. This is why Aceh is called Mecca’s verandah.”

Histories of Aceh as Mecca’s verandah, thus, have focused on the archipelago’s conversion through the initial coming of Islam to Aceh. While this conversion process begins in some of these accounts as early as the seventh century, it is the seventeenth-century Sultanate of Aceh Darussalam that represents the pinnacle of these developments. In these histories, the Acehnese Sultanate provides the stage on which great *ulama* of the past confront each other, and Islamic rulers create realms that attract visits from scholars and pilgrims from far-flung regions of the Islamic world. Characteristic of much of the writing following in the Mecca’s verandah narrative strand is the following passage, drawn from HAMKA’s paper to the 1980 conference on the coming of Islam to the Indonesian archipelago described above:

Referencing Aceh as “Mecca’s Verandah” is not just something that is fabricated, but a historical reality that cannot be denied[...] If we mention the names of two Acehnese Religious Scholars (I., *Ulama Aceh*), it is the same as 1,000 or 2,000 [ordinary] people[...]. Syaikh Abdurrauf As Singkily was a Great Ulama who lived at the time of the Kingdom of Iskandar Muda[...] in the Seventeenth Christian Century. In the era of the Government of [Iskandar Muda...] Aceh met with greatness in this world and the afterlife (I., *kebesaran dunia dan akhirat*)[...] Aceh was a Maritime Country, full of populations from all of the people of the Islamic World[...]. Aside from Abdurrauf[...] there are also other names that became stars of Knowledge in Aceh (I., *bintang Ilmu Pengetahuan di Aceh*), specifically, two prominent names: Hamzah Fanshuri and Nuruddin Raniri. These two names have come to be repeated very often because of their disagreements in understanding Islamic mysticism (I., *Ilmu Tashawwuf*)[...]. If an Acehnese refers to his or her country as MECCA’s VERANDAH, he or she is not simply arrogant[...] authentic proof is what has caused Aceh[...] to earn the name MECCA’s VERANDAH. (HAMKA 1989, 221, 224-225, 228-229; emphasis in original)

Land of the Acehnese Dagger

While the chronotope of conversion to Islam and the themes of religious study and dispute are central to the works produced by the group of intellectuals examined here, these

authors stressed other themes tied to Aceh's historic place in the global politics and economy of the Indian Ocean world, often in the same works. Along with the sultanate's position as the culminating point in a history of conversion and a stage for the actions of Aceh's famed *ulama*, several of these histories involved the military and economic preeminence of the sultanate (Hasjmy 1978; Said 1981, Zainuddin 1957). These accounts often highlighted the historic role of the sultanate in staving off Portuguese rivals, based in Malacca, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While ultimately failing to take Malacca, seventeenth-century Acehnese forces did manage to keep the Portuguese from the immediate environs of the sultanate's core territory of influence, through military confrontations that became one of the common subjects of court literature of the time (Hurgronje 1906, II, 80-117; Iskandar 1958; Reid 2010; Salleh 1992). These episodes were adapted into the works of authors of Acehnese history, often through giving these episodes an explicit anti-colonial resonance. It was these anti-colonial resonances that were played upon by those authors who wrote in terms of the narrative strand of Aceh as "the land of the Acehnese dagger" (I., *tanah rencong*).

While the sultanate's resistance to the Portuguese almost certainly aimed at the consolidation of the sultan's power through the control of inter-oceanic trade networks, the authors of histories of Aceh frequently took the seventeenth-century sultanate to be acting, on principle, against the earliest instances of European colonialism. Such an anti-colonial arc was present clearly in the writings of intellectuals from the 1950s, some of whom were veterans of the Indonesian Revolution and who explicitly placed Acehnese resistance to the Portuguese in a narrative culminating in the eventual winning of Indonesian independence (Hasjmy 1976, 1997; Ishak 1977). In these histories, Acehnese resistance to colonialism was deeply tied to the sultanate's relationship with a broader Islamic cosmopolitan world. Allied with the Ottomans,

and flying the crescent moon and star standard of the Ottoman caliph, the historical sultanate did, in fact, reject Portuguese interference in an explicitly religious idiom that tied Aceh to this broader Indian Ocean Islamic cosmopolis (Reid 2010).

In published histories of Aceh that stressed the theme of Aceh's long anti-colonial struggle, Acehnese resistance to the Portuguese in the seventeenth century was often put side by side with the decades-long Dutch-Aceh War. This was not a new narrative move. During the early stages of the Dutch-Aceh War, representatives of the Acehnese Sultanate continued to invoke, and attempted to mobilize, connections and networks associated with their long-standing ties to the Ottomans, which they took as having enabled their predecessors' past resistance to colonial intervention (Ho 2004, 219-221; Reid 1969, 19, 119-129; 1972). Some post-colonial authors writing histories focused on the Dutch-Aceh War did so through linking this resistance to earlier periods of anti-colonialism. Others offered analyses of the histories of the holy war (*hikayat prang sabi*), the works of esoteric verse describing the afterlife for those who fell as martyrs on the field of battle (Alfian 1987, 1992; Hasjmy 1976; Hasymy 1971). Still others focused on the conduct of the war by Acehnese fighters, chiefs, and *ulama* (Said 1981, II; Talsya 1980). A narrative strand of resistance to colonialism thus was developed that entailed a history of pious struggle against colonial powers, bookended by resistance to the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the Dutch in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is these narrative themes that have come to be associated with the idea of Aceh as the land of the Acehnese dagger.

Region of capital

It was the practical defeat of most Acehnese resistance in the late colonial period that, ironically, set the stage for the third narrative strand and toponym that would come to serve as a

dominant interpretative frame for Acehnese history, that of Aceh as the “region of capital” (I., *daerah model*). Following several decades of relatively stable, if uneasy, Dutch rule in Aceh, the Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies in 1942 ushered in the beginnings of the Indonesian Revolution. On August 17, 1945, within days of the Japanese surrender ending World War II, Indonesia’s first president and vice-president, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta, respectively, declared Indonesia an independent nation. When the Netherlands moved to reassert its authority over the archipelago in the following months, it did not attempt to retake Aceh. Remaining unoccupied throughout the Revolution, Aceh became a major staging ground for the anti-colonial struggle.

Along with histories of the old Acehnese Sultanate and the Dutch-Aceh War, then, the group of intellectuals involved in the development of new histories of Aceh began to focus on the period of the Indonesian Revolution. At least one, the journalist T.A. Talsya, made these histories the central motif of his work, eventually finishing a three-volume series in the form of a timeline of the Revolution in Aceh (Talsya 1990a, 1990b, 1990c). Other authors also approached this subject, often tying histories of Aceh’s pious resistance and grand past in the sultanate to its place in the eventual Indonesian national struggle (Hasjmy 1976; Seksi Penerangan/Dokumentasi Komite Musjawarah Angkatan 45 1959). All of the accounts stressed the great service of Aceh to the cause of Indonesian independence, and the sacrifices Acehnese had made along the way.

The list of episodes within this narrative strand was long. A famed radio broadcast declaring the continuing existence of the Indonesian Republic was made from Aceh’s Gayo highlands in December 1948 following a Dutch offensive on Java in which most of the Indonesian nationalist leadership was captured. This broadcast featured prominently in many of

the histories of Aceh that began to be developed in the 1950s. The symbolically most important episode of these histories, however, was the purchasing of two DC-3 aircraft. These planes were used to run weapons into Aceh and from there to various fronts. They were said to have been paid for by the gold of Acehnese women, in some versions of the narrative, gold collected by Daud Beureueh. This collective act of sacrifice in order to purchase these two airplanes, more than any other, has come to symbolize the narrative strand of Aceh as the “region of capital,” the site from which much of the operating capital of the Revolution, financial and otherwise, was alleged to have originated. A replica of one of these two DC-3s stood as a monument in central Banda Aceh at the time of my fieldwork, attesting to this history of service to the nation.⁴⁸

Special Area

The fourth narrative strand that came to dominate published histories of Aceh in the post-colonial period was that associated with the toponym “special area” (I., *daerah istimewa*). On a certain level, this was simply a legal designation, one that was modeled on Yogyakarta’s special autonomy, as previously described. In 1959, Aceh officially became the Special Area of Aceh, with autonomy in customary practice (I., *adat*), religion (I., *agama*), and education (I., *pendidikan*). But almost as soon as Aceh’s special legal status was enacted, Ali Hasjmy and his allies began to craft narratives that took the granting of special autonomy as the solution to the civil strife that had racked Aceh for the previous decade, as well as the appropriate answer to Acehnese complaints against the Indonesian central government. Rather than positioning Darul Islam guerrillas primarily as defeated rebels, the stories Hasjmy weaved about the period of rebellion leant credence to the Acehnese branch of Darul Islam’s claims of mistreatment at the hands of the central government. In these narratives, Aceh deserved its measure of autonomy,

⁴⁸ A second replica stood in the Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Park (I., Taman Mini Indonesia Indah), just outside the Indonesian national capital of Jakarta, attesting to the importance of this episode in national histories of the Revolution.

given its long Islamic history and service to the Indonesian Republic. Hasjmy's narratives implied that Darul Islam guerrillas were not so much traitors as they were Indonesians frustrated by the central government's refusal to acknowledge Aceh's rightful place in the nation. The achievement of provincial status and special autonomy were portrayed in Ali Hasjmy's histories as the fulfillment of Darul Islam's most important objectives (Hasjmy 1967; Panitia Persiapan Pendirian Universitas Negeri Sjiah Kuala 1961a, 1961b). While rarely explicitly pointing to his own role in bringing about the compromise of special autonomy, Hasjmy no doubt was aware of how these histories supported an image of him as a peacemaker.

Perhaps more important than the specifics of Hasjmy's narrative of how Aceh came to be a special area, were the ways in which he propagated this narrative as part of his work as governor, and later as he took up other government and university posts. In his efforts to enact Aceh's special autonomy, Hasjmy engaged in high profile public works projects in the province. The most conspicuous of these, and Hasjmy's proudest legacy, was the founding of Banda Aceh's main university campus. In sermons and speeches celebrating milestones in the growth of this university campus and other of his public works projects, Hasjmy narrated the events that had led to the enactment of Aceh's special autonomy. This narrative was circulated in pamphlets and anniversary publications at these events, as well as at other public commemorations and for national holidays (Hasjmy 1967; Panitia Persiapan Pendirian Universitas Negeri Sjiah Kuala 1961a, 1961b). Hasjmy thus wrote the history of Aceh as a special area not simply with paper and print, but by inscribing this history on the landscape in monuments, university campuses, and other objects in the built landscape, objects indexing the compromise that led to the end of Darul Islam and the recognition of Aceh as a special area.

The narrative strand of Aceh as a “special area” (I., *daerah istimewa*), thus, represented the process leading to the legal ratification of Aceh’s special status in the new nation. It entailed both historically deep precedents, namely, the special characteristics of Aceh’s history and culture, and more immediate causes, for example, the Darul Islam rebellion and the compromise struck to end it. This narrative strand quickly became as recognizable and widely-circulated as the other three, becoming the object of published narratives, invoked by public figures and ordinary Acehnese alike, and inscribed in the very name of the province. That this narrative strand came to be as dominant in representations of the Acehnese past as the other three was evident in the framed photographs of the most iconic moments in the string of events that led to Aceh’s special legal status adorning the walls of the provincial archive in Banda Aceh during my research. In 1998, Aceh was granted a new round of autonomy by the Indonesian central government in Jakarta, and its name was changed to Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam. Nonetheless, the period in the late 1950s in which Aceh came to be the Special Area of Aceh remained one of the dominant frames through which Acehnese narrated their history throughout the period of my research.

Rahdman’s Moral Boundary

The histories that were written according to one or more of the four narrative strands described above were not homogenous. Particular authors wrote their own versions for their own reasons. Comparisons of individual histories written within the same narrative strand reveal differences in emphasis that are significant for understanding the intentions and assumptions of specific authors. My purpose in describing each of these four narrative strands, however, has been to present the reader with a taste of the narrative episodes and themes that have come to dominate discussions of Acehnese history in the post-colonial period, rather than to compare

individual accounts. As will become apparent in the next two sections of this chapter, the episodes and themes of these histories have had immense consequences for Acehnese narrative practice.

This and the next section turns to day-to-day narrative practices in Aceh. None of the narrators described in this discussion had published printed histories, or even considered themselves proper sources of Acehnese history. They included a professional driver, two school teachers, an academic, and others. I turn to these instances of narrative practice for several reasons. On the most basic level, these instances of narrative practice illustrate just how deeply the four narrative strands described in the previous section permeated Acehnese historical discourse by the time of my research. Further, these narrative strands had infused Acehnese historical discourse in part because they had become common frames through which Acehnese had learned to read indexes of the past in the present in the Acehnese landscape and on the bodies of their neighbors. The material objects and qualities that Acehnese narrators took as inscriptions of history on land and bodies motivated specific instances of history-telling. The instances of history-telling sparked by these signs of the past could then provide context in which Acehnese carried out social commentary and action. Drawing attention to these day-to-day experiences of historical narration, especially their embeddedness in daily social contexts, allows me to illustrate the extent to which Acehnese social practice is tied to a finely tuned sense of Aceh's place in the history of Islam and the Indonesian archipelago. This will be central to the linking of non-prophetic history and Islamic piety in later chapters. My discussion begins with a particularly evocative example, one that illustrates both the explanatory power of the four narrative strands previously discussed and the ways in which these narratives help constitute value-laden geographies of the archipelago.

On a breezy evening in early June of 2008, I found myself on the campus of Universitas Syiah Kuala in Darussalam, the university district of Aceh's provincial capital, Banda Aceh. I was enjoying the company of Rahdman, a jolly, middle-aged fellow, and a successful professional driver who had benefited from the burgeoning ex-patriot population in the city in the years since the December 2004 earthquake and tsunami. Rahdman had a penchant for articulating opinions on social issues that he felt cut against the grain of conventional wisdom. On this night, our discussion began with his offering a critique of the much-heralded implementation of a form of Islamic law underway in Aceh since 1999. The way he saw it, rather than the vice police (Wilayatul Hisbah or WH) cracking down on young couples romancing in the streets, the best thing instead would be to create places for young adults to enjoy themselves, for example, movie theaters. On one hand, this might very well lead to the sorts of loose morals the recent reforms sought to prevent, especially extra-marital sex. But on the other, it would at least give kids things to do. And besides, he added, morals should be taught at home.

To this point, I had been following Rahdman's logic. But then he narrated a story that caught me by surprise. He asked me if I had seen, wandering around Banda Aceh, a certain girl from Medan, Indonesia's third largest city (see Map 2). I told him that I had not. He continued, letting me know that this young lady was "crazy" (I., *gila*), putting his index finger to his forehead in the common gesture used to denote someone suffering from mental illness. He revealed that she walked around uncovered, although I did not remember later if Rahdman had been more specific in describing precisely how she dressed. "What happens now, when she is not just left alone, is that she is arrested by the vice police and talked to and then let go," Rahdman continued. "But this does not solve anything. How are people going to feel if

something happens (I., *sesuatu terjadi*)?" he asked. "She should be taken back to Medan!" Aware that Medan, just south of the Acehnese border in the province of North Sumatra, has the reputation for being a city of gangsters, prostitutes, and just about every other form of vice, I found myself confused. I asked Rahdman if his point was that she should be taken home to her family. But he indicated that he did not think that she had a family. So would the government in North Sumatra, her home province, help her using funds from that region? Rahdman was noncommittal on this point, and more uninterested in my question than anything else. Then I decided to ask about what I thought was the obviously unaddressed question: "If one takes her to Medan, couldn't something happen (*sesuatu terjadi*) there?" "Why of course!" Rahdman replied smiling, in fact, almost laughing at me. "But Mr. Daniel! Then it would not be happening on Mecca's verandah (I., *serambi Mekkah*)!"

Rahdman's comments reflected sensibilities about religious and moral practice, the territory of Aceh, and the Indonesian nation that I found consistent with much public discourse in the province during research there between 2006 and 2009. Most striking was the way in which Rahdman's invoking of the Mecca's verandah toponym revealed a qualitative moral difference between the territory of Aceh and that of North Sumatra. Something might happen to the woman in Medan, he admitted, "[but then] it would not be happening on Mecca's verandah."

It would be a mistake to interpret Rahdman's comments as deriving from a sense that once the young woman of whom he spoke had been swept across the border, she would no longer be an Acehnese concern. His invocation of the Mecca's verandah toponym entailed a range of historical and social resonances marking Aceh and North Sumatra as qualitatively different kinds of places within the Indonesian archipelago. Rahdman's unblinking assumption that such a reply would be sufficient and self-evident as a response to my inquiry reveals the

broad, if often vague, explanatory powers of the narrative arcs described above, which are most often cited in daily conversation in Aceh through the shorthand of the toponyms around which they have congealed. Much of this explanatory power rests in the ways in which the narrative strands described above have become embedded in daily Acehnese social life.

Narrative Practice in Post-Colonial Aceh: Living Among the Signs of History

Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in Aceh in recent years will have sooner rather than later heard what has become an exceptionally common way that Acehnese invoke the cosmopolitan aspects of Aceh's Islamic and anti-colonial past. "Aceh," my interlocutors regularly repeated, "[it stands for] Arab-Cina-Eropa-Hindia!" This phrase, associating each of Aceh's letters with a different group of visitors thought of as having distinct cultural and racial characteristics (i.e., Arabs, Chinese, Europeans and Indians), was meant to be a concise encapsulation of Aceh's cosmopolitan history, a way of invoking the continuing presence of the seventeenth-century sultanate in the present.

It would be easy to dismiss this phrase as an empty multi-culturalist discourse with little historical depth. However, invocations of Aceh's cosmopolitan past were not simply cynical or abstract appeals to either a principled cultural pluralism or an imagined Islamic cosmopolitanism. The racialized groups identified using this acronym were widely taken in Aceh as having contributed cultural and biological materials to the Acehnese present, making their past in the Acehnese Sultanate detectable in daily social interactions. People and objects that exhibited qualities linking them to these racial and ethnic groups were taken as embodied tokens of the past.

Saifuddin

Consider, for example, the response of Saifuddin to the news that the Acehnese government had restricted the public performance of a dance held by Chinese-Indonesians to celebrate the Chinese New Year:

Our laws, that are supposed to be based on Islamic law, do not yet reflect... the foundations of Islam that are exceptionally tolerant[...] respect and give a sense of security to other religious communities (I., *umat*)[...] If the measure [used to deny permits for a public celebration] is that the lion dance is not Acehnese culture (I., *budaya Aceh*), I think we need to discuss history in depth. Did Chinese and Arabs come to the Acehnese coast in the past? Did these early Chinese migrants (I., *pendatang*) not give color (I., *memberi warna*) to the accomplishments of Acehnese history? Look at all the faces that resemble Chinese! Is it true that in the blood of the Acehnese people there are absolutely no Chinese genes?

Saifuddin was a young academic who spent much of his time in coffee shops frequented by students and college instructors. I heard similar discourses, with different valences depending on the politics of the person speaking, throughout my time in Aceh. Darker-skinned men and women, especially if they were known to have come from a particular village or area, were identified as the descendants of Indians. Light-skinned people, some alleged to have blue eyes, were thought of as the progeny of Portuguese who had abandoned their previous political and religious allegiances to become Acehnese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These light-skinned people were assumed to have originated in Lam No, where large numbers of such Portuguese converts were said to have once lived. Such discourses were not meant solely for consumption by interested non-Acehnese such as me. They appeared in Acehnese newspapers, for example, and the popular Acehnese pop singer Sabirin is a light-skinned man from the village of Lam No who sometimes croons about his Portuguese blood for his Acehnese fans.

These examples of reading the racialized bodies of Acehnese neighbors as indexes of Acehnese history represent just one of the ways in which I found Acehnese to inhabit a social landscape full of signs of the past. My Acehnese acquaintances interpreted phenotypic

differences through a framing informed by notions of the Acehnese Sultanate's cosmopolitan grandeur. The past thus evoked actually could have been construed as much more recent. Aceh in the late-nineteenth century, at the time of the Dutch invasion, was still frequented by people from around the Indian Ocean Islamic world (Hurgronje 1906, I, 17-23). Further discussion of late nineteenth-century Aceh, below, will suggest some of the ways that these practices of reading the past on racialized bodies have been structured by the four narrative strands discussed above.

Ibu Juanda

If reading the past of the Acehnese Sultanate in the racialized bodies of Acehnese neighbors evoked the toponyms of Mecca's verandah and the land of the Acehnese dagger, a conversion I had with a school teacher, Ibu Juanda, revealed how embodied experiences of place could be tied directly to the four narrative strands discussed above. Recall that beginning in the late 1950s, the newly established provincial government under Ali Hasjmy sponsored a series of public works projects that were, in important senses, narrative acts. These public works indexed the history of violent strife in the 1940s and 1950s, and the resolution of the conflict in the achievement of Aceh's special legal status.

Ibu Juanda was still a girl when the most prominent of these public works projects began. This was the founding of the "Student City" (I., Kota Pelajar Mahasiswa, Kopolma) of Darussalam. Today incorporated into Banda Aceh, Darussalam was founded as the site of a new state university, Syiah Kuala, and, in addition, became the location of the Acehnese branch of the State Islamic Institute in 1963. It remained at the time of my fieldwork the most widely-known and remembered instance of the public works projects Hasjmy instituted in his term as governor. Its centrality to narratives of Ali Hasjmy's successfully brokering of an end to the rebellion was

reflected in comments such as the following, offered by a member of the Acehnese Ulama Council: “What did Daud Beureueh’s taking to the hills get us? Darussalam. A university campus. That is good. But was it worth the suffering and bloodshed of the rebellion?” Even the name of the neighborhood selected for the creation of this university campus seemed fortuitously to suggest its place in the ending of Darul Islam, as Darussalam can be translated from Arabic into “land of peace.”⁴⁹

Ibu Juanda recalled with great poignancy the period of “mutual self-help” (I., *gotong-royong*) Hasjmy organized to clear the land that would be used for the construction of the campus. Only in only fifth grade at the time, she joined adults and other children in this project:

Darussalam is the heart (I., *jantung-hati*) of the Acehnese people (Ac., *oereuëng Atjèh*)[...] It was built because of the contributions (I., *sumbangan*) of the Acehnese people[...] the people gave it moral (I., *moral*) support. I was in fifth grade at the elementary school. I, with all of my class mates, came to clear the area. So it was as if the people (I., *masyarakat*) owned it.⁵⁰

Ibu Juanda next went on to discuss a dark point in Darussalam’s history. Sometime after a monument had been erected to memorialize the act of mutual self-help in which she had participated, someone, widely assumed to be Darul Islam-affiliated, shot at the monument. She linked this to a more general climate of danger in the area. “There was shooting there at night,” Ibu Juanda said, “But it was safe during the day. DI protected Darussalam. DI protected the safety of the people.” More than one interlocutor recalled to me that Darussalam was a heavily Darul Islam-leaning territory at the time of the land clearing described by Ibu Juanda. Yet Ibu

⁴⁹ For some of Hasjmy’s own accounts of the project, see Panitia Persiapan Pendirian Universitas Negeri Sjiah Kuala (1961a; 1961b).

⁵⁰ The Indonesian phrase *jantung-hati*, which Ibu Juanda used multiple times in this interview to refer to how the Acehnese people feel about Darussalam, is interesting in this context. A compound made up of two words that might be translated “heart,” *jantung* being the physical heart and *hati* being the liver, which in Indonesia is taken to be the seat of emotions and thus the emotional “heart,” this phrase is most often used to designate a beloved, if not favorite, child.

Juanda noted here that no one was harassed during this massive public works project, despite the nightly crossfire.

The most telling moment in Ibu Juanda's recollection of the history of the Darussalam campus came as she linked her experience as a child helping to clear land for the campus to her choice of vocation as an educator. A successful English teacher, Ibu Juanda had rejected several offers to work elsewhere in the archipelago, and even overseas, turning down significant sums of money in the process. When she had taken work elsewhere, she always found her way back to the Universitas Syiah Kuala, the state university located on the Darussalam campus, where she worked as an instructor preparing future generations of English teachers. Finally, she was given the opportunity to help run a new experimental elementary school on the Unsyiah campus:

When we built the new school, it was just like when I was in fifth grade. We held mutual self-help with the students and lecturers of the English Department. We even ate bundled sticky rice (Ac., *boe leukat*) [as she had during the land clearing for the Darussalam campus in the 1950s]. My soul (I., *jiwa*) very much loves Darussalam. My father once told me, "If you work at the factory, you will help a few, but in Darussalam you can help the Acehnese people (I., *rakyat Aceh*)."

Ibu Juanda clearly was moved by her experience clearing land for the Darussalam campus. Her emotional response was anchored in the physical place of Darussalam and her participation in its creation. Her stories about the campus, while deeply personal, clearly echoed the central motifs of the narrative strand associated with Aceh's legal status as a special area. In fact, her narratives were strikingly consistent with the language and narrative styles employed in printed programs commemorating the founding of the campus, produced in the early 1960s (Panitia Persiapan Pendirian Universitas Negeri Sjiah Kuala 1961a; 1961b). She stressed how Darussalam had helped to bring about an end to the conflict with Darul Islam guerrillas, the campus' role in reconciling the Acehnese people following a decade of conflict, and its continuing promise for the Acehnese future. She did so in a manner that entwined her personal

history as an educator with the founding of this campus. While speaking about Darussalam, not all Acehnese were moved to the same degree as Ibu Juanda was. Indeed, some people with whom I spoke expressed cynicism towards Ali Hasjmy's compromise with the central government and took his public works projects primarily as opportunistic and self-serving. Nonetheless, Ibu Juanda's story of her participation in the founding of Darussalam offers a striking example of how narratives of Acehnese history could be inscribed in the Acehnese landscape in powerful ways.

Ibu Juanda's narration of her personal involvement in the creation of Darussalam clearly participated in the narrative of Aceh as a special area. This was in large part because of her personal experience in helping to build the most prominent monument to Aceh's special legal status, the Darussalam campus. Before concluding this section, I turn to two examples in which the embeddedness of Acehnese in a social context full of deeply-resonate signs of the past is apparent despite the fact that those involved in these instances of historical narration did not directly participate in the events they narrated. In these instances, effects of the popularization of the four aforementioned narrative strands on the daily narrative practice of non-elite Acehnese are clearly visible.

“Arab-Cina-Eropa-Hindia” in the Nineteenth and Twenty-first Centuries

I begin by returning to the practice of reading the cosmopolitan past on the bodies of neighbors. It is difficult to know just how long practices of reading history on the bodies of others have been prominent in Aceh. In his classic ethnography-cum-military intelligence report, C. Snouck Hurgronje indicated that in the late-nineteenth century a multitude of different kinds of social and racial groups were recognized in Aceh (Hurgronje 1906, I, 17-23). In some cases, these groups were thought to belong to specific villages and regions, not unlike the ways in

which, during my field research, different parts of Aceh were thought of as the home of the descendants of Indians or Portuguese (Hurgronje 1906, I, 19). But if these regions and the phenotypes associated with them were at the time taken as indexes of the sultanate's past, this was not noted by Hurgronje. Hurgronje did note, however, that Teungku Kutakarang, the author of one of the best known instances of the histories of the holy war, had suggested that Acehnese were descendant from Arabs, Persians, and Turks. Hurgronje related that at the time of his field research in the 1890s, Teungku Kutakarang's theories of Acehnese descent were being circulated widely in Aceh (Hurgronje 1906, I., 17-19).

Hurgronje's discussion of the categories of social and racial differences that were salient in late nineteenth-century Aceh suggests some important ways that post-colonial practices of reading history on human bodies has been shaped by the histories of Aceh popularized since the 1950s. While the "Arab-Cina-Eropa-Hindia" frame is intended in part to celebrate Aceh's historically vibrant cosmopolitanism, the Aceh described by Hurgronje was far more diverse than even this frame allows. It included black Africans and white Circassians, and entailed a far more noticeable presence of other Southeast Asian peoples, for example, Bugis, Bataks, and those from the island of Nias. I suggest that the ways of narrating history propagated by the authors who cultivated the four narrative strands represents one of the reasons why the historical presence of these people has not been central in post-colonial Acehnese narrative practice as has been, for example, the presence of Arabs, Chinese, Europeans, and South Asians.

From one point of view, because Bataks and those from Nias were associated with a history of slave trading, specifically as the human objects of this trade, they did not feature prominently in the narratives of Aceh's pre-colonial past authored in the 1950s and after. While the slave trade was part-and-parcel of the economic and political milieu of the sultanate, it had

no place in the histories of Hasjmy and his circle, which focused on the sultans, *ulama*, and traders who contributed to Aceh's brilliance in past centuries. One can, in fact, already see inklings of this bias towards rulers, scholars, and traders in Teungku Kutakarang's nineteenth-century assertions of Acehnese descent from Arabs, Persians, and Turks mentioned above. The histories of the 1950s systematized the idea that Acehnese descended from the people traveling relatively freely in pan-Indian Ocean trade circuits, and it did so in specific ways. One of these ways reflected the placing of Aceh in a chronotope of Islamization. Recall that in histories reliant on this chronotope, Aceh was the font from which Islam flowed to the rest of the archipelago. If since the 1950s Islamization has represented the primary idiom through which Aceh's relationship to the Indonesian nation has been expressed, highlighting the contributions of Javanese, Bugis, and Bataks to the Acehnese past reverses the appropriate direction of historical contributions from Aceh to the rest of the archipelago.

Herein lies one reason why the published histories of the 1950s, and subsequent popular narrative practice in Aceh, have tended to focus upon cosmopolitan peoples from outside of the archipelago. These peoples (i.e., Arabs, Chinese, Europeans, and South Asians) have been inscribed in the Acehnese past as contributors of Islam, blood, and culture to the Acehnese present. These contributions, especially Islam, have been understood to then have been passed on to the rest of the archipelago. This helps to explain why the published histories of Aceh discussed above rarely name contributions of other archipelagic peoples to Aceh, or even the presence of other archipelagic peoples in Aceh. Some instances of these presences, for example the eighteenth-century Bugis dynasty that ruled the Acehnese Sultanate, are too important to ignore completely. But the narrative emphasis of histories of Aceh since the 1950s has been on the contributions of Indian Ocean cosmopolitans and not on such figures as the Bugis dynasty.

This tendency was even stronger in the examples of popular narrative practice that I heard during my field research. I never heard anyone suggest that a passerby had Bugis features, for example, but was prodded daily to notice the Portuguese eyes, Chinese faces, and Indian skin tone of those around me.

A “Portuguese” Gravestone in Kuala Batee

The narrative strands developed in the 1950s infused the kinds of narrative practice described in this section with historical meanings. This occurred through the reading of embodied and emplaced features of daily social experience as indexes of the past. This was also apparent in one final example I will present. This example illustrates how the narratives strands of the 1950s have become dominant enough frames for interpreting signs of the past that they foreclose certain other readings of Acehnese history. In Kuala Batee, a sub-regency of Aceh’s southwest coast in the regency of Aceh Barat Daya (see Map 2), is a rather unusual gravestone (see Figure 4). When I visited the stone in 2008, it recently had been moved from above the grave on which it previously stood to the courtyard of a local elementary school, in part because it had been deemed of historical value by local authorities, and in part because these same authorities had felt it inappropriate to leave the stone on the grave of the Acehnese Muslim it had hitherto marked. It had a long and formal inscription in English and had been sent by Salem-based merchants to an Acehnese port captain (I., *syahbandar*) of Kuala Batee upon this captain’s death in 1824.⁵¹ This *syahbandar*, according to the inscription a man of many virtues and talents associated with the trade in pepper, was probably was one of the chief trading partners of a group of merchants who frequented the coast.

⁵¹ As described in the Introduction, Salem merchants dominated the world pepper market of the early nineteenth century through their relationship with Acehnese chiefs, who sold them the region’s pepper off-shore, trading on flat-bottom U.S. vessels designed in Salem especially for this purpose (Gould 1956; Putnam 1922; Reid 1969, 6-17).



Figure 4: Headstone for a “shewbuntar” (i.e., *syahbandar*) of Kuala Batee

The nineteenth-century pepper trade can be considered a contemporary analogue to the modern crude oil market. It was dominated by Acehnese chiefs who controlled pepper plantations all along the west coast of Aceh. It was especially lucrative for both these chiefs and the Salem traders who carefully guarded both the sailing technology that made it possible to trade in the shoals off the coast and the maps that made it possible for them to return to the same sections of coastline in multiple years. This trade left an indelible mark on Acehnese social and

domestic patterns, spawning its own instances of Acehnese-language *hikayat* literature (Drewes 1980; Hurgronje 1906, II, 120-121; Siegel 2000).⁵²

While most Acehnese are vaguely aware of the past importance of the pepper trade, and the topic has been considered by some Acehnese historians, it has never been incorporated fully into any of the four narrative strands described in this chapter, nor made into one of its own. This may be in part because the period is one in which the sultanate itself, the focal point of most of the histories described here, was particularly weak, trade occurring at the local level with regional chiefs.⁵³ The details of this history of the pepper trade are fairly obscure to most Acehnese. When several friends and I visited the school and stone in 2008, a teacher there explained to us that although she knew little about it, its inscription was in Portuguese. Her misrecognition of the language on the stone was suggestive of the dominant ways Acehnese have come to organize their history. In her explanation of the significance of the stone, she was acutely aware that it existed as a result of Aceh's place of importance in global economic history. However, she was far less aware of the specific U.S. trading interests that had been so important in the region of Aceh's southwest coast. She assimilated the stone into the narrative strands that stress the old sultanate and its Portuguese rivals. In the process, she overlooked the much more

⁵² This trade had very important resonances for US audiences as well, especially after the 1831-32 “Battle of Quallah Batoo” affair called into question the allegedly anti-imperial nature of the trade. Until 1831, the practice of offshore trading in flat-bottomed U.S. vessels had been touted as anti-imperialist because it avoided both military intervention and the sending of U.S. traders to shore. But when one of these vessels, the *Friendship*, was attacked and several of its crew members captured by an Acehnese minor chief, a low-grade battle ensued. This was followed by a retaliatory attack the next year by the U.S. Navy frigate *Potomac*. In Salem, this series of events spawned public reflections on the “battle,” the trade, and U.S. interests overseas (Putnam 1922, 70-110; Warriner 1835, 9-118). Here I would be remiss if I did not thank Michael Feener, who helped me to fully understand the significance of what is today an isolated and difficult to reach beachhead in an especially rural section of Aceh’s coastline.

⁵³ Thus, for example, Mohammad Said treats the topic in a chapter sub-titled “As a Result of the Civil War,” implicitly suggesting that it represented a low point of history from the point of view of the sultanate (Said 1981, I, 470-533).

recent claims of her specific region of Aceh to global political and economic historical importance, namely, the early nineteenth-century pepper trade with American merchants.

On Living among the Signs of History

In many respects, the ways in which I describe Acehnese living among embodied and emplaced signs of history is not unusual. In presenting the above account, I have, for example, been inspired by William Kelleher's description of similar practices in North Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s (Kelleher 2003). Before turning to my conclusion, I want to make clear why I have devoted so much attention to these practices. What makes them significant for the broader arguments of this dissertation?

While it is true that reading signs of the past in the present may be a fairly common activity in different societies and historical periods, there is something remarkable about both the ubiquity and intensity with which the seeking of these signs occurs in Aceh. This ubiquity and intensity is also characteristic of the related practice of invoking the four toponyms previously described, each associated with one of the narrative strands developed beginning in the 1950s. During my research, references to these four toponyms were exceedingly common and could overwhelm any observer astute enough to recognize them. Tens of universities and Islamic boarding schools in different parts of the province used some form of “verandah” or “Mecca’s verandah” in their name, as did the major Indonesian-language Acehnese daily, *Serambi Indonesia*, owned by the largest media conglomerate in the country (Kompas Gramedia Group). In 2008 and 2009 I frequently met with government officials who would begin conversations by noting, “This is the Special Area of Aceh,” before pausing to add, “Actually, it is no longer the Special Area of Aceh, but it is still special.”⁵⁴ “Land of the Acehnese dagger” appeared on

⁵⁴ These were references to the official name of the province, changed from Special Area of Aceh to Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (roughly, the Country of Aceh Realm of Peace) in 1998. Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam

everything from glass encased Acehnese daggers for sale at tourist shops in Banda Aceh to headlines in newspapers and periodicals. Acehnese wishing to make a claim against the Indonesian central government, usually regarding alleged political and economic neglect of the province and its inhabitants, invoked the “region of capital” toponym to suggest that the nation’s debt to its Acehnese citizens remained unpaid. Acehnese pop music and other popular cultural forms regularly made reference to Aceh using any one of these place names. Religious teachers such as Teungku Hasani used them in sermons in order to effect moral persuasion through the toponyms’ historical weight. Non-Muslims in the province turned to these toponyms to make claims of belonging in Aceh in the face of discrimination.

But it is not simply the ubiquity and intensity of these references that makes them of interest to this dissertation. Because of the ways in which they were tied to the narratives cultivated by intellectuals such as Ali Hasjmy, Mohammad Said, and HAMKA, these invocations of Acehnese place, and daily encounters with the Acehnese past, served as means through which Acehnese came to inhabit the value-laden geographies inscribed by these intellectuals. Recall that my discussion of popular Acehnese narrative practice began by relating the story of Rahdman’s moral boundary. This was the boundary between Aceh and North Sumatra, which once crossed entailed movement into a qualitatively different kind of moral space, one in which the moral problems raised by the presence and behavior of the young woman who was the object of Rahdman’s commentary ceased to matter in the same way. Rahdman’s explanation for this qualitative difference was simply an invocation of the Mecca’s verandah toponym. He clearly felt that the historical episodes that congealed in this reference would be sufficient to explain the moral contrast between Aceh and North Sumatra that he assumed in his

was selected at the time in part because the mix of Acehnese and Arabic languages it reflected was felt by many to better represent Aceh’s historical and cultural uniqueness. In 2009 the province’s name was changed yet again, this time simply to the Province of Aceh (Propinsi Aceh).

commentary. The next chapter will treat in more detail some of the contrasting moral resonances between Aceh and North Sumatra that Rahdman assumed, as well as how these resonances have been tied to broader value-laden geographies of the archipelago. For now, I simply draw attention to the fact that by invoking the Mecca's verandah toponym, Rahdman participated in the inscribing of these value-laden geographies.

Conclusion: Islam, Aceh, Nation, and Narrative

After a brief description of elements of pre-colonial and colonial Acehnese narrative practice, this chapter began in the 1950s, examining the cultivation by Indonesian elites of four narrative stands linking Aceh to the history of Islam and the Indonesian nation. These narrative strands placed Aceh squarely within the frame of the Indonesian nation by using such narrative devices as the chronotope of Islamization and themes of anti-colonial struggle culminating in Indonesian independence. These same narrative devices also marked Aceh as “special” (I., *istimewa*) by giving Aceh primacy in narratives of Islamization and anti-colonial resistance. This inscribed Aceh within a value-laden geography of the archipelago, evident in the title of a 1981 collection of essays, “From Here It Spread” (*Dari Sini Ia Bersemi*), the “here” being Aceh, and the “it” being Islam.

Especially to the extent that they were underpinned by the chronotope of Islamization, the four narrative strands discussed in this chapter positioned Islam as mediating the relationship between the Indonesian nation and Aceh. This was true, for example, in common narratives of the archipelago’s Islamization, in which the Indonesian nation was placed on a progressive path towards ever deeper conversion, with Aceh as its vanguard. It was also true in histories of Acehnese pious resistance, in which anti-colonial resolve inspired by a selflessly pure Islamic spirit again anticipated the eventual telos of the nation. This may help to explain why Islamic

intellectuals like HAMKA and Mohammad Said, who were not Acehnese but whose formulations of the nation were heavily tied up in Islamic imaginaries, were so enthusiastic about these histories.

In part because the narrative strands cultivated by Acehnese intellectuals in the 1950s were clearly drawn from long-standing Acehnese narrative traditions, and in part because of the ways in which they came to be embodied and emplaced in daily practices of reading the past in the present, they have remained popular in Aceh ever since they began to be published in the decade after Indonesian independence. Through practices of reading the signs of the past in one's immediate social context, Acehnese have come to inhabit the value-laden geographies that these narrative strands inscribe.

This last point is central to understanding how this dissertation participates in a body of scholarship that explores the varied spatio-temporal paths Muslims take to participate in an Islamic tradition writ large (Florida 1995; Grewal 2006; Ho 2006; Rogozen-Soltar 2012; Werbner 2003). Not all of the narrative strands and practices discussed in this chapter took up Islamic themes explicitly. However, to the extent that these histories partook of the chronotope of Islamization, they clearly involved Acehnese actively orienting themselves to local Islamic pasts. For example, in his discussion of the boundary between Aceh and North Sumatra, Rahdman tied the Mecca's verandah toponym directly to an Islamic social and political project (i.e., Aceh's recent Islamic legal reforms) and a value-laden geography that contrasted differing moral responsibilities depending upon whether one was in Aceh or North Sumatra. Similarly, the interest in Acehnese history on the part of Indonesian intellectuals such as HAMKA quite clearly drew upon these figures' visions of a progressively more Islamic nation and society.

This chapter began with an epigraph that requoted the sermon of Teungku Hasani with which the introduction to this dissertation opened. The multiple rhetorical effects of Teungku Hasani's invocation of the seventeenth-century sultanate should now be clear. Teungku Hasani was drawing on an over century-old rhetorical strategy of Acehnese religious teachers, one that marks the present era as a period of moral decline in relation to Aceh's grand past. He could trust that the reference would resonate for his audience, given the ways in which many Acehnese are aware of the signs of the seventeenth-century sultanate in their daily lives. In the chapters that follow, both the four narrative strands and the embodied and emplaced practices of reading the past in the present described here reappear. This is because they are central to the ways in which Acehnese have come to orient themselves to local Islamic pasts.

Chapter 3

“Wild Churches” and Muslim Converts: Christianization, Islamization, and Aceh

But Mr. Daniel, then it would not be happening on Mecca’s verandah!

-Rahdman, professional driver, Banda Aceh, June 2008

The previous chapter described a process through which Indonesian elites in the 1950s cultivated four narrative strands of Aceh’s place in the history of Islam and the Indonesian nation. While these four narrative strands drew on historical subject matter ranging from Aceh’s early Islamic history to the Darul Islam rebellion and its aftermath, one of their key narrative motifs was the chronotope of Islamization (Bowen 1989a). It was Aceh’s status as the first place in the archipelago to receive Islam that was the key to how the chronotope established a particular configuration of relationships involving Aceh, Islam, and Indonesia. On one hand, these narratives placed Aceh firmly within the nation; on the other, they did so by drawing attention to Aceh’s “special” (I., *istimewa*) qualities.

In this chapter, I examine in more detail how the chronotope of Islamization linked Aceh to Islam and the nation in powerful ways for different groups of Indonesians. I do this through analyzing a controversy over “wild churches” (I., *gereja liar*), that is, churches built without the proper permits, along Aceh’s southern border with the province of North Sumatra.⁵⁵ This

⁵⁵ *Liar* also can have the meaning of “illegal,” and this is clearly an intended connotation, and perhaps the primary thrust, of the phrase “gereja liar” (i.e., “illegal churches”). However, the meaning of *liar* as “wild” is played upon in the documents that I discuss below, and it is clear from these documents that those who opposed these churches tended to see them not simply as illegal, but as the result of Christians crossing the border into Aceh in an unrestrained and disorderly manner. I have chosen to use the translation “wild churches” to capture both senses of the Indonesian, and to highlight the concern over what the term’s usage in these documents suggests was both unrestrained and unregulated activity in Aceh’s southern border region.

controversy allows me to illustrate how powerful linkages between Acehnese locality, Islamic history, and the Indonesian nation already could be by the late 1970s. The archival record surrounding these episodes includes the voices of several different parties to the conflict over wild churches, each of which contextualized their interest in terms of the history of Aceh, Islamization, and Indonesia.

In March of 1978, four “wild churches” were burned down in the South Acehnese sub-regency of Simpang Kanan (see Map 2). A few months later, two delegates representing the self-proclaimed “Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan” arrived at the offices of the Acehnese Ulama Council in Banda Aceh.⁵⁶ These delegates attributed Muslim-Christian tensions in Simpang Kanan, which they claimed had resulted in the church burnings, to the migration of Christian laborers across the Acehnese border from North Sumatra. The Acehnese Ulama Council already had been involved in monitoring and addressing the influx of Christian laborers across the border, which the council, like the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan, saw as a threat to Aceh’s Islamic history. The church burnings of 1978, as well as additional church burnings in 1979, were covered in national Islamic presses as well.

The convergence of local, provincial, and national attention on the church burnings in Simpang Kanan facilitated a synergy of provincial and national imaginaries that took the territories of Aceh and North Sumatra to be value-laden with moral and religious significances. Indeed, the region along the Acehnese and North Sumatran border was an especially fruitful site through which Acehnese and other Indonesian Muslims in this period worked out questions of

⁵⁶ Technically, by 1978 the Acehnese Ulama Council had been absorbed into the Indonesian Ulama Council as one of the latter’s provincial branches. Nonetheless, its members continued to see themselves as the Acehnese Ulama Council and, as I will describe in more detail below, as the model on which the national Indonesian Ulama Council was founded in 1975. For the sake of simplicity, and to recognize this continuity, throughout this dissertation I refer to the council as the Acehnese Ulama Council.

national interest related to the spatialization of religious practice, the proper relationship between religious communities, and the specter of proselytization. Of particular importance was the perceived threat of “Christianization” (I., *Kristenisasi*), a preoccupation of many national Islamic intellectuals and politicians of this period. Narratives of Christianization mirrored narratives of Islamization in that they involved a model of the gradual conversion of the archipelago to Christianity. However, as one might expect, Christianization was taken as a shadowy conspiracy by many Islamic intellectuals, who saw it as both a religious threat and a threat to the nation. It is not insignificant that some of the very same non-Acehnese Islamic intellectuals who were invested in narratives of Aceh’s Islamic history (i.e., HAMKA) also were concerned with Christianization. The Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan, the provincial Acehnese Ulama Council, and writers publishing in national Islamic presses covering the controversies over wild churches in the late 1970s, all took Aceh as a central locality in their entwined narratives of Islamization and Christianization. This suggests, again, the ways in which Islam, and especially histories of Islamization, tied Aceh to the nation for many Indonesians.

Interreligious Tensions in South Aceh, 1968-1980

On August 18, 1978, two delegates, Muhammad Hamzah and Sabarin AS, appeared before the Acehnese Ulama Council in Banda Aceh in order to deliver a report entitled “Growth/Activities of the Christian Religion in the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan” (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978c). In the letter of explanation carried by the two men, Hamzah was identified as the head of an elementary school and the agent of an Islamic revivalist organization in Simpang Kanan, a sub-regency of South Aceh (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978b). Aside from these details about the two men, the sources found in the

archive of the Acehnese Ulama Council held in Banda Aceh reveal only that they represented a group calling itself the “Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan.”⁵⁷ The reason for their visit, conversely, is abundantly clear in the multiple pieces of correspondence that accompanied the report the two men left with the ulama council following their meeting. In March of the same year, four “wild churches” (I., *gereja liar*), buildings used for Christian worship without the proper permits, had been burned by what appear to have been angry groups of Muslim neighbors. Hamzah and Sabarin had made the 500 kilometer trek along unfinished and frequently blocked roads to report on these church burnings.

Using Hamzah and Sabarin’s report, along with other correspondence and reports found in the same archival folder (Folder 234, Bundle 36 of the Archive of the Ulama Council of the Special Area of Aceh held in the Provincial Archive in Banda Aceh), one can reconstruct a decade of tensions leading up to the March 1978 church burnings. The tensions revolved around migrant laborers who had crossed the Aceh-North Sumatra border from their homelands in order to engage in agricultural work in South Aceh.⁵⁸ Most of these laborers were of Toba Batak ethnicity, but some were Karo as well. Predominantly Christian, both Protestant and Catholic, these groups began to build churches that later were accused of being illegal because their

⁵⁷ Others had served this role on earlier occasions when the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan approached government officials at the regency level. See, for example, Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan (1978a). While presumably there may be some people alive who remember Hamzah and Sabarin’s mission, it was difficult for me to locate such people. Simpang Kanan is south of the area where I had received permission to conduct research. It was impossible to travel there to ask questions about these men without violating my research permit and, given the sensitive nature of the reasons for Hamzah and Sabarin’s visit in 1978 (i.e., the burning of four churches in the sub-district), potentially drawing the attention of local authorities. Those with whom I was able to speak about the interreligious tensions of the 1970s, most from places near Simpang Kanan where I could conduct research, quickly changed the subject, telling me that they knew nothing about the topic.

⁵⁸ Both Toba Batak and Karo peoples are thought of in Indonesia as being native to the mountain highlands of North Sumatra. In post-colonial Indonesia they also have widely been thought of as being the indigenous inhabitants of North Sumatra as a whole, although, as will be seen in my discussion below of anti-Christianization polemics, this has been contested by those who feel the native Malay populations of North Sumatra’s coast have been pushed aside by their highland neighbors. Today, most Toba Bataks and some Karo are Christian, but significant portions of both populations are Muslim. In the period of the 1970s, many, if not most Karo, were not affiliated with any of the state-recognized religions, as will become apparent in what follows.

patrons never had acquired proper permits. Further, local Muslim inhabitants began to suspect that at least some among these laborers were involved in Christian missionary activities.

There appear to have been at least three major periods of tension. The first involved calls in the late 1960s by prominent Islamic organizations in South Aceh (i.e., Muhammadiyah, Partai NU, PI Perti) for the government to address the issue of illegal churches.⁵⁹ These same organizations also objected to the promotion of non-Muslims as village and sub-regency heads (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978c). In July of 1968, a controversial article in the Medan printing of the national daily *Sinar Harapan* appeared, which, it can be assumed, discussed some of the tensions in the region. The same coalition of Islamic organizations attacked this article for “damaging the good name of Aceh and [that of] a prominent Islamic religious teacher,” demanding that the article’s author, a priest named Dj. Sinamo, be brought before the local courts to answer for his defaming comments (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978c).⁶⁰ This seems to have resulted in a November 1968 law passed at the level of the South Aceh Regency restricting church building and mission activities in the regency (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978c).

The second round of tensions revolved around the building of a Catholic Church in Mandumpang, Simpang Kanan in 1975. This church was opposed not only by local Muslims but, at least officially, by representatives of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (Huria Kristen Batak Protesten, HKBP) and a non-Christian group of indigenous practitioners whose practice was identified as “Pambi religion” (I., *agama Pambi*). Whether or not this non-Muslim

⁵⁹ In addition, the labor union GASBIINDO joined in some of these calls.

⁶⁰ Unfortunately, I have not been able to locate an extant copy of this edition. The priest may have been Catholic, or he may have been of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (Huria Kristen Batak Protesten, HKBP). Other churches implicated in the archival record of the events include the Indonesian Christian Church (Huria Kristen Indonesia, HKI) and the Indonesian Church of God (Gereja Tuhan Indonesia, GTI).

opposition reflected rivalries between Catholics and these other groups, or some sort of Muslim-Protestant-Pambi alliance born of calculation or other circumstances, is unclear. But in May of the same year the Governor of the province of Aceh, Muzakir Walad, banned the use of private homes as churches (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978c).

The third period of tension, beginning in 1977, included several minor skirmishes, the trafficking of pig meat by Christians “in an open manner,” a new bureaucratic instruction issued by Governor Walad ordering that requests for new church permits in the province not be considered, and, finally, the church burnings of March 1978 (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a, 1978c). Despite the involvement of local authorities, a second round of church burnings and related incidents occurred in June of 1979 before the tensions seem to have faded (anonymous 1979b, 1979c).

My interest in the string of events that led to the 1978 and 1979 church burnings in Simpang Kanan lies primarily in the ways in which certain Muslim parties who became involved in the events, directly or through authoring representations of them, articulated the significance of these tensions. While reconstructing these events in more detail and with greater accuracy is no doubt an interesting and worthwhile project, it is not my goal here. Similarly, I have little desire to apportion responsibility for violence now over thirty years old, even if it remains a sensitive subject in contemporary Aceh. On one level, my sources, primarily drawn from the Acehnese Ulama Council’s archive in Banda Aceh and writings published in national Indonesian Islamic presses, simply do not allow me to address these questions as effectively as I might. More importantly, I instead approach these materials as windows into local and national imaginaries that allow one to see how Aceh’s presumed place in Indonesian and Islamic history became central to issues of Indonesian national concern. Before moving forward with this

analysis, I first must turn to some important aspects of the context in which controversies over the churches built by Christian laborers in South Aceh occurred.

Religious Transformations in the New Order

By the time Hamzah and Sabarin found their way to the Acehnese Ulama Council in 1978, much had changed in Indonesian political and religious life since Aceh had officially been recognized as a special area in 1959. On September 30, 1965, an aborted coup attempt, alleged to have been carried out by factions within Indonesia's large Communist party, resulted in the deaths of seven of the Indonesian military's highest-ranking generals in Jakarta (Anderson and McVey 1971; Crouch 1988, 97-134). This ushered in the end of Sukarno's presidency, which, under pressure from both the army and the Communist Party, had become increasingly autocratic beginning in the late 1950s, precisely the period in which Aceh was gaining official recognition for its special place in histories of Islam and the nation (Crouch 1988, 43-68; Feith 1962). The coup precipitated a blood bath in which five hundred thousand to a million people accused of being leftists or leftist sympathizers were murdered in mass killings throughout Indonesia (Anderson and McVey 1971; Crouch 1988, 135-244). These killings helped to raise to power the military regime that came to be called the "New Order" (I., *orde baru*), led by the general Soeharto, who held the presidency until the beginnings of democratic reform in 1998.

Much has been written on the New Order, most of it focusing on its peculiar relationship to and deployment of dispersed forms of violence, its continuities with the colonial era, and its development of disciplinary discourses focused on local customary practice (I., *adat*), religion, and idealized notions of Indonesian social organization (Bowen 1986, 1989b, 2003; Florida 1995, 1-51; Lev 1985; Pemberton 1994; Stange 1986). Here I want to briefly highlight a few points about the early years of the New Order that are most pertinent to this chapter. First,

following the killings of 1965 and 1966 many Indonesians who had previously practiced mystical and ritual traditions that were not, or only loosely, affiliated with Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, or Buddhism converted to one of these world religions (Kipp 1996; Ricklefs 2012, 138-150; Stange 1986; Steedly 1993). The Indonesian state had recognized these five traditions as legitimate religions since independence. But, in the years following the massacre of the Indonesian left, not to be affiliated with one of them carried potentially grave consequences, as it meant that one ran the risk of being taken as a leftist. The charge was all the more potent when used against those who engaged in mystical practices not affiliated with a recognized religious tradition, usually identified as “beliefs” (*I., kepercayaan*), as in Java the Communist party had been widely associated with such mystical practices. This rush to affiliate with one of these religious traditions continued for over a decade, as individuals and groups converted, sometimes in mass conversion ceremonies of entire villages.

At first glance, Aceh appears as a place where the above described scramble for religious affiliations would be a minor concern. Ninety-eight percent of the Acehnese population was Muslim, with small Christian and Buddhist minorities in urban areas. In 1965, one would have been hard pressed to find someone in Aceh who did not already profess one of the state-recognized faiths. Just across the Acehnese border in a region of North Sumatra known as Karoland, however, there lived large numbers of ritual practitioners, unaffiliated with one of the five state-recognized faiths. Karo mystical practitioners had long been attracted to southwest Aceh, not infrequently converting to Islam during their travels, because of the presence of powerful Islamic mystical teachers there (Kipp 1996, 5, 215-223). This pattern would take on new meanings following the massacres of the mid-1960s. Indeed, as will become apparent

below, these Karos played a sometimes significant role in religiously-inflected spatial imaginaries of Indonesian Muslims following the rise of the New Order.

Another aspect of post-1965 political and religious life in Indonesia that unquestionably influenced Aceh was the creation of new and powerful bureaucratic institutions that arose from the violence of the mid-1960s. Aceh played a prominent role in the development of such bureaucratic institutions, although to this point Aceh's role has been relatively unrecognized (Feener 2013). Aceh's special autonomy in the fields of education, religion, and customary practice allowed it, ironically, to become a sort of experimental field for new methods of governmentality and bureaucratic apparatuses that would later be adopted by the New Order on a national level. Here it is important to keep in mind that Aceh gained such autonomy through a deal brokered between local elites, including Ali Hasjmy, and the national government in a period just before the advent of the New Order. This was the period when a steadily-weakening Sukarno was becoming ever more autocratic. While many accounts have stressed a discontinuity between the Sukarno years and the New Order (Florida 1995, 1-51; Pemberton 1993), others have suggested important continuities across both periods and late-colonialism (Lev 1985). It should come as little surprise, then, that Aceh's autonomy, won during the final years of Sukarno's presidency, came to facilitate the development of some of the New Order's most potent bureaucratic forms.

What kinds of bureaucratic forms were developed in Aceh in the early New Order? As Michael Feener has illustrated, bureaucratic institutions involved in the administration and socialization of Islamic discourses and practices frequently were developed in Aceh at this time (Feener 2012). This was in large part because “religion” (I., *agama*) was one of the areas guaranteed autonomous administration under Aceh's status as a special area. The Acehnese

Ulama Council, to which Hamzah and Sabarin paid their visit in 1978, was one such organization. The council was founded in Aceh shortly after the killings of 1965 and 1966. The explicit rationale for its creation, still recognized in the founding myths circulated by its members today, was the felt need for an Islamic legal basis to justify the killing of suspected Communists, thereby tying the institution and the New Order to the same originating violence.⁶¹ That this first Acehnese council became a model on which a national network of similar institutions was later developed, with branches at the national, provincial, regency, and sub-regency levels, has remained an important part of the self-representations of the institution (Feener 2013). The original Aceh council was absorbed into this national network, known as the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI), in 1975. It remained a provincial branch of the Indonesian Ulama Council until it was granted autonomy in 1998 as a result of a new round of legal reforms in the province.

Other bureaucratic fields besides religion gained similar institutions from the Aceh “laboratory” as well (Feener 2012). The “Aceh Development Board” (in English), a group of economic planners drawn primarily from Banda Aceh’s largest state university, was already claiming to be the predecessor to the national system of Planning Bodies for Development (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah, BAPPEDA) in 1976, just two years after BAPPEDA’s founding. BAPPEDA would become perhaps the most powerful bureaucracy of the New Order, a political regime obsessed with economic development. The Aceh Development Board routinely claimed in its yearly economic reports that the “success of this planning body (i.e., the Aceh Development Board)[...] was an example[...] for other areas in Indonesia. The Presidential decision[... that] founded BAPPEDA throughout Indonesia, at its

⁶¹ This was made clear to me in a meeting with a high-ranking member of the Ulama Consultative Council (Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama, MPU), the current body claiming the mantle of the original organization. See also Feener (2013) and Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (2006, 1-6).

root[...] was based on the model of the Aceh Development Board” (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah Istimewa Aceh 1976). Other New Order bureaucracies, while not claiming to have been founded in Aceh, came to play special roles there. An Acehnese branch of the Union for Efforts at the Improvement of Islamic Education (Gabungan Usaha Perbaikan Pendidikan Islam, GUPPI), for example, was founded in Aceh in the 1970s as part of an effort to drum up support for the government during elections. It came to be involved in efforts at Islamic outreach that were important to later Islamic legal reforms in the province (Feener 2013).

A third and final point related to the political and religious context relevant to my discussion in this chapter centers on the increasing suspicion that began to fester between many Indonesian Muslims and Christians following the advent of the New Order. These suspicions manifested themselves in fears among some Muslims of what came to be called “Christianization” (I., *Kristenisasi*), a blanket term associated not only with proselytization, but with fears of neo-imperialist threats of which Christian missions were understood as the vanguard. While such discourses predated independence, they became increasingly popular in the early New Order. Protestants and Catholics increased their numbers by greater percentages than did Muslims following the killings of 1965 and 1966, and this may have compounded some Muslims’ fears regarding Christian missionary efforts (Mujiburrahman 2006).

Controversies over alleged Christianization became amplified in the national press, especially periodicals associated with prominent Islamic intellectuals such as HAMKA. Anti-proselytization laws that remained from the late Dutch period made it illegal to conduct mission work among a people who already belonged to one of the state-recognized religions. These laws often were understood in territorialized manners, identifying certain regions, namely, those without large populations of Muslims, Christians, Hindus, or Buddhists, as possible mission

fields, while demarcating other territories as off-limits. In nationally-circulating publications in the 1970s, public figures such as HAMKA and the former Indonesian prime minister Muhammad Natsir articulated their fears that wealthy and powerful Christian missionaries were targeting poor Muslims in areas where such activities were illegal (Natsir 1973). These figures responded publically to events such as a 1967 controversy over the building of a Methodist church in Meulaboh, West Aceh (see Map 2), one of the earliest examples of national attention to allegedly illegal churches (Hefner 2000; Mujiburrahman 2006). Mujiburrahman, in his study of Muslim-Christian relations during the New Order, takes this controversy as the starting point of the sometimes bitter polemics between Muslims and Christians that have come to characterize one major strand of Indonesian religious discourse ever since (Mujiburrahman 2006, 29-35). Addressing such controversies, intellectuals such as those mentioned above read them through the lens of Christianization, seeing them as religious and political threats to the nation (anonymous 1979a, 1979c; Mujiburrahman 2006, 29-35, 57-104; Natsir 1973).

Hamzah and Sabarin probably would have traveled through Meulaboh to reach Banda Aceh in 1978. During fieldwork in the region, I found that the 1967 episode over the Meulaboh church remained one of the most important focal points of public memory. Most Muslims, almost fifty years later, passionately defended the local government's decision to refuse permission for a “new church” (I., *gereja baru*) in Meulaboh. Catholics with whom I spoke recalled how, following the violence of 1965 and 1966, the church and school that they believed to have been fully legal were dismantled.⁶²

⁶² Mujiburrahman’s account identifies the Meulaboh controversy as being focused on the building of an illegal Methodist church, although he does record the involvement of the Indonesian Catholic Party in debates on the issue in the national parliament (Mujiburrahman 2006, 29-35). There remains a large Methodist presence of predominantly Chinese-Indonesians in Meulaboh, who remain without an official church or other building for the conduct of ritual practice. But Catholics, too, recalled in great detail how their church and school were rapidly dismantled over a period of several days in the late 1960s. One of the reasons this episode has remained in public memory may be that it continues to be a live issue. During my fieldwork, for example, Catholics were able to

Wild Churches in ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf’s Homeland

Keeping the above context in mind, one is better equipped to engage archival and press sources relating to the tensions that led to the church burnings of 1978 and 1979 in Simpang Kanan. Less than two months after Hamzah and Sabarin’s visit to the Acehnese Ulama Council in August of 1978, the national level Indonesian Ulama Council sent a letter to Banda Aceh requesting information from the Acehnese Council about the church burnings earlier that year (Rimba 1978). Attached to the letter sent by the Acehnese Ulama Council in response was the report of the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan brought by Hamzah and Sabarin. The months after Hamzah and Sabarin’s visit, therefore, marked a point at which at least three self-consciously Muslim organizations, each operating on a different administrative scale, became involved in the controversies over the wild churches on Aceh’s west coast. These were the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan, the provincial Acehnese Ulama Council, and the national Indonesian Ulama Council. My analysis in this section will focus on the ways in which sources drawn from interested parties on each of these administrative levels described the problem of wild churches through interconnected geographic imaginaries linking Aceh, Islam, and Indonesia. I begin with the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan.

Whether or not Hamzah and Sabarin had realized their report might make it into the hands of the Indonesian Ulama Council in Jakarta, it is clear that the organization they represented was attempting to address the tensions in South Aceh through making appeals up a

secure an unmarked building for informal use by members of their community. In private, many Catholics with whom I spoke understood this to be a small victory in a decades-long struggle to regain their religious community’s lost buildings and property. However, upon its opening, neighbors were already reported to be complaining about the founding of a “new church” (I., *gereja baru*) and the exact legal status of the building was being questioned publicly. Further, rumors spread rapidly that the new building had been built using funds for post-tsunami reconstruction from Catholic charities, something that, if not surprising, in this context carried with it the sinister connotations of the meddling of outsiders in local religious affairs.

bureaucratic chain. Before sending Hamzah and Sabarin to Banda Aceh, the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan had asked for help from local authorities in South Aceh (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a). Frustrated by what they took as a lack of response by these local authorities, Hamzah and Sabarin came to the Acehnese Ulama council with numerous pleas. Primary among them was a request that the Council act to rein in the growing Christian presence in Simpang Kanan: “[W]e hope [...] that the growth and activities of the Christian religion in the form of the unrestrained outreach (I., *dakwah liarnya*) in Simpang Kanan immediately will receive attention and a positive solution that achieves religious harmony (I., *kerukunan beragama*)” (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978c).

Of all of the extant sources on the incidents of Muslim-Christian tensions in South Aceh, the most detailed and descriptive are those that were generated by the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan. These materials, both the report submitted to the Acehnese Ulama Council and documents submitted to local authorities in South Aceh earlier the same year, are full of references, for example, to the regular trips Karo laborers were making through Muslim villages while carrying pig meat, the names of specific people involved in confrontations, and other details.⁶³ Such details were tied to an extremely local knowledge of and interest in place and politics. They were not repeated in the materials of the Acehnese Ulama Council or the national-level sources I discuss below, which tended to treat the problems in the sub-regency in a general manner through reference to anonymous actors at the sub-regency, provincial, and national level.

⁶³ Pig meat is forbidden for practicing Muslims, and many Indonesian Muslims find being in the presence of pigs, dead or alive, repulsive. In fact, the practice of pig farming is a recurring motif in Acehnese discourses that are meant to illustrate how religious others in Aceh have crossed lines of interreligious respect and decency. Ali Hasjmy, for example, in an oral history interview recorded in 1974 and kept at the Indonesian National Archive in Jakarta, blamed the outbreak of the Darul Islam rebellion in the 1950s in large part on the personal habits of Batak military units stationed in Aceh. These Bataks, he said, “sometimes bathed naked [in rivers...] and they ate pigs” (Hasjmy 1974). Pigs featured prominently in at last one national-level formulation of the threat of Christianization along the Aceh-North Sumatra border, which I discuss in more detail below.

Even more telling of the kinds of spatial imaginaries at play in these reports were certain references to history. A June report to local authorities, for example, contextualized the church burnings in light of “historical background” that included, among the first two bullet points of the historical section, references to Aceh’s status as “the AREA OF MECCA’S VERANDAH since centuries past” and the “‘AREA OF CAPITAL’ for the struggle[...] for independence” (capitalized as in original) (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a). The fourth bullet point in this section drew attention to the “blood of Acehnese MARTYRS (I., *SYUHADA*)... shed in the [national] struggle” (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a). Later, the letter identified South Aceh as the birthplace of “Shyekh Abdurauf Syiak Kuala,” the last of the great sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Acehnese *ulama* prominent in the Mecca’s verandah narrative strand (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a).

Thus, within the first page of a four page report, the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan had placed the tensions in South Aceh firmly within historical frames tied to three of the four narrative strands and toponyms described in Chapter 2. They invoked two of the toponyms explicitly (i.e., Mecca’s verandah, area of capital) and evoked a third through references to martyrdom and the anti-colonial struggle (i.e., land of the Acehnese dagger). The authors of the report, however, gave these narratives a distinctly local inflection, placing the alleged affronts of Christian migrants in “the land of Shyekh Abdurauf Syiak Kuala’s birth.” This reference to ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf placed the specific territory of Simpang Kanan, and South Aceh more generally, within broader narratives of Aceh writ large that the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan clearly felt would move the authorities they encountered on their bureaucratic journey.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The rest of the June report described the encroachment of Christian laborers and missionaries into the region. Given the prominence of the historical section of the report, however, it would be a mistake not to consider

It is impossible to say, based on the extant sources, how the Acehnese Ulama Council responded to Hamzah and Sabarin's visit. The council already had been involved in attempts to address the influx of Christian laborers in South Aceh for several years. In 1975, for example, at the time of an earlier controversy over the building of an allegedly illegal Catholic Church in Mandumpang, South Aceh, the Acehnese Ulama Council's Commission on Research and Planning had issued a programming plan entitled "Overcoming the Problem of Christianization in the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan, South Aceh" (Komisi B Majlis Ulama Aceh 1975). By the time the Acehnese Ulama Council turned their files on the church burnings of 1978 over to the national Indonesian Ulama Council in Jakarta, two months after Hamzah and Sabarin's visit, the Acehnese Ulama Council's head, Teungku H. Abdullah Ujong Rimba, seemed a touch exasperated by the on-going difficulties on the southwest coast. He noted in his letter to the Indonesian Ulama Council that, "[we] have already made efforts to discuss the aforementioned problem with the provincial authorities but have yet to complete everything. Please keep in mind the busyness associated with other duties. But, God willing, we will continue again" (Rimba 1978).

While it is unclear how the Acehnese Ulama Council responded to Hamzah and Sabarin's visit, the documents associated with the 1975 programming plan make clear some of the spatial imaginaries at play for the council in the controversies over Christian presences in South Aceh. This plan of action was issued in response to a letter from the regency-level Ulama Council describing local concerns over Christian laborers and missionaries in Simpang Kanan. The letter explained:

how the narratives invoked in it placed the events in Acehnese history. The report to the Acehnese Ulama Council delivered by Hamzah and Sabarin in August of 1978 did not contain as many references to Aceh's history or South Aceh's place in it. However, the June report to local authorities was included along with the August report and was saved in the Acehnese Ulama Council's files in the provincial archive in Banda Aceh.

[C]onsistent with its position next to an area in which Christians already have advantages/strengths (i.e., North Sumatra), the area of the sub-regency of Simpang Kanan has been made the center of activity for the followers of Christianity for all of the Regency of South Aceh[...] [I]n the midst of Islam has been founded a church, even though Aceh itself absolutely consists of the Muslim community (I., *umat Islam*), and is a place where the substance of the Islamic path (I., *syari'at Islam*) is carried out. (Budiman and Lubis 1975)

Note that this mention of the carrying out of the “the substance of the Islamic path” is a reference to Aceh’s special autonomy in religious affairs. While not mentioning Aceh’s legal status explicitly, anyone associated with the Acehnese Ulama Council at this time would have understood the reference immediately. The council’s own legitimacy was in part derived from this special legal status and such references were common-place in their own documents and literature. Further, note the stark spatial contrast drawn in this complaint. North Sumatra was identified as “an area in which Christians already have advantages/strengths.” Aceh is a place that “absolutely consists of the Muslim community.” The proximity of North Sumatra to Simpang Kanan is taken as both a logical reason for the tensions (i.e., “consistent with its position next to an area”) and an implicit threat.

Aside from the oblique reference to Aceh’s special legal status, the 1975 letter by the South Aceh Ulama Council made no mention of any of the toponyms associated with Aceh’s history. It reflected a dry, bureaucratic language that was characteristic of New Order government sources more generally. The proposed plan of action forwarded by the provincial-level Acehnese Ulama Council’s Commission on Research and Planning was written in an equally bureaucratic style, and it made no explicit mention of any of Aceh’s claims to special status. But both documents participated in another idiom of spatialized religious difference that distinguished between Aceh and North Sumatra. This was the discourse of “Christianization” (I., *Kristenisasi*) discussed briefly in the previous section. Both documents invoked Christianization

explicitly as a threat linking Aceh to the alleged efforts of Christian missions to convert Muslims elsewhere in Indonesia.

As mentioned briefly above, theories and fears of Christianization were widely circulated in Indonesia in the 1970s. This occurred, among other means, through publications such as *Panji Masyarakat*. In these publications Islamic intellectuals such as HAMKA and the former Indonesian prime minister Muhammad Natsir promoted the idea that Indonesia was threatened by an on-going process of missionary activity tied to neo-imperial threats. While having a variety of iterations and forms (Mujiburrahman 2006), these discourses were unmistakably linked to spatial imaginaries of the nation that, in many ways, mirrored those underpinned by narratives of Islamization. Christian missions were portrayed as originating elsewhere, either outside the particular region of Indonesia considered at risk or outside the nation altogether. These missionaries were identified as entering an Islamic part of the archipelago in order to trick or tempt Muslims into apostasy using financial resources, misleading information, seduction, or intimidation and force (Natsir 1973). Success or failure in combating Christianization was articulated in terms of territorial integrity. Losses in the battle with Christian missionaries rarely were expressed in terms of individual converts, but through the loss of *regions* to mission activities. All of this was apparent in an article by Muhammad Natsir, published in *Panji Masyarakat* in June of 1973:

Indonesia today, even more so since receiving independence, has become a target of Christianization efforts from all corners of the world. From Europe, where there is the “World Council of Churches” [...] and from the Vatican [...] and from the United States [...] from where come] Baptists, Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, “Student Crusade for Christ,” and others... All of these come to Indonesia with resources from *foreign peoples* in the form of priests, religion teachers, and social workers [...] They come here with modern tools for Christian propaganda [...] in fact even bible ships (I., *kapal2 penginjil*) that come to [...] islands such as Lombok, Sumbawa, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku and others [...] In regions outside of Java, such as Nusatenggara and Kalimantan, missionaries

already use *modern communication devices*[...] Civil servants and postal workers receive “service” from missionary offices, especially in areas from East Kupang to Waingapu, twice a week[...] The map that has just been published by the Council of Indonesian Churches [...] gives a picture of the Indonesian archipelago already divided up to become targets of not less than 41 Churches[...] What is more [...] Catholic factions have also publicized a map, making it even clearer that Christianization in Indonesia has expanded. (Natsir 1973, 17)⁶⁵

All of the sources I have examined thus far in this chapter, including those of the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan, participated in this spatial imaginary of Christianization. Hamzah and Sabarin’s report to the Acehnese Ulama Council, for example, made repeated mention of Christian missionaries, ministers, and priests “from outside the area” (I., *dari luar daerah*) and, in one case, “from overseas” (I., *dari luar negeri*) (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a, 1978c). One of the reports made explicit that these figures were coming “wildly across the Tapanuli-Aceh border” (I., *secara liar melalui perbatasan Tapanuli Aceh*) and asked the government to “immediately bring order” (I., *segara menertibkan*) to this influx (Ummat Islam Kecamatan Simpang Kanan 1978a). Similar language ran throughout the documents of the Acehnese Ulama Council and its regency-level counterparts.

Returning to the 1975 plan of action of the Acehnese Ulama Council’s Commission on Research and Planning, the Commission proposed to “pursue as much objective data as possible,” all the while conducting preemptive “faith immunizations” (I., *immunisasi akidah*), in order to counteract the threat of Christianization in South Aceh. These “faith immunizations” included providing sermons and other religious literature to Islamic officials at the local level, as well as other interventions in Islamic educational institutions in the sub-regency. Keeping a medicalized idiom, the plan referred to the problem of “Christianization in Aceh” as an “abscess that although [...] treated with medicine [...] sometimes swells until it can be felt painful and

⁶⁵ Italics and quotation marks in original.

bothersome” (Komisi B Majlis Ulama Aceh 1975). The medical metaphors of the action plan evoked a sense of invasion that was constitutive of the discourse on Christianization.

What emerges in the documents, then, is a fusing of two complementary spatial imaginaries, that of Aceh as historically and morally distinct from, but historically constitutive of, the rest of the archipelago, and that of an Indonesian nation under territorial threat as a result of Christianization. The 1978 reports from the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan articulated the alleged encroachment of Christian laborers and missionaries in terms colored by evocative references to Aceh’s Islamic history and South Aceh’s specific place within that history as the birthplace of ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf. The 1975 letters and reports of the provincial and regency-level Ulama Councils did not mention Aceh’s special history explicitly, but did so implicitly through invoking Aceh’s legal status. Both groups of sources focused on a tide of Christian missionary activity taken as an instance of Christianization. The history of Aceh as a special place and fears of Christianization came to be mapped onto the space of Aceh and North Sumatra, with the Aceh-North Sumatra border representing a boundary along which the moral valences of both discourses were brought into relief. Note how in all the documents I have discussed, influxes of Christians arose from across the Acehnese border with North Sumatra.

How were the events in South Aceh received by wider networks of national-level religious activists and bureaucrats? I have been able to find no evidence of actions taken by the national-level Indonesian Ulama Council once the file of materials I have discussed here was turned over to their care in October of 1978. But a series of 1979 reports in the magazine *Panji Masyarakat* offers clues (anonymous 1979a, 1979b, 1979c; Fauzan 1979). These reports reveal that in June of 1979 six more churches were burned and several other altercations between

Simpang Kanan's Muslim and Christian residents occurred. In the second half of 1979, a ceremony was held that consisted of a joint pledge of peace by Muslims and Christians, accompanied by exchanges of highly symbolic objects of regional ethnic identity, the Acehnese dagger (I., *rencong*) and the Batak ceremonial cloth (I., *ulos*) (anonymous 1979c). National press coverage of this "customary practice ceremony" (I., *upacara adat*), said to have been attended by 6,000 people, attributed it to the intervention of regency-level authorities on both sides of the Acehnese border (i.e., the regencies of South Aceh, Central Tapanuli, and Dairi) (anonymous 1979c).

National press coverage of the controversies over wild churches involved spatial imaginaries similar to those described in the documents above. These articles tended to stress territorialized and ethnicized identities that were tied to religious affiliation and marked by highly symbolic objects, such as pigs. Consider the following, from an October 1979 *Panji Masyarakat* article:

This is what has happened since Indonesia became independent. Muslims have been sufficiently tolerant, for the sake of the Unity of the People, for the sake of the national Five Principles (I., *Pancasila*). But beginning with the 1945 Revolution, the lands of the Kingdom of Serdang (i.e., the area of the North Sumatran capital of Medan) have been colonized by our brothers (I., *saudara-saudara kita*) from the Batak lands, followers of Christianity who are aggressive[...] The method of this colonization was amazing. Before colonizing, what was done first was the releasing of domesticated pigs into the land that would be colonized. The native Malay population in those lands was forced to retreat... because of the feeling of repugnance at facing pigs[...] [B]ecause[...] the ones who colonized these lands also were participants in the Revolution[... Muslims] were afraid of being identified as "Contra-revolutionary [if they opposed Christians...]" However, in their hearts[...] arose a question: "Is this really the meaning of religious harmony?" [Namely], that the followers of another religion freely let their pigs roam, the founding of churches cannot be slowed down, while the founding of mosques in one's own land and one's own village is difficult? Today churches are founded all the time, and there are also many pigs[...] Now it is heard that this same method has been used as well in[...] Simpang Kanan. (anonymous 1979a)

In this quotation the movement of Christian laborers into Simpang Kanan is described as the extension of strategies by Batak peoples to take over new territory from their Muslim neighbors in North Sumatra. This plot was alleged in the article to hinge on the cultivation of pigs, which the article claimed were used to push Muslims residents from their homes. Here one sees Christianization articulated as both a neo-colonial and territorialized process, expressed in distinctly ethnic terms. Note the ways in which the quotation places the process it describes in the context of colonialism and the Indonesian nation. Muslims had been reluctant to oppose their Christian “brothers” (I., *saudara-saudara*) because of their shared revolutionary struggle. Yet the process of pushing Muslims from their homelands using pig cultivation is described using the same word as was used to indicate Dutch colonialism, that is, *penjajahan* (I.)

How was the relationship between Aceh and the nation described in national news coverage? Consider the following, from a different October 1979 article:

[T]hese new immigrants (i.e., Christians in Simpang Kanan), who have a different religion and customary practice, have not been able to adapt themselves to the population in the area[...] Where ever these new immigrants live, they care for or raise pigs[... offending] the feelings and peace of mind of the population. Aside from this they founded churches at an increasing rate[...] Did not the Christian community[... elsewhere in Aceh] intend to found churches[...]? But they respected the people around them and the laws of the Government of the Province of the Special Area of Aceh regarding its specialness (I., *keistimewaan*): Education, Religion and Customary Practice[...] The psychology of the Acehnese population is such that it is not certain an Acehnese will become angry if he is personally offended. But if his religion is affronted, he will voluntarily sacrifice his life[...] to protect the sacredness of his religion and be known as a martyr[...] (Fauzan 1979)

Note two complementary logics at work in the above passage. On one hand, the quotation suggested that Indonesian Christians living in Muslim-majority regions were required to act in a way that did not offend the sensibilities of their Muslim neighbors. This logic had been expressed as early as 1967 by the Indonesian Minister of Religion, Saifuddin Zuhri,

specifically in reference to the Meulaboh controversy described above (Mujiburrahman 2006, 35-38). It would go on to be a common refrain during Muslim-Christian tensions in different parts of Indonesia for decades to come, placing the onus on religious minorities to protect “religious harmony” (I., *kerukunan beragama*). Religious minorities were expected to avoid upsetting the local majority by refraining from public displays of religious practice and identity.

But note also how the above formulation drew attention to the special characteristics of Aceh and the Acehnese. Had not other Christians in Aceh wanted to found their own churches, yet decided against doing so because of Aceh’s special status? This special status compounded the more general notion that religious minorities were responsible for maintaining religious harmony. The author of the above quotation went on to buttress this argument through a psychologized rendering of the “land of the Acehnese dagger” narrative strand. If Acehnese were relatively tolerant of personal insult, this author suggested, an affront to an Acehnese’s religion conversely was grounds for a vigorous, even violent, defense.

These quotations from *Panji Masyarakat* reveal that the fused spatial imaginaries of Aceh as a special place and Christianization as a threat to the nation were compelling beyond Aceh’s borders. This reflected, in part, the same interests that brought non-Acehnese intellectuals to narrate histories of Aceh more generally. Note how narratives of threatened Christianization paralleled narratives of Islamization, even as the former narrated a perceived threat to the historical process of Islamization that the latter purported to describe. Narratives of Christianization created their own value-laden geographies of the archipelago, at times reinforcing and at times challenging the valences of the value-laden geographies inscribed by common narratives of Islamization. Given Aceh’s central place in narratives of Islamization, it is little wonder that perceived threats of Christianization raised the ire of many of the same

intellectuals who took reversing of the valuations of Dutch narratives of Islamization to be an anti-colonial act. The Acehnese border with North Sumatra became a place on which national attention to questions of religious pluralism, proselytization, and the place of Aceh in the Indonesian nation came to be focused. The moral boundary separating Aceh from North Sumatra was doubly inscribed, once by Aceh's seminal place in narratives of Islamization, and once by North Sumatra's status as a perceived center of Christianization.

Crossing Borders with the Acehnese Ulama Council in the 1970s

Perceived threats of Christianization in South Aceh were not the only thing in the region of the Aceh-North Sumatra border that drew the attention of the Acehnese Ulama Council and their national activist and bureaucratic allies in this time period. On September 29, 1978, during the two months between Hamzah and Sabarin's visit and the passing of the Acehnese Ulama Council's documents on the matter to the Indonesian Ulama Council in Jakarta, one Berti Yuswar Lingga, a farmer from just south of the Acehnese border in the regency of Dairi (see Map 2), converted to Islam in Banda Aceh. Witnessing this conversion were high-ranking members of the Acehnese Ulama Council, including Ali Hasjmy, then vice-chair, and Abdullah Ujong Rimba, then chair. Rimba was listed on Yuswar's certificate of conversion to Islam (I., *surat pengislaman*) as the one who "converted" (I., *di Islam*) Berti Yuswar (Surat Keterangan Memeluk Agama Islam 1978). The certificate of conversion is signed by the head of the Department of Religion for Banda Aceh, placing the ceremony in that city and, given the profile of those serving as witnesses at the event (e.g., Ali Hasjmy), presumably at the grand Baiturrahman Mosque (Surat Keterangan Memeluk Agama Islam 1978).

Berti Yuswar, who took the name of Baktiar Yusuf at his conversion ceremony, was not the first convert from Dairi to have sparked the interest of the Acehnese Ulama Council. Seven

years earlier, on March 8, 1971, one Nubung Sinulingga had taken the name Moehammad while converting at Baiturrahman (Surat Keterangan Masuk Islam 1971). This conversion of a “customary chief” (I., *kepala adat*) from the religion of Perbegu, a sort of spirit cosmology adhered to by many Karo people, was publicized widely by the Acehnese Ulama Council, who contacted the local press and the Banda Aceh branches of the national radio and television stations in the weeks before and after Nubung’s conversion (Linga 1971; Rimba 1971a). Nubung’s coming to Banda Aceh with the intention of converting was first announced in a February 22, 1971 letter from the chair of the “Committee for the Building of the Gunungsajang Mosque-Madrasah” in Dairi (Linga 1971). In this correspondence, the chair noted that Nubung was the “grandchild of a former supernatural teacher” (I., *tjutju dari Guru... jang sakti dulu*). With Nubung’s conversion to Islam, the Gunungsajang Mosque-Madrasah Committee was optimistic that the conversion of his followers and descendants, as many as five hundred households, would follow.⁶⁶

The 1971 conversion of Muhammad Nubung Sinulingga seems to have involved the Acehnese Ulama Council because the convert was a part of a network of “new Muslims” (I., *mualaf*) from Dairi that had been fostering ties with Acehnese governmental agencies in support of their religious education and development. In fact, the other points discussed in the letter from the Committee for the Building of the Gunungsajang Mosque-Madrasah announcing Nubung’s imminent arrival in Banda Aceh suggests the extent of these ties. In it were mentioned the trials the committee had experienced when the chair took a brief leave of his position in April 1970 and requests for “funding and resources” so that “our children, who have just entered

⁶⁶ This expectation that others would follow in Nubung’s footsteps was in part based on patterns of conversion to Islam and other religions in this period. As discussed above, it was not uncommon in the years after the 1965 and 1966 massacres that entire villages or family groups would convert to one of the religions recognized by the Indonesian state. See the description of HAMKA’s trip to Siberteng below. On this pattern, as it related to the conversion of Christianity on Java, see Ricklefs (2012, 138-150).

Islam... are not as if blind in our religion" (Lingga 1971). The letter discussed a representative who previously had been sent from Dairi to Banda Aceh with the goal of gathering financial aid. In fact, as of June 6, 1971, after Nubung Sinulingga's conversion had been publicized by the MUI, over six hundred thousand Indonesian rupiah, along with three pieces of "pure gold" and six hundred seventy-two pieces of mixed cloth, had been collected for the building of the Gunungsajang mosque and madrasah, all from the regencies of West and South Aceh (Sinulingga and Sinulingga 1971).⁶⁷

Further correspondence links the Acehnese Ulama Council with Karo converts in Dairi. From April until October of 1971, for instance, a series of letters was circulated between the Dairi Department of Religion, Dairi village heads, and various government offices in Aceh, including the Acehnese Ulama Council, the Department of Religion, and the Office of Religious Affairs. These letters regarded Karo students who had been sent to religious boarding schools in Aceh, in particular the town of Tiro in Pidie, but who were in need of funds to support themselves and their studies (Kudadiri 1971; Rimba 1971b; Rimba 1971c).

Dairi lies three-fourths of the way along what is now the Banda Aceh-Medan road on the west coast of Sumatra. It is slightly further from Banda Aceh than the sub-regency of Simpang Kanan, from which Hamzah and Sabarin made the 500 kilometer trek in the same time period. Why were Acehnese Ulama Council members and other Acehnese officials so involved in supporting the new Muslims of a poor and rather isolated regency on the other side of Aceh's border?

⁶⁷ These were substantial amounts, although not nearly sufficient for finishing the mosque and madrasah project. For example, in a January 1971 letter a 20 by 8 meter housing unit for teachers that already had begun to be erected is identified as having cost 2,000,000 rupiah to that point. The source does not indicate how much work was left to be finished on that unit (Sinulingga, Lingga and Setepu 1971).

Rita Smith Kipp suggests that Karo, who make up the majority of the inhabitants in Dairi, have long been attracted to Islam in small numbers as a result of their close proximity to Muslims living to their north and east. The Karo stories regarding pre-colonial conversions to Islam that Kipp cites all contain protagonists from Aceh. She suggests that links in the pre-colonial period between small numbers of Muslim converts in Karoland, and their patrons and teachers in southwest Aceh, were strong (Kipp 1996, 5, 215-223).⁶⁸ Seen in this light Acehnese Ulama Council support for new Muslims from Karoland can be understood as part of a broader history of conversion, patronage, and the seeking of education and other resources that have long connected Karo people with Acehnese.

However, following the massacres of 1965 and 1966, Karoland came to hold a specific place in certain national imaginaries of legitimate mission fields in the post-massacre rush to affiliate with one of Indonesia's five recognized religions. Until this point, Karo largely engaged in ritual practices identified as Perbegu or Pambi. Following the massacres of the mid-1960s, however, a large number of Karo began converting to Christianity, with a smaller group becoming Muslim. Still others began efforts to have their indigenous practices recognized as a form of Hinduism (Kipp 1996, 215-223; Steedly 1993). It is difficult not to see such patterns as they manifested in the 1970s through the lens of the spatial imaginaries described above, imaginaries that took the border between Aceh and North Sumatra to be a marker of qualitatively different kinds of places as a result of differing histories of Islamization.

Returning to the pages of *Panji Masyarakat*, one finds an evocative 1979 description of Karo conversion. In this article readers were taken on a ride along with an elderly HAMKA as he traveled to a conversion ceremony in the village of Siberteng. HAMKA's journey to the Karo

⁶⁸ For a related discussion of conversion into Islam among the highland peoples of North Sumatra as a means of participating in the political and economic life of Malay sultanates, see Steedly (1993, 51-52; 1996).

highlands, narrated by his traveling companion H. Amiruddin Siregar, included several features also found in the Acehnese Ulama Council archival sources regarding newly converted Karos in Dairi. The remoteness of the village, the desire to build schools and mosques with the financial support of a sponsor from outside the region, and the linking of the conversion of the village head to the conversion of the village are all features of this narrative that would have seemed familiar to those Acehnese officials who were working with Karo converts in the early years of the 1970s:

At 17:00 in the evening from Kabanjahe came a representative of the Coordinating Body for Islamic Da'wah in Karoland who wanted to invite Buya Hamka to personally conduct a conversion ceremony (I., *pensyahadatan*) for 200 Karo families in the village of Siberteng, sub-regency Barosjahe Brastagi[...] They said very clearly that the road to the village of Siberteng was quite difficult[...]. Around 1967 the Karo population that was Muslim was about 16,500 people, but now it had already reached more or less 65 to 73 thousand[...]. Once [during the journey] the Toyota jeep flipped and I (i.e., the author) hit my head against a metal pole. Luckily Buya sat in the front rather comfortably so that he could hold on tightly[...]. We arrived in Siberteng at 11 and the ceremony immediately began[...]. In a choked-up voice Buya Hamka led Nikel Baros (i.e., the village head) in converting to Islam, and finally Buya gave his own name to Nikel Baros. Buya said "I give my name ABDUL MALIK to become yours[...]" [E]ven I joined in the commotion and in fact shed a few tears[...]. The climax of the event was the profession of faith (I., *pensyahadatan*)[...]. A sponsor] had already promised he would build a Mosque and a School for the village[...]. The coming of Buya Hamka[...] had not been planned but was truly the will of God, so that Buya could spread Islam (I., *meng Islamkan*) in Karoland[...]. We left Karoland, full of new Muslims, in a cool mountain air. (Siregar 1979, 21-23)⁶⁹

I raise the example of the Acehnese Ulama Council's support of Muslim converts from Dairi as another instance in which one sees a significant interest in the region of the Aceh-North Sumatra border among Acehnese and non-Acehnese Muslim elites.⁷⁰ This interest again focused

⁶⁹ Buya is a title of respect that commonly was used in front of HAMKA's name. It continued to be used by many Indonesians at the time of my research. Recall that "HAMKA" is an acronym for Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. Thus, HAMKA gave his name "ABDUL MALK" to Nikel Baros in the above quotation.

⁷⁰ I should note that this interest was not limited to the southern portion of that border, near the sub-regency of Simpang Kanan and the regency of Dairi, the location on which I have focused here. Interest in the southern border regions generated most of the extant materials in the Acehnese Ulama Council's archive. But the northern

on the religious affiliations of those living along and crossing, potentially or actually, this border. While no explicit links were made between the territory of South Aceh and the support of new Muslims in Dairi, for example, through claims that the support of new Muslims might stem the Christian presence in Simpang Kanan, the implicit links between the two are suggestive. These links include those of proximity and circumstance (i.e., Karo were present in South Aceh in the period, new Karo converts might have traveled the same roads as did Hamzah and Sabarin in 1978, etc.) and those related to underlying similarities in the ways in which both interreligious tensions in South Aceh and support for new Muslims in Karoland were carried out against a backdrop of new possibilities for Christian and Muslim missionary activity opened up by the advent of the New Order and set along the Aceh-North Sumatra border.

Conclusion: Islamization and Christianization in an Indonesian Province

This chapter has examined a series of documents in the archive of the Acehnese Ulama Council from the 1970s. These documents reveal an intense interest on the part of the council, as well as other parties inscribed in the sources, in the region along either side of Aceh's southern border with the province of North Sumatra. What has this treatment of the Aceh-North Sumatra border in the 1970s revealed that is of consequence for my larger discussion of space, time, and Islamic practice in Aceh in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries?

The concern shown by local, provincial, and national political actors regarding the presence of Christians in South Aceh in the 1970s could be taken as driven by what Timothy Cresswell has called a “moral geography” (Cresswell 2005). Moral geographies consist of socially-recognized valences marking places as proper or improper for certain classes of people, objects, or activities (Bourdieu 1970; Cresswell 1996, 2005; DeRogatis 2003). The interesting

portion of the Aceh-North Sumatra border, just south of the town of Kuala Simpang, also was a site of interest (see Map 2). See, for example, the materials held in the folder entitled “Bundle (Regarding) Religious Followers at the Transmigration Project in Pernaram, Regency of East Aceh” (Folder 313, Bundle 56).

question in this case is how such a moral geography came to be inscribed on Indonesian territory. The answer to this question lies in the combination of common narratives of Islamization and people's deeply-resonating experiential and affective relationships with the Acehnese past. These two factors allowed for the fusing of the idea of Aceh as a special place and the spatialized articulations of the threat of Christianization discussed above. Further, these fused geographic imaginaries were compelling for a wide variety of social actors on local, provincial, and national levels because of how narratives of Acehnese history placed the province in a relationship with the Indonesian nation, marking Aceh as unique within, yet constitutive of, the Indonesian Republic.

Of particular interest to my discussion in this chapter is the way in which Aceh's special status was linked to narratives of Islamization. This is because the documents I analyze here all were tied to Islamic activism involving Islamization or the staving off of the perceived threat of Christianization. Accounts of Islamization and Christianization represented parallel narrative forms, each relying on episodes that described conversion in terms of the progressive movement of Islam or Christianity through the archipelago. In the course of Indonesia's twentieth- and twenty-first-century history, narratives of Islamization and Christianization have jointly transformed and re-inscribed value-laden geographies of the archipelago, a point vividly made in the quotation by Muhammad Natsir above: "The map that has just been published by the Council of Indonesian Churches [...] gives a picture of the Indonesian archipelago already divided up to become targets of not less than 41 Churches."⁷¹ Thus, controversies over wild churches in South Aceh, or interest in Karo converts on the other side of Aceh's border with North Sumatra, represent phenomena in which assumptions about the intersection of Acehnese history, Islam,

⁷¹ Indeed, Michael Laffan suggests that such entwined histories of Islamization and Christianization have an even longer history, stretching to the early colonial period (Laffan 2011, 65-122).

and the Indonesian nation intersected with issues of national concern tied to religious pluralism, proselytization, and the place of religion in the national imaginary.

Remembering this helps to clarify the stakes of these controversies for the different groups who became involved in them. For national Islamic elites like HAMKA and Mohammad Natsir, as well as many of those who read their works on the pages of *Panji Masyarakat* and other journals, alleged Christianization in Aceh was one in a series of assaults on the nation, a harbinger of imminent religious and political ruin that required a decisive response. That such an assault was taking place on “Mecca’s verandah” must have appeared particularly threatening. It was one thing to push Muslim Malays out of North Sumatra, a province widely recognized as Christian even in the 1970s even though Muslims made up a majority of its population. But converting Aceh to Christianity, as unlikely a possibility as this may seem in retrospect, was an affront to the very font of Indonesian Islam.⁷² As such, it threatened to reconfigure the entire archipelago-wide map of valuations based on differential degrees and histories of Islamization.

Ironically, this point may have been made most effectively through an example that appears to be among the most *local* of expressions of the fused geographic imaginaries described in this chapter. Recall that in their June 1978 report to local authorities in the Regency of South Aceh, the Islamic Community of the Sub-Regency of Simpang Kanan drew attention to the regency’s status as the birthplace of ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf. Above I drew attention to how this claim rested on histories of Aceh as Mecca’s verandah that allowed authorities in Simpang Kanan to draw attention to their locality’s place in that narrative strand. Yet ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf was not only a great mystic and religious scholar, but held the pedigree (*I., silsilah*) for the Islamic mystical order of the Syattariyah, expressed in genealogical form. Many mystical teachers of this order in

⁷² Again, recall the title of the 1981 volume, “From Here It Spread” (Panitia Penyelenggara Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur’an 1981).

the archipelago in later centuries traced their own pedigrees to him, thereby making ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf a human embodiment of Islam’s transmission via Aceh. The invoking of South Aceh as ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf’s birthplace in the context of the controversy over alleged Christianization in Simpang Kanan was thus an extremely powerful example of the fusing of Aceh’s special place in the nation and the threat of Christianization, begging a suggestive rhetorical question: From here (Simpang Kanan) it (Islam) spread?

Those Indonesian Muslims who in the 1970s became involved in controversies over wild churches in South Aceh did so as Muslims acting within historical frames underpinned by narratives of the archipelago’s Islamization and what they perceived as the threatened reversal of this centuries-long process. These historical frames undoubtedly inscribed a “web of associations and co-occurrences between persons, places, and landscapes” in which these Islamic practitioners took action (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007, 534). They did so out of an entwined sense of religious and national duty, one that rested on an orientation to a period of Islamic history not that of the Prophet Muhammad. Further, recalling my analysis of Acehnese as living among the signs of history, there is every reason to believe that, rather than cynically justifying religious intolerance and interreligious violence through appeals to history, those Muslims involved in these controversies were motivated by deeply-felt connections to Acehnese place and Islamic pasts. This, of course, should not be taken as a justification for their actions. Nor should it suggest that all Indonesian Muslims responded to this configuration of Acehnese, Indonesian, and Islamic history in the manner that the Muslims described in this chapter did. What it illustrates, however, is that embodied and emplaced narrative practices involving the narrative strands described in Chapter 2 could be tied to the participation of Acehnese and other Indonesians in the Indonesian nation through actions underpinned by spatial and temporal

orientations to Islamic pasts that were, in many ways, eminently local.

Chapter 4

Placing Islamic Reform in Context: Darul Islam, Histories of Islamization, and Nagan Raya’s Entangled Genealogies

This chapter turns to a historical ethnography of the regency of Nagan Raya. It begins by focusing on two different ideal type schemes for dividing Muslims in Nagan Raya into groups of Islamic practitioners, both of which were utilized by residents of the regency in daily social practice. The first scheme identified groups of Islamic practitioners based on the relative adherence of these groups to standards of reformed Islamic practice. The second scheme organized Muslims through identifying their place in genealogical histories of Nagan Raya’s Islamization.

My description of these ideal types continues an illustration of how the narration of Islamic history in Aceh has created “web[s] of associations and co-occurrences between persons, events, and landscapes” that have infused narrative, social, and ritual practice with significances (Shaery-Eisenlohr 2007, 534). Of particular importance to this discussion are two periods, the time of Nagan Raya’s initial Islamization, and the period leading to the Darul Islam rebellion of the 1950s. Although Darul Islam had been over for almost fifty years at the time of my fieldwork, the context provided by the rebellion, and the ideal types that crystallized in the archival and oral histories of Darul Islam that I collected, continued to frame how residents of Nagan Raya described different groups of Islamic practitioners. The same was true of the period

of Nagan Raya's Islamization, which different people in Nagan Raya placed in different centuries, but which always contained the same basic narrative elements and historical figures.

The two ideal type schemes that are the object of this chapter reflected differences between Muslims in Nagan Raya. These differences were not absolute and enduring but dependent on social context. Nonetheless, they were assumed to be real by those living in the regency. Even if most people whom I observed were eclectic in their religious practices, specific types of practice could be identified as being reformed or unreformed according to criteria that were recognized widely within the regency. Similarly, certain individuals at the time of my fieldwork were recognized as belonging to specific patrilineages that stretched back to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization. The members of these patrilineages, together with their followers and devotees, were understood to constitute a recognizable group. Both of these schemes depended heavily on the historical periods of Nagan Raya's Islamization and Darul Islam to produce their most powerful resonances. They thus represented how Muslims in Nagan Raya were oriented to local Islamic pasts in ways that inflected their daily social practices.

The second ideal type system described here, which was based on genealogical ties to Nagan Raya's period of Islamization, is of particular interest to the broader arguments of this dissertation. This was in large part because of how it ran against the grain of the first, which grouped Muslims based on their relative adherence to Islamic reformist practice. The use of standards of relative adherence to Islamic reformist practices has been a dominant, perhaps the most dominant, way in which anthropologists and historians of twentieth and twenty-first-century Islamic reformism have understood Muslims to recognize differences between each other (Abdullah 1971; Bowen 1993b; Deeb 2006; Dhofier 1999; Geertz 1960; Kobo 2009; Laffan 2003; Noer 1973; Peacock 1978; Rasmussen 2010; Scheele 2007). In these studies

genealogical idioms frequently have been treated primarily as instances of unreformed Islamic practice, associated with Islamic “traditionalism” and targeted by Islamic reformers of various kinds. The genealogical imaginary described in this chapter, however, was shared by those who self-consciously identified as reformers as well as those who took an anti-reformist stance. This allowed for the idiom of genealogy to cut across polemics of reform that had characterized much of mid-twentieth-century Islamic discourse in Nagan Raya. Further, it illustrated how important genealogical idioms were to the ways in which Muslims in Nagan Raya placed themselves in relationship to the Islamic past.

Three Key Historical Figures: Habib Muda, Zakaria Yunus, and Muda Waly

In Nagan Raya, the archival and oral histories that I collected about the Darul Islam rebellion tended to focus on three narrative protagonists: Habib Muda, Zakaria Yunus, and Muda Waly. Each of these men represented their own institutional network of Islamic practitioners and adhered to greater or lesser degrees of locally-recognized standards of reformed Islam. Further, two of these figures, Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus, were descendants of genealogical patrilines that were believed to stretch back to the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization. When narrators in Nagan Raya put forward histories of these figures’ activities during Darul Islam, these narrators rarely simply were telling stories about these men as individuals. Instead, their histories revealed how narrators understood, or sought to inscribe, relationships between different groups of Muslims in the regency.

Habib Muda

At the time of Darul Islam, Habib Muda (d. 1972) was the most prominent family member of the Habib Seunagan, the group of Sayyids described in Chapter 1 as being at the center of a ritual, mystical, and devotional complex of the Syattariyah Sufi order. The archival

and oral historical records make it clear that by the time of the Indonesian Revolution, Habib Muda was already well-known as a mystically powerful and charismatic figure (Daud 2009; Njaksih 1970). During my fieldwork, I heard countless stories of Habib Muda's miraculous abilities, which included powers of healing and extraordinary sensory perception.⁷³ Using a commonly circulating photograph, for example, more than one interlocutor showed me where Habib Muda was shot in the head by a Dutch soldier during the prolonged Dutch-Aceh War of the late nineteenth-century. This occurred in his childhood. However, Habib Muda felt no effects of the wound, living, according to a recently published biography, to the ripe old age of 112 (Daud 2009). His grave, located in the Nagan Raya town of Peuleukung, was one of two centers of ritual practice associated with the Syattariyah Sufi order, and drew daily visitors seeking the Sufi's intercessionary aid, as well as tens of thousands of devotees at regular points in the calendar (see Figure 5).⁷⁴

Zakaria Yunus

Zakaria Yunus (1906-1996), like Habib Muda a Nagan Raya native, was the figure most closely associated with reformed Islamic practice in oral histories of the mid-century that I collected during my fieldwork. Yunus' career as an Islamic reformer and educator had begun during the late-colonial period, when he traveled to Padang Panjang, several hundred kilometers south of Aceh on Sumatra's west coast, to study with some of the most prominent circles of 'Abduh-inspired activists in the archipelago. Upon returning to Nagan Raya in the 1930s, Yunus founded an Islamic reformist school in Jeuram (Controleur 1935). In 1953, he became the leader of Darul Islam in Nagan Raya. After the rebellion he held a high-ranking post in the Office of

⁷³ These abilities commonly are associated with particularly powerful and pure-of-heart Sufis, both in Indonesia and among mystically-inclined Muslims more broadly. See, for example Ewing (1994; 1997) and Gilsenan (1973).

⁷⁴ I discuss this practice, and its relationship to narratives of Nagan Raya's Islamization, in Chapter 6.



Figure 5: Inside of Habib Muda’s grave complex in Peuleukung, Nagan Raya

Religious Affairs (I., Kantor Urusan Agama) for the regency. I spoke with several former reformist activists, men and women in their sixties, seventies, and eighties, who remembered Yunus with deep respect and fondness. It was clear that a good portion of their enthusiasm for reformist activism had derived from respect for this man. At least one man who remembered Yunus said as much, noting that a recent decline in interest in reformism had begun with Yunus' death in 1996.

Muda Waly

The third figure who featured prominently in histories of Darul Islam in Nagan Raya was the Sufi and scholar Muda Waly (1917-1961). Muda Waly lived, taught, and died in Labuhan Haji, in the regency of South Aceh. However, his influence at the time of my research expanded throughout Aceh as a result of generations of students who had studied at the network of Islamic boarding schools run by his protégées.



Figure 6: Plaque commemorating Perti's presence in Aceh

In Nagan Raya, Muda Waly's influence began in the early 1950s. At that time, several of Muda Waly's students who originated from the area around the Nagan Raya village of Nigan (see Map 3), returned home from their studies at Muda Waly's boarding school in South Aceh. Beyond his network of intellectual protégées, Muda Waly's influence was due in part to his founding, in 1940, of an Acehnese branch of Persatuan Tarbiyah Islamiyah (Perti), a nominally national group of politically organized anti-reformists.⁷⁵ This affiliation with Perti has remained a central part of his legacy. Some of his intellectual descendants have even secured a monument commemorating Perti's Acehnese branch, located in Muda Waly's hometown of Pawoh, South Aceh (see Figure 6).

The Terms of Reform in Nagan Raya

⁷⁵ This was part of a wider expansion of Perti's influence in areas of Sumatra outside of the west coast region of Minangkabau, an expansion that frequently went hand-in-hand with affiliation with the Naqsyabandi mystical order. See van Bruinessen (2007, 99).

Like in much of the archipelago, Islamic reformers in Nagan Raya in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been inspired by stands of Islamic reformist thought traceable to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century figures Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā (Bowen 1993b; Geertz 1960). ‘Abduh and Riḍā are best known their attempts adopt particular forms of rationalist inquiry within Islamic intellectual traditions. Further, they advocated for a return to the direct interpretation of Islamic scripture, thereby circumventing the legal methods and decisions established in Sunni Islam’s four major schools of jurisprudence. However, precisely how ‘Abduh and Riḍā’s influence has affected the goals and actions of Islamic reformers since the late nineteenth century has varied markedly from place to place and in different time periods. What have been the aims of Islamic reformers in Nagan Raya in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries? Oral histories of the high water mark of Islamic reform in the regency, which occurred between 1930 and 1960, offer answers to this question.

There were several aspects of mid-twentieth century Islamic reformism that recurred in oral histories offered to me by people in Nagan Raya, both those who considered themselves sympathetic to the goals of ‘Abduh-inspired reform and those who considered themselves opposed to these goals. One female reform activist, Ibu Kadidjah, remembered traveling to Nagan Raya’s villages in the 1950s in order to teach women how to do their five daily prayers. “All they knew was how to recite ‘There is no god but God’ over and over again! They could not do the five daily prayers!” she exclaimed to me.

For women such as Ibu Kadidjah, engagement with Islamic reform was in large part about helping villagers learn to complete their daily obligations. Her reference to the repetitive recitation of “There is no god but God” suggested a second target of reformed practice in Nagan Raya, i.e., the mystical practices of both the Habib Seunagan and the Naqsyabandi. Such

practices, including the recitation of litanies, came under the scrutiny of reformers of the 1930s to the 1960s. Aside from an emphasis on the repetition of prescribed litanies, which reformers suggested distracted practitioners from their obligatory prayers, the devotion that participants of Sufi orders showed towards their teachers was something that reformers took as easily leading to idolatry through inserting a human mediator between practitioners and God.

When distinguishing their general religious outlook from groups such as the Habib Seunagan and Naqsyabandi, there were two powerful oppositions to which ‘Abduh-inspired reformers in Nagan Raya tended to return. Again consider the words of Ibu Kadidjah:

The difference between Muhammadiyah and Muda Waly (i.e., the Naqsyabandi) was only the question of having a school or not having a school (I., *bermazhab-mazhab aja*)[.... Muhammadiyah] left behind what was recommended (I., *sunnat-sunnat*). [Muda Waly] made what was recommended obligatory (Ac. and I., *meungnjò sunnat, diwajibkan*). For Muhammadiyah what was recommended could be left behind. For Muda Waly, Islam was about the hereafter (I., *akhirat*). Muhammadiyah was concerned with this world (Ac., *dōnja*) and the hereafter[....]

In this quotation, Ibu Kadidjah distinguished between Muhammadiyah, the reformist organization in which she was an official member, and Muda Waly, the most important figure in the branch of the Naqsyabandi Sufi order that became popular in Aceh in the 1940s and 1950s.⁷⁶ She first did so by suggesting that the major question separating the two was one of whether or not these groups “had a school” (I., *bermazhab-mazhab*). This referred directly to an ‘Abduh-inspired rejection of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence, in this case the Syafi’i school which had long been dominant in the archipelago. Ibu Kadidjah’s suggestion that Muda Waly “made what was recommended obligatory” was part of a critique of the four schools of jurisprudence, namely, that these schools had accumulated legal precedents that were inconsistent with what actually was required in Islamic scripture. Similar language was used regularly by people in

⁷⁶ Presumably, Ibu Kadidjah would have been a member of Muhammadiyah’s women’s wing, Aisyah, rather than Muhammadiyah itself.

Nagan Raya to distinguish between reformers, who were said “not to have a school of jurisprudence” (I., *tidak bermazhab*), and their opponents, who were said “to have a school” (I., *bermazhab*).

The second way in which Ibu Kadidjah distinguished between Muhammadiyah and the Naqsyabandi was by suggesting that members of the Naqsyabandi were not interested in “this world” (Ac., *dōnja*), but simply “the hereafter” (I., *akhirat*). At the time of my fieldwork, this opposition remained a major point of contention between reformers and those whose practice reformers found objectionable. But note that the accuracy of the characterization was not contested. Instead, it was the effects of these two different orientations that were at issue. Members of the Naqsyabandi, for example, did not reject the proposition that “Islam is about the hereafter.” Instead, they charged that the orientation to the world characteristic of ‘Abduh-inspired reformers had led reformers to seek worldly power and, as a result, to cooperate with the late-colonial regime. Reformers leveled a parallel accusation against the opponents of Islamic reformism, claiming that an unreformed emphasis on the hereafter had resulted in a lack of will to effectively oppose the Dutch. One reformer, Bapak Jami, even went as far as to suggest that this emphasis on the hereafter was itself a colonial conspiracy: “It was the Dutch orientalist Snouck Hurgronje who taught traditionalists (i.e., opponents of reformism) to seek the hereafter. Divide-and-conquer! That was the Dutch strategy.”⁷⁷

The Peak of Islamic Reform in Nagan Raya, 1930-1960

It is telling that contestation over contrasting orientations to the world and the hereafter focused on the late-colonial period. At the time of my fieldwork, many men and women who

⁷⁷ The ways in which ideas of “this world” and “the hereafter” were employed to make this opposition between reformers and their opponents was not necessarily characteristic of how these ideas were invoked in other contexts. Chapter 5 examines how orientations to the world and the hereafter inflected ideas about proper ethical pursuits irrespective of Islamic practitioners’ stances towards Islamic reform.

saw themselves as sympathetic to projects of Islamic reform waxed nostalgically about the 1930s through the 1960s.⁷⁸ In Nagan Raya, like in much of the rest of Aceh, this was a period in which open debate ensued between Islamic reformers and the Muslims who were the objects of reform efforts (Bowen 1993, 21-32; Feener 2013). My interlocutors saw it as a time in which reformed styles of religiosity were on the rise. They contrasted this with recent decades in which zeal for Islamic reform had declined. Consider the following quotation by Haji Mustafa Ahmad, a high-ranking official of the Muhammadiyah organization:

The history of Muhammadiyah [on Aceh's southwest coast] begins in the time of the Dutch. Muhammadiyah was not accepted at first. People have schools of jurisprudence (I., *bermazhab*) here. But Muhammadiyah goes right to the Qur'an and words and deeds of the Prophet[...] Eventually Muhammadiyah was accepted. This was all happening in the 1930s. There were branches everywhere, in each sub-regency[...] It is true that Muhammadiyah has declined [in recent years...] there are not enough Muhammadiyah cadres [today].

Haji Mustafa's quotation, solicited during an oral history interview that I conducted at his house, noted both the growth of Muhammadiyah in the 1930s, and its subsequent decline in recent years. This was characteristic of much of the discourse that I heard during my fieldwork in Nagan Raya, which took reformed religious sensibilities and activism to have been at their height around the middle of the twentieth century.

Oral histories I collected from men and women in their seventies and older were full of references to the mid-century period of confrontation between reformers and their opponents. Among the most common leitmotifs of these oral histories were versions of stories of pitched debates in which well-known figures associated with reformist and anti-reformist camps would discuss publically the issues of the day. These pitched debates predominantly focused on *kandoeri*, the ritual feasts that laid at the heart of daily ritual practice in Nagan Raya.

⁷⁸ This included both men and women who could remember parts of this period themselves, and those who could not but who recalled the events as they had heard them repeated.

Reformers found *kandoeri* to be economically wasteful, and thus irrational, as well as an accretion to proper Islamic practice authorized by Islamic scripture. The opponents of reformers took *kandoeri* as central to village reciprocity, an important way to generate heavenly reward for oneself and one's relatives, and authorized by scripture through appeals to the Syafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence. Debates about *kandoeri* revolved around some of the central issues raised by polemics of Islamic reform in Nagan Raya: the status of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, orientations to the world and the hereafter, styles of rationalism, etc. In recollections of these pitched debates, my interlocutors rarely remembered the details of the arguments forwarded by their participants. However, both those who identified as sympathetic to reformers and those who opposed them remained thoroughly convinced that their own position had carried the day.⁷⁹

If self-identifying reformers were nostalgic for the 1930s through the 1960s, their anti-reformist rivals spoke of the period with far more trepidation. These included both the followers of the Habib Seunagan and participants in Naqsyabandi ritual practice. They spoke disdainfully of reformist activists in the period who attempted to alter daily village rituals and eliminate mystical practices. While opponents of reformism asserted that it had been their intellectuals that won the pitched debates of the 1930s and 1940s, it was clear that the three to four decades that represented the height of 'Abduh-inspired reformism were ones in which the followers of the Habib Seunagan and Naqsyabandi felt themselves to be on the defensive. This sense only increased with the outbreak of the Darul Islam rebellion.

Darul Islam: A Quarrel among Religious Scholars

⁷⁹ Compare this to Bowen's account of oral histories of similar events in the Gayo highlands in the same time period (Bowen 1993b, 22-31).

With the advent of Darul Islam in 1953, the confrontations of the 1930s moved from pitched debates to open violence. Recall that Darul Islam arose in Aceh as a result of a series of factors that included the commitment of some activists to the ideal of an Islamic state, general discontent over Aceh's loss of provincial status, and many Acehnese people's sense of marginalization at the hands of a Javanese-dominated national government. In addition, the conflict came to be inflected in important ways by reformist and anti-reformist polemics. This was especially the case in Nagan Raya.

At the provincial level, Darul Islam was led by Daud Beureueh, undoubtedly the most dominant 'Abduh-inspired Islamic reformer of the period. In Nagan Raya, it was Zakaria Yunus who served as Darul Islam's top leader, thereby tying the rebellion locally to Yunus' own networks of Islamic reformist activists. Conversely, the most vehement opposition to Darul Islam at the provincial and regency levels was voiced by a coalition of religious leaders that included Muda Waly and Habib Muda. This coalition joined together in endorsing a legal opinion authored by Muda Waly that condemned the rebellion and its leadership on the basis that according to Syafi'i legal precedent it is abominable to rebel against a legal political authority, which the opinion took the Indonesian president Sukarno to be (Daud 2009; Waly 1993). Thus, the most important Islamically-learned figures at both the Acehnese provincial and Nagan Raya regency levels split on the question of whether to support or oppose the rebellion, and they did so along lines that reflected their stances towards 'Abduh-style reformism.

The anti-Darul Islam coalition, of which both Muda Waly and Habib Muda were a part, is of particular importance for understanding how those in Nagan Raya came to understand Darul Islam to be inflected by reformist and anti-reformist polemics. This coalition was careful to fashion itself a union of traditional and Sufi scholars, rhetorically contrasting their practice and

pedigree to the reformist leaders of the rebellion. The anti-Darul Islam coalition consciously crafted this self-fashioning in a manner that depended upon widely-recognized markers of unreformed Islamic practice. These markers of unreformed practice were employed in conjoined political and religious acts that both expressed opposition to Darul Islam and highlighted the contrasting religious sensibilities of the rebellion's leadership.

Chief among these acts was the legal opinion Muda Waly put forward. It condemned Darul Islam on the logic that supporting imperfect, even corrupt, political leadership was preferable to the risk of anarchy that arose when Muslims took up arms against the state. Because the opinion rested on Syafi'i jurisprudence, it highlighted the differing legal orientations of the anti-Darul Islam coalition and the leadership of the rebellion, the latter of which explicitly rejected the four Sunni schools of jurisprudence. Further, it was consistent with a stereotype of unreformed Islamic legal practice as adhering to arcane jurisprudential form over legal and political substance.

A second example entailed oaths of allegiance through which Muda Waly's followers simultaneously pledged their loyalty to the Indonesian nation and their mystical teacher (Ansah, Halimi, and Wali Elchalid 1958; Wali Elchalid 1958). These oaths merged the bonds forged between citizen and nation with those of Sufi master and disciple. For mystical teachers such as Habib Muda and Muda Waly, as well as their followers, the bonds between teacher and disciple were idealized as absolute and unbreakable. Reformers, conversely, found such bonds to inappropriately place a human teacher between the individual seeker and God. These oaths of allegiance, therefore, simultaneously recruited people to the anti-rebellion camp while drawing

attention to one of the fundamental distinctions between the rebellion's reformist leadership and its anti-reformist opposition.⁸⁰

At the time of my fieldwork in Nagan Raya, the conjoined political and religious stance forwarded by Muda Waly and Habib Muda in opposition to Darul Islam remained a salient aspect of collective memories of the 1950s and early 1960s. Further, for Habib Muda and Muda Waly's followers, these memories also revealed the broader sense noted above that the 1930s through the 1960s was a time when non-reformed leaders and practices were under attack. I repeatedly heard Muda Waly's followers, for example, tell versions of a story about assassination attempts carried out against their revered teacher. The following, which I recorded from one of Muda Waly's close personal associates, Teungku Adnan of Bakongan, was typical:

There were a lot of happenings that showed he (i.e., Muda Waly) held special abilities (I., *kelebihan*) [...] Once [...] [b]ecause he wasn't on good terms with DI-TI, they planned to kill him [...] [T]he leadership of DI [...] sent someone to shoot him. He (i.e., the would-be assassin) brought a weapon and [...] climbed a coconut tree. It just so happened that every day after dawn prayers, he (i.e., Muda Waly) sat below that coconut tree. He recited prayers. He read his holy books.

In stories such as these, Muda Waly became the target of violent attack by the Darul Islam guerrillas that he opposed. But note how Teungku Adnan's story went on to draw attention to features of Muda Waly's practice that distinguished him from Darul Islam leaders, and the relationship of these features to his miraculous survival and the repentance of his would-be assassin:

⁸⁰ Examples of these oaths are found in the Acehnese provincial archive in Banda Aceh. However, none of the oaths kept there are signed. Instead, they are in the form of fill-in-the-blank form documents. Thus, I cannot be certain that such joint oaths were ever administered. Nonetheless, based on the rest of the documents in the archival bundle (Secretary of the Special Area of Aceh (1961) Folder 194, Bundle 11), it is clear that they were created in a period in which Muda Waly was advising local authorities regarding the encroachment of Darul Islam guerrillas into South Aceh. In fact, based on these documents, Muda Waly was quite adamant that the provincial government authorities were not doing enough to protect members of his institutional network despite his followers' loyalty to the Indonesian Republic, and that this might force locals in the region to take matters into their own hands. I thank Michael Feener for bringing these oaths to my attention.

The person in the tree (i.e., the would-be assassin), he wanted to shoot. But the gun would not fire. It would not fire! So it could not happen. He (i.e., the would-be assassin) wanted to come down. But that could not happen either[...] he was stuck in the tree! His hand would not let go. So he asked for help: “Help! Help!” “What’s that?” [Muda Waly said.] He (i.e., Muda Waly) was reading his holy books. “Who is that that is asking for help?” He asked his students, “Who is that?” His students replied, “There is someone in the coconut tree. He is asking for help.” “Well help him!” [Muda Waly replied]. “But we cannot help him, Father.” “Why not?” It was like I said, he was stuck in the tree. “We will recite litanies,” said the students[...]. When that did not work, Muda Waly said] “Oh, God the Most High must be very angry with him.” He (i.e., the would-be assassin) asked specifically that Father (i.e., Muda Waly) come[...]. Finally, [once Muda Waly had come to the tree himself,] the man in the tree was able to come down. He came down and asked for forgiveness. He said, “I was ordered to kill you, Father.” [Muda Waly asked] “Who ordered that?” “Our father and leader. But when I tried to shoot you, the gun would not fire and I got stuck in the tree[...].” [Muda Waly] forgave him his sin[...] “I do not have enemies. You have many,” he (i.e., Muda Waly) said. After that he (i.e., the would-be assassin) wanted to go home[...] he repented and he sought the Sufi way. After that he went home. (Another interviewer asks: “He was given a mystical lineage also?”) Yes [...] for the Naqsyabandi path. He took it back to his father, the leader of DI-TI. (Chuckles.)

‘Abduh-inspired reformers in Nagan Raya who complained to me about the mystical practices of the intellectual descendants of Muda Waly often did so by drawing attention to the allegedly irrational beliefs underpinning these practices. Muda Waly was saved in Teungku Adnan’s story by virtue of miraculous powers explained only in terms of the will of God (i.e., “Oh, God the Most High must be very angry with him.”). The books (I., *kitab*) Muda Waly read in the story were no doubt those of the intellectual tradition he propagated. His students attempted to bring the would-be assassin out of the tree by reciting litanies. And upon repenting, the would-be assassin joined the Naqsyabandi mystical order and brought the Naqsyabandi’s mystical lineage back to the leader of Darul Islam, a clear reference to Daud Beureueh. Teungku Adnan’s story, and others like it, was rich and multivalent. However, one of the things it undoubtedly illustrated was that the efforts of the anti-Darul Islam coalition to portray Darul

Islam in terms of a conflict between reformist and anti-reformist religious networks remained salient well into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The Decline of Polemics of Reform After 1962

One reason I have drawn my descriptions of Islamic reform in Nagan Raya from oral histories of the period of the 1930s to the 1960s is because people I knew in Nagan Raya most often described the differences between reformed and unreformed Islamic practitioners, through referencing this period of confrontation. This was, in part, because the confrontations between ‘Abduh-style reformers and the Islamic practitioners whom they attempted to reform had been on the wane since the end of Darul Islam in the 1960s. Some reformers suggested to me that this had been the result of the death of Zakaria Yunus in 1996, or the lack of effort on the part of reformers to attract and train new cadres in recent decades. However, there were other reasons that the intense disagreements of the 1930s through the 1960s had faded.

Some people with whom I discussed the reluctance of Muslims in Nagan Raya to engage in public arguments over the issues that had once defined Islamic reformist and anti-reformist polemics suggested that this reluctance was the result of a decision by the Acehnese Ulama Council that effectively barred public discussions of “divisive opinions” (I., *khilafiyah*). I have yet to find evidence of an official decision to this effect.⁸¹ However, the archive of the Acehnese Ulama Council is full of references to the inappropriateness or illegality of discussing divisive opinions in public. It is clear from these sources that the council, beginning in the 1970s, was

⁸¹ See also a brief reference to a similar decision regarding public discussion of divisive opinions by Muslims in the Gayo highlands in Bowen (1993b, 18-21). In the instance described by Bowen, it is a 1948 opinion of PUSA declaring certain funerary practices as forbidden that is cited by a man engaged in an argument with a friend. According to this man, the same opinion also outlawed discussion of divisive opinions. The text of the opinion, however, makes no mention of the impermissibility of discussing divisive opinions (Abdurrahman, Amin, Berueuh and Indrapuri 1948).

putting pressure on reformists and their rivals to tone down the tenor of their polemics. These efforts reinforced New Order attempts to dampen publically visible argument and dissent.

Such efforts were not entirely successful. In 1970, for example, Muda Waly's son and biographer, Muhibbuddin Waly, visited Habib Muda in his home village of Peuleukung after returning from studies in the Middle East (Hasan 1970). In his public comments on this occasion, which also symbolically renewed the ties between the two families established during Darul Islam, Muhibbuddin drew attention to a range of practices attacked by reformers, most importantly *kandoeri* held at funeral feasts. Muhibbuddin claimed to have seen such practices carried out by religious scholars in the Middle East, thus suggesting their legitimacy. Concerned regency government informants identified Muhibbuddin's speech as full of "divisive opinions," but no record exists showing if Muhibbuddin was ever made to suffer any consequences for this breach (Hasan 1970).

Nonetheless, as one moves chronologically through the archival record for Nagan Raya, such altercations become less common, and they hardly feature at all in the oral histories that I recorded in the regency. The reaction of the majority of the 'Abduh-style reformers with whom I discussed a reformed preacher named Zulkarnainy was telling.

Zulkarnainy, a native of South Aceh, delivered at least two public sermons in Nagan Raya in 1962, and lived near Jeuram at that time. His sermons resulted in several altercations, and even a fist fight, all precipitated by his thinly-veiled attacks on the Habib Seunagan (Arsjad and Basa 1962; Musa and Idham 1962). However, some of the very same people who waxed nostalgically about the confrontations of the 1930s through the 1960s, and lamented the decline in reformist activism since this period, attempted to distance themselves from this man. "He Zulkarnainy was too bold," Haji Mustafa told me, "and did not respect the peace."

This suggestion that reformist and anti-reformist polemics might threaten the peace was not simply New Order discourse. It had a clear evidentiary basis given the history of confrontation and conflict previously described. Awareness of this history of open confrontation seemed to permeate efforts by reformists in Nagan Raya to seek compromise during the years of my fieldwork. Reformist activists whom I knew in Nagan Raya made a point of sometimes attending *kandoeri*, despite the fact that in the past *kandoeri* had been the central practice against reformist polemics had been launched. These reformers justified their participation in *kandoeri* in manners that resembled rationales offered by similarly compromise-seeking reformers elsewhere in the archipelago (Beatty 1999; Geertz 1960). Some expressed the idea that these ritual feasts were, ultimately, an instance of Acehnese “culture” (I., *budaya*), and thus attending them was not a violation of proper religious practice. Other reformers, when attending such feasts, simply ignored the prayers at *kandoeri* that they found objectionable, either pretending they did not hear them, or leaving before they started. Indeed, by the 1950s, some reformers already had developed what they called a “modern *kandoeri*” (Ac., *kandoeri modern*). In this *kandoeri*, participants redistributed to orphans and the poor a share of the food prepared at ritual feasts, a change intended to serve a social purpose and minimize economic waste. Similarly, the modern *kandoeri* eliminated the prayers reformers found most objectionable, those widely believed to generate heavenly rewards (I. *pahala*) for deceased friends and family members.

In fact, some of these compromises had been institutionalized in local practice in Nagan Raya. Consider the *maulid* feast that I attended in the town of Nigan in March of 2009. *Maulid* is the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday. It is celebrated in Aceh over a three-month period through large reciprocal feasts in which villagers attempt to provide food for as many neighboring villages as possible. These neighboring villages are then invited to send

groups (I., *rombongan*) of predominantly young men to partake of the food and participate in ritualized recitations.

The *maulid* feast in Nigan resembled those that I had attended elsewhere in Nagan Raya and in the vicinity of Meulaboh over the course of the three-month “*maulid season*” (I., *musim maulid*). About seven or eight groups, each with as many as forty men, arrived in the courtyard of Nigan’s Islamic boarding school just after midday prayers. After being assigned a place in a mosque or school building, each group began their recitations. These included the names of God, praises to the Prophet Muhammad, and episodes from the life of the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets. The recitations continued until just before sundown prayer, with a short break halfway through for the mid-afternoon prayer.

After beginning in a relatively restrained manner, with reciters sitting calmly in their groups on the floor, the recitations became increasingly loud and flamboyant. Groups began to move their bodies, sometimes in violent or intricately choreographed patterns. Eventually, all of the groups stood up and, one-by-one, began to hop and jump. By the end of the afternoon, it almost seemed that chaos had come to reign at the event, as even the carefully-choreographed groups formed a sort of *maulid* mosh pit, with men excitedly yelling “Peace be on the Prophet” while hopping and bumping into each other excitedly.

To this point, there was little in the celebration that seemed reconcilable with the kinds of ‘Abduh-style reformism described above. Indeed, *maulid* festivals of various kinds have long been the target of such reformers in many parts of the archipelago. These reformers have taken the celebration of *maulid* to be a deviation from proper scriptural practice. The demonstrative recitations and bodily movements typical of Acehnese *maulid* celebrations were at variance with the more sedate prayers and litanies preferred by ‘Abduh-style reformers in Nagan Raya. The



Figure 7: Rows of containers of food for *maulid* feast, Kota Baru, June 2009



Figure 8: Top layer of food inside container for *maulid* feast, Kota Baru, June 2009

copious amounts of food produced for those who participated in the feast have been identified by reformers in the past as economically wasteful, and a potential hardship on poorer families who are expected to make their contribution (see Figure 7 and Figure 8).

Yet just before the end of the litanies, when things were building to a crescendo, a man who worked for the regency Office of Religious Affairs pulled me over to a small pavilion in which children were sitting. “These are the orphans!” he said as he pointed excitedly. “See, we will not waste all this food. The orphans get their share!” Indeed, food was distributed to this handful of children first, before being divided up among those who had conducted recitations, who quickly left to bring their feast home to waiting family members.

At most of the *maulid* feasts that I attended, food was set aside for orphans in this manner. This clearly was inspired by the previously mentioned models of “modern *kandoeri*.” It responded, albeit in a somewhat symbolic way, to the accusations made, beginning in the 1930s, that village feasts were economically wasteful. While it may seem a small adjustment to an otherwise thoroughly non-reformed practice, the passing of food to orphans in this manner was something that at least one of my reformist interlocutors identified as allowing him to attend such feasts in good conscience.

Despite the fact that such compromises had been struck, and public debate about religious difference clearly was muted when compared to the open confrontations of the 1930s through 1960s, it is important to remember that one of the ways that those in Nagan Raya conceptualized differences between Islamic practices and practitioners continued to be in terms of the categories of reformist polemics of the mid-twentieth century. This was in part because differences in practice remained salient, even if they no longer remained cause for open confrontation. Some mosques, for example, recited the call to prayer twice on Fridays at midday, reflecting a legal

opinion that was popular among Muda Waly's intellectual descendants. The Habib Seunagan engaged in flamboyant styles of recitation that both Muda Waly's protégées and 'Abduh-style reformers sometimes found scandalous. And truly committed reformers, while finding ways to justify attending the *kandoeri* of their neighbors, refused to allow recitations at the small feasts they held at their own homes for the purposes of marking deaths, weddings, and funerals.

Another reason why differences in orientation to Islamic reformism seemed to remain salient in Nagan Raya, despite the relative decline of reformist polemics since the mid-twentieth century, was continuing devotion to the key figures of the oral histories of the 1930s through the 1960s. Habib Muda, Zakaria Yunus, and Muda Waly had commanded great respect and devotion among their followers. Even if someone attended neighborhood *kandoeri*, for example, if he or she had felt a personal attachment to Zakaria Yunus, he or she usually identified as a reformist. Some followers of the Habib Seunagan and lay members of the Naqsyabandi sought legal advice from reformist teachers whom they knew and trusted. But they remained devoted to their Sufi teachers and, in many situations, would identify as anti-reformist for this reason. It was, significantly, in the context of discussing the confrontations of the 1930s through the 1960s that those with whom I spoke were most adamant about identifying themselves in terms of their stance for or against Islamic reform. Nonetheless, these stances remained an important interpretive frame through which those in Nagan Raya understood Muslims to be divided into recognizable groups.

"They Were Really on the Same Side": Alternative Histories of Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus

Given the continuing salience in Nagan Raya of an ideal type interpretive frame based on the polemics of Islamic reformism, I was surprised when Bapak Amin told me a quite different version of the events of the 1950s. In his late sixties, Bapak Amin was no uninterested

party. On our first encounter, just a few weeks into my fieldwork, he enthusiastically told me how as a boy he had informed on the movements of government troops for Darul Islam guerrillas. With his stories, he seemed to slightly frighten his colleagues in the government office where he worked part time. “Oh, that guy,” the office head muttered when I asked who had told the stories about Darul Islam several weeks before. “Don’t pay any attention to him. He doesn’t know anything.”

Shortly after his boss’ evasive response, however, I successfully located Bapak Amin, and asked him if he might tell me more about his childhood during Darul Islam. As a way of answering my inquiry, he took me on a tour of local sites related to the rebellion: an old village that had been washed away when the Seunagan River changed its course, a few graves of religious teachers, an old religious school, and the points at which Darul Islam guerrillas would come down from the hills to conduct raids. We were resting at his house after our excursion when I noted that I had heard that Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus were related by marriage.⁸² “Of course,” he responded, “They were very close. Family. During DI, Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus met in the evening to eat together after sunset prayers. They would hang out all night. During the day they would fight each other. Bang-bang-bang!⁸³ But they were family. And really, they were on the same side.”

Bapak Amin never did explain which “side” (I., *pihak*) Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus were on. I found his assertion somewhat jarring, given how starkly histories of Darul Islam in Nagan Raya tended to portray the opposition between Zakaria Yunus, in one faction, and Habib Muda and Muda Waly, in the other. But while everyone in Nagan Raya was aware that the two

⁸² The patrilinees from which Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus descend are understood to have been intermarried at several points over the centuries, as discussed below. Zakaria Yunus’ mother was none other than the younger sister of Habib Muda.

⁸³ Here Bapak Amin imitated the sound of guns firing.

had been enemies during Darul Islam, quite a few of those with whom I spoke in Nagan Raya seemed unsurprised that Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus might have maintained cordial personal relations during the rebellion. I began to ask people if they knew of the story of the two enemies sharing rice in the evening during the rebellion. While only a handful had heard it, most people to whom I mentioned the story found it plausible that such meals might have occurred. “They were family,” some offered. Other people invoked a common refrain: “Teungku Tjik di Kila is the Habib Seunagan’s right hand.”

Teungku Tjik di Kila was the patrilineal ancestor of Zakaria Yunus. This reference to him as the Habib Seunagan’s “right hand” (I., *tangan kanan*) was one drawn from genealogical histories linking Zakaria Yunus’s patriline to the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization. These histories of Nagan Raya’s Islamization are central to understanding the second broad way through which residents of Nagan Raya conceptually organized groups of Islamic practitioners in the regency.

Genealogies of Islamization

Oral and written histories of the coming of Islam to Nagan Raya, embraced by nearly all with whom I spoke in the region, attributed the conversion of the regency to a figure named Habib Abdurrahim, the genealogical progenitor of those people who claimed membership in the family of the Habib Seunagan (Azman 1962; Bowen 1989b, 602-604; Daud 2009). Details such as the century in which Habib Abdurrahim lived and carried out his work tended to be secondary concerns in these histories and often were omitted.⁸⁴ In these histories, Habib Abdurrahim was

⁸⁴ Based on stories told regarding Habib Abdurrahim, his contemporaries, and their descendants, it seems that he was active in the period just before the Dutch-Aceh war, although there was much disagreement in Nagan Raya about precisely when he had lived. Also, see Bowen (1989b, 602-604) and Hurgronje (1906, II, 14). The lack of a fixed date for Habib Abdurrahim contributed to some ambiguity about precisely what was meant when those with whom I spoke in Nagan Raya claimed that Habib Abdurrahim “Islamicized” (I., *mengislamkan*) the Nagan Raya countryside. This term can have either the meaning of bringing about the initial conversion of the population of a region, or that of facilitating a process through which a region’s people come to a deeper commitment to Islam.

identified as the *qutubul ujud* (I., Ar. *qutb al-wujūd*) or *qutub* (I.). He was said to have carried out his work of Islamicizing the Nagan Raya countryside with the help of four deputies, whom were identified with the term *autad* (I., Ar., *autād*). One of these deputies was none other than Teungku Tjik di Kila, the ancestor of Zakaria Yunus mentioned in the previous section as the Habib Seunagan’s “right hand.”

The terms *qutub* and *autad* were drawn from mystical discourses most closely associated with the influential twelfth- and thirteenth-century Andalusian mystic, Ibn ‘Arabī. In mystical cosmologies based on Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought, especially those developed by the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century figure ‘Abd al-Qarīm al-Jīlī, *qutub* usually denotes the singular most important human figure in the world at any one point in time, the central “pole” around which the relationship between humans and the divine revolves (Hodgson 1974, II: 227-230; Trimingham 1971: 133-165). The *qutub*, along with the *autad* and progressively lesser figures surrounding him, mediate between creation and the divine, and are sometimes thought to be able to intervene with God on behalf of their devotees. For many Sufis, the very fabric of creation depends upon the existence of such a figure in each and every age. Without him, the universe could rend apart.

The cosmological system developed by al-Jīlī, placing the *qutub* as the central pole in a mystical hierarchy that includes *autad* and other lesser figures, has been adapted in a wide variety of times and places (Florida 1995; Hodgson 1974). These adaptations have taken al-Jīlī’s universal cosmology and inscribed it in local mystical, social, and political contexts. In Nagan Raya, the language of al-Jīlī’s cosmology had become one of the central idioms through which

In the oral histories that I heard, there was some ambiguity as to whether Habib Abdurrahim was the first to bring Islam to Nagan Raya, or if he was simply a major figure in its deepening intensity there. What was consistent in all histories I collected, however, was that it was the period of Habib Abdurrahim to which all of the major family lines in Nagan Raya connected themselves via genealogical ties to figures in the history of the regency’s Islamization. Thus, whether Habib Abdurrahim was thought of as the initial agent converting Nagan Raya’s residents to Islam or not, it was he and his contemporaries that represented the paradigmatic and seminal generation in histories of Nagan Raya’s Islamization.

residents of the regency narrated the history of the region's Islamization. This idiom identified figures such as Habib Abdurrahim and Teungku Tjik di Kila using the titles of *qutub* and *autad*.

Especially for those Muslims who participated in the practices of the Habib Seunagan, such linkages evoked the mystical significances of al-Jīlī's cosmology, reinforcing the Habib Seunagan's claims to centrality in local mystical practice. Further, the idiom of al-Jīlī's cosmology was linked to genealogy in a manner that allowed the descendants of Habib Abdurrahim and Teungku Tjik di Kila to lay claim to the titles of *qutub* and *autad* as well. It was this ability to lay claim to these titles through genealogy that underpinned the second manner in which residents in Nagan Raya organized groups of Islamic practitioners, as well as helped to explain why it might not seem counterintuitive that Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus may have shared meals during the Darul Islam rebellion.

Nyak Nur's Entangled Genealogy

One evening, Nyak Nur, one of Zakaria Yunus' direct descendants, stopped by my house just before sunset prayers. I had conducted an interview with him earlier in the day in which he had related to me aspects of the life history of Zakaria Yunus. Nyak Nur began that interview by narrating his family's genealogy. He clearly had invested much time in learning and documenting the genealogical links of his patriline and felt strongly that I needed to properly record it. In fact, this was his reason for visiting me that evening. He had decided to stop by my house in order to bring me a computer-generated copy of his patriline, consisting of five pages in the form of a flow chart (see Figure 9).

In this computer-generated document, Nyak Nur had traced his genealogy to a "Raja Syam," whose name was formed from the Sanskrit-derived "raja" (king) and the Arabic "Syam"

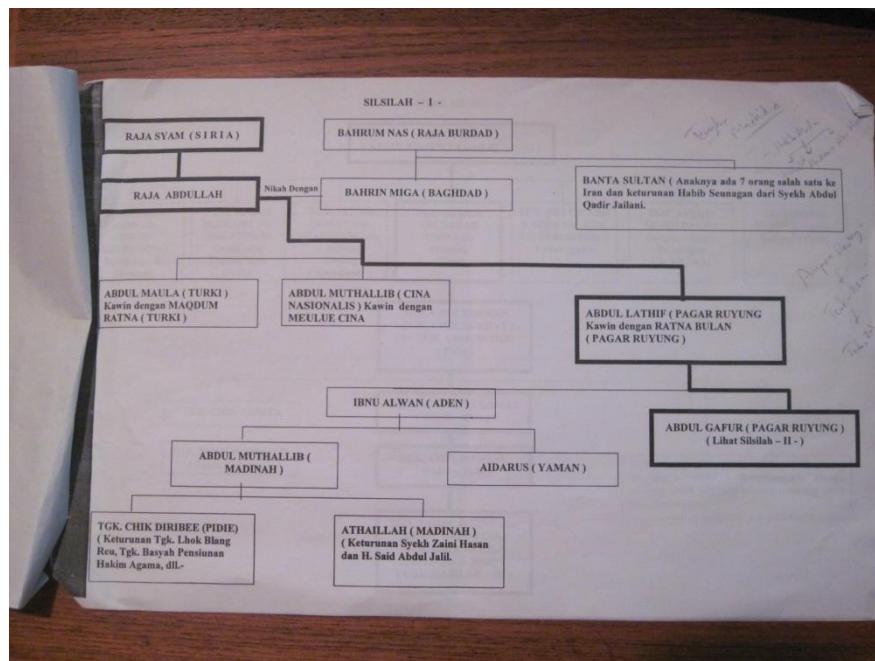


Figure 9: First page of “Family Line of Teungku Tjik di Kila”

(Syria), and thus was translatable as “King of Syria.” From there, the genealogy worked its way through twelve generations. Nyak Nur identified several of these generations as having moved, first from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, and then from Aceh’s north coast to Nagan Raya. He therefore stressed his patriline’s distant Arabic origins.

More important than these Arabic origins, however, were the ways in which Nyak Nur’s genealogy configured his patriline’s place in Nagan Raya’s history of Islamization. The computer-generated genealogy was entitled the “Family Line (I., *Silsilah Keluarga*) of Teungku Tjik di Kila.” Teungku Tjik di Kila was neither the first nor the last link in the genealogy. He was, however, the first link in Nagan Raya, and, as mentioned above, one of Habib Abdurrahim’s primary deputies (*autad*) in the Islamization of the Nagan Raya countryside. The title of the genealogy, thus, drew attention not to Nyak Nur’s deep genealogical ties to the Middle East, but to his patriline’s central place in the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization.

This emphasis on the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization was reinforced by the ways in which Nyak Nur's genealogy was entwined with the genealogy of the Habib Seunagan. On the document's first page was a note explaining that one "Banta Sultan" of Baghdad, the brother-in-law of Raja Syam's son, was the ancestor of the Habib Seunagan. This established a link of marriage between the patriline of Teungku Tjik di Kila and the Habib Seunagan, several generations before either had reached Nagan Raya. Because the genealogy declared itself the patriline of Teungku Tjik di Kila, this marriage looked forward to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization as well, and portended future marriages between the two families, such as that of Habib Muda's sister to Zakaria Yunus.

One of the effects of Nyak Nur's genealogy, then, was to link him to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization through drawing attention to his descent from Teungku Tjik di Kila. However, this required that he link himself to the Habib Seunagan. Nyak Nur was clearly ambivalent about this tie. Recall that Nyak Nur was the direct descendant of Zakaria Yunus, the preeminent Islamic reformer of the previous generation and the leader of Darul Islam in Nagan Raya. Nyak Nur embraced Yunus' legacy, and took himself to be similarly reformist in his religious sensibilities, maintaining a critical attitude towards the Habib Seunagan. Even as he gave me the genealogy attesting to his own patriline's ties to the Habib Seunagan, he told me a story that called into question Habib Muda's alleged mystical powers. However, he refused to divorce himself or his family line from entanglements with the Habib Seunagan and the Islamization of Nagan Raya. This was evident in his oral and written articulations of his family's genealogy, as well as his acknowledgement that he, as the direct descendant of Teungku Tjik di Kila, was, in fact, the "right hand" of the Habib Seunagan.

It was not only Nyak Nur who did this. His siblings, all direct descendants of Zakaria Yunus, and therefore descendants of Teungku Tjik di Kila, acknowledged the various titles that their genealogy allowed them to claim, namely, that of *autad* and “right hand” of the Habib Seunagan. One of these siblings, for example, attempted to shed the mystical connotations of these titles by claiming that they were simply like the titles of civil servants working in bureaucratic offices: “Teungku Tjik di Kila was like the assistant head of the office of Islamization (I., *kantor Islamisasi*). That is all the title *autad* means.” Nonetheless, this sibling did not deny that the title could be used to denote his patriline, or that it linked him to the Habib Seunagan through the project of Islamization carried out jointly by Habib Abdurrahim and Teungku Tjik di Kila.

In Nagan Raya, genealogical links between individuals in the present and ancestors from the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization could be invoked in daily social practice through the use of greetings and titles. The first time I met Zakaria Yunus, in fact, he was introduced to me as “Teungku Tjik di Kila,” the name of his paramount ancestor standing in for his own given name.⁸⁵ The generic term Habib typically implied a similar kind of identification with one’s patrilineal ancestors, as the unmarked term usually indicated the descendants of Habib Abdurrahim.⁸⁶ All of these titles referenced the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization. Together with the cultivation of genealogies such as Nyak Nur’s, they turned the living descendants of Nagan Raya’s paramount ancestors (i.e., Habib Abdurrahim, Teungku Tjik di Kila) into flesh-and-blood tokens of the narrative of Nagan Raya’s Islamization.

⁸⁵ This, admittedly, was done in a playful manner. Nonetheless, it suggests the close identification of descendants in this line with the paramount ancestor of Teungku Tjik di Kila.

⁸⁶ In Nagan Raya, there were Sayyids who were not descendants of Habib Abdurrahim, and therefore not members of the Habib Seunagan. But when the term “Habib” was used in daily conversation, it usually was taken to refer to the Habib Seunagan, unless someone specified otherwise.

It was not simply Nyak Nur and his siblings that cultivated the links between the patrilines of the Habib Seunagan and Teungku Tjik di Kila. The ties between the two families were guarded by members of both patrilines, even though they remained deeply suspicious of each other as a result of their different religious sensibilities and the history of open conflict between them in the period of the 1950s and early 1960s.⁸⁷ Members of the Habib Seunagan, from prominent scions of the family to young and not yet influential men and women in their twenties, volunteered to me that Teungku Tjik di Kila was their “right hand,” explicitly extending the title to cover his patrilineal descendants.

Many residents of Nagan Raya seemed to see things the same way. In fact, one person told me that Nyak Nur initially had produced the computer-generated copy of his genealogy that he shared with me in order to garner supporters in a regency election. He banked on the fact that his ties to the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization would carry votes. In the end, he did not win. But this was in part because another candidate, the grandson of Habib Muda, could claim a more prestigious, and dual, genealogy, via a patriline to one of Nagan Raya’s hereditary chiefs and a matriline to the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization via Habib Muda.

Seen in the light of the genealogical practices described in this section, Bapak Amin’s story of Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus eating together during Darul Islam makes more sense. These two men, while enemies, each descended from a patriline understood locally to be traceable to the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization. Further, their patrilines were intermarried at numerous places, and their paramount ancestors had worked together, as *qutub* and *autad*, to bring about Nagan Raya’s Islamization. As such, they were imagined to form a local religious elite responsible for the conversion of Nagan Raya. Their shared genealogical history was

⁸⁷ Not all descendants of the patriline of Teungku Tjik di Kila descended from Zakaria Yunus, or shared his reformist sensibilities. Nonetheless, it was Zakaria Yunus’ descendants who were most influential in Nagan Raya from among those people who claimed to descend from Teungku Tjik di Kila.

understood by some in the regency to overcome even the otherwise violent divisions between them: “During the day they would fight each other. Bang-bang-bang! But they were family. And really, they were on the same side.”

To be sure, such expressions of alignment between Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus were highly context dependent, alternating with others that reflected the rift between the two patrilines. However, the moments in which unity between these two rivals was stressed during my fieldwork were common and salient. They appeared to be meaningful to a wide variety of social actors, from members of the two patrilines themselves to villagers like Bapak Amin who recalled displays of familial affection between Nagan Raya’s most prominent enemies.

Perhaps most telling, however, was how Muda Waly fell out of such histories. Muda Waly, who was neither from nor resided in Nagan Raya, was extremely prominent in narratives of Darul Islam that stressed the opposition between reformed and anti-reformed Islamic practices and sensibilities. However, he and his followers rarely featured in histories of Darul Islam when they were narrated in terms of Nagan Raya’s prominent patrilines. Muda Waly’s influence in Nagan Raya really only began in the 1940s, when several of the earliest generations of his students returned to Nagan Raya after studying with him in South Aceh. However central Muda Waly’s role had been in developing an anti-Darul Islam front in partnership with Habib Muda, he and his students had no claims to prestigious genealogies linking them to Nagan Raya’s Islamization.

(Dis)entangling Genealogies: Two Imaginaries of Islamic Practitioners

This chapter examined two sets of ideal types that organized Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya according to separate criteria. The first took a group’s adherence to Islamic reform as the interpretative basis for dividing Muslims into reformed and unreformed Islamic

practitioners. This ideal type often arose in people's recollections of the period from the 1930s through the 1960s, when reformist polemics were at their height. It remained a salient way in which Muslims marked distinctions between each other at the time of my fieldwork, even though the confrontations of the earlier period had been muted following the discord of the 1950s. This was in part because the institutional networks of practitioners associated with Habib Muda, Muda Waly, and Zakaria Yunus continued to exist. While most individual practitioners were somewhat eclectic in their religious practices, specific types of practice could and often would be identified using the interpretive ideal types that arose from the reformist polemics of the 1930s through the 1960s.

The second set of ideal types organizing Muslims into different groups of Islamic practitioners involved their place in genealogical histories. Rather than placing Muslims into groups based on their position vis-à-vis Islamic reform, this interpretive frame identified Muslims according to their genealogical links to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization. Establishing such links depended on social practices such as the cultivation of genealogies (i.e., Nyak Nur's "Family Line of the Teungku Tjik di Kila"), and the recognition of specific people's ties to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization. One of the effects of these genealogical histories was to reconfigure the ways in which residents in Nagan Raya might understand different Muslims to be linked in networks of affiliation. Thus, Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus could be portrayed as continuing their familial, and presumably for some mystical, ties as a result of their entwined genealogies and links to Nagan Raya's Islamization. Such a portrayal could even be set in the period when Habib Muda and Zakaria Yunus were engaged in open war against each other.

What might my discussion of these two different ways of conceptually organizing Muslims in Nagan Raya suggest beyond the immediate case? Much literature on Islamic history and practice, in Indonesia and elsewhere, has taken conceptual frameworks roughly parallel to the first set of previously described ideal types (i.e., based on polemics of Islamic reform) to be the primary means through which Muslims have understood differences between Islamic practitioners (Abdullah 1971; Bowen 1993b; Deeb 2006; Dhofier 1999; Geertz 1960; Kobo 2009; Laffan 2003; Noer 1973; Peacock 1978; Rasmussen 2010; Scheele 2007). This is not without good reason. Islamic reformism in various iterations has been a vitally important part of Islamic discourse and practice throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In Indonesia, ways of imagining Islam as an object of reflection and as a set of practices to be carried out in a proper manner, what Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori have called “objectification,” have been influenced deeply by polemics of reform (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996).

Nonetheless, there have been other ways in which Muslims in Indonesia have organized themselves into different groups of practitioners. In Nagan Raya, one of these ways has been through genealogical links. This should not be surprising. Genealogical idioms have long been central to Islamic discourse and practice. Central to Islamic jurisprudence, for example, is the verification of chains of transmission, from one scholar to the next, of records of the Prophet’s words and deeds (I., *hadis*; Ar., *ahādīt*). Similarly, the authority of teachers sanctioned to transmit the teachings of a Sufi order usually is expressed primarily through a chain of transmission known as a *silsilah* (I.; Ar. *silsila*). These chains record the transmission of esoteric knowledge from teacher to student, and usually stretch back to the Prophet Muhammad himself. In some cases, such chains have been tied directly to the genealogical patrilines of specific

families, for example, the ‘Alawi Sayyids described by Engseng Ho as having inhabited the far-flung littorals of the Indian Ocean since the tenth century (Ho 2006).

Of particular interest in the case of Nyak Nur’s “family line,” and genealogical histories of Nagan Raya’s Islamization more generally, are the ways in which genealogy cuts across distinctions made in terms of polemics derived from ‘Abduh-inspired Islamic reform. This is because genealogical idioms, while permeating Islamic practice, have tended to be associated with “traditional,” that is unreformed or anti-reformist, practitioners. The genealogical and educational pedigree of particular reformers has sometimes been noted by analysts (Abdullah 1971; Bowen 1993b). However, it is unreformed *ulama*, for example, that have most often been portrayed as passing boarding schools and knowledge to favorite sons and son-in-laws (Dhofier 1999).⁸⁸ Conversely, ‘Abduh-inspired reformers have tended to be described as skeptical of practices associated with the transmission of knowledge in a genealogical idiom, for example, the bonds between teacher and student institutionalized in Sufi orders, and the privileges sometimes afforded the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (Abdullah 1972; Bowen 1993b; Geertz 1960; Ho 2006). This all suggests that genealogical idioms of Islamic practice more properly belong to groups of Muslims that are the least influenced by the styles of objectification associated with ‘Abduh-style Islamic reformism.

Nyak Nur’s genealogy, however, suggests otherwise. The direct descendant of Nagan Raya’s most prominent twentieth-century reformer, Nyak Nur embraced ‘Abduh-style reform. This was evident in his questioning of the Habib Seunagan’s mystical powers. It was also evident in his daily practice and social milieu. Although most in Nagan Raya were eclectic in their religious practice, I never met Nyak Nur at any of the *kandoeri* held at the graves of the

⁸⁸ An important exception to this is scholarship on reform movements not inspired primarily by Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā (Metcalf 1982). These reform movements have been portrayed as maintaining, if at times altering, a wide range of genealogical idioms.

Habib Seunagan. The *kandoeri* at which I did meet him were all marked by distinctly reformed practice. At these *kandoeri* there were no prayers offered to lessen the suffering of the deceased. Rather than long strands of litanies, much of the ritual involved a respected member from among those in attendance, often one of Nyak Nur's siblings, leading a spontaneous prayer.

All of this marked Nyak Nur as embracing 'Abduh-style reform. Yet, it was clear that his genealogical descent from Teungku Tjik di Kila remained central to an Islamic imaginary that informed his daily social practice and placed him in broader histories of Nagan Raya's Islamization. Genealogy, thus, was a central medium through which he expressed affinities with other Muslims, as well as his place in Nagan Raya's Islamic history. In this instance, then, it was clearly not the case that genealogical styles of imagining and organizing Muslims and Islamic practice were primarily the domain of unreformed practices and individuals.

Conclusion: On Finding a Place in Islamic History

Of the two ways of conceptually organizing the relationship between groups of Islamic practitioners described above, the genealogical ties to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization are of particular interest to my broader arguments regarding the ways in which Acehnese Muslims orient themselves to local Islamic pasts. The cultivation of these genealogical ties in many ways paralleled the reading of the past on landscapes and bodies described in Chapter 2. Signs of the past were to be found in the patrilines descending from the major figures of Nagan Raya's period of Islamization, for example, the patriline of Teungku Tjik di Kila. These signs were made readable by the genealogies and titles that indexed these patrilines and found their way into social and political interactions ranging from the daily use of terms of address to the contesting of elections for local political office. As such, the cultivation of these genealogies

were instances of the ways I found Acehnese to place themselves in relationships with local Islamic pasts through embodied and emplaced practices.

The period of Nagan Raya's Islamization could be conceptually linked to the period of the Prophet Muhammad through the genealogies of the Habib Seunagan, who as Sayyids claimed patrilineal descent from the Prophet's immediate family. However, this rarely occurred in daily narrative or social practice in Nagan Raya. The focus of genealogical histories in Nagan Raya, for example, Nyak Nur's "Family Line of the Teungku Tjik di Kila," tended to be on the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization. This was the paradigmatic period for Muslims in Nagan Raya who took up genealogy as an idiom of Islamic history.

That many Muslims in Nagan Raya frequently oriented themselves to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization is not simply noteworthy because local Islamic pasts represent the foci of this dissertation. Recall that the narratives of Christianization that helped to contextualize concern over migration to South Aceh, described in Chapter 3, revealed that Islamization could be understood as an unfolding historical project, one that could be reversed or intensified in different time periods. As such, linking oneself to this unfolding historical project of Islamization through genealogical ties could carry moral resonances that underpinned both the authority of those people who claimed these prestigious genealogies and a sense that such people should be involved in the on-going work of Islamization.

Such a sense of responsibility was common among both descendants of Habib Abdurrahim and Teungku Tjik di Kila. The Habib Seunagan remained the central figures in the devotional practice of their devotees. One young member of the family, a recent university graduate, suggested to me the great responsibility that came with this position, which included supporting the people of Nagan Raya in their social, economic, and religious development. The

descendants of Zakaria Yunus were involved in a range of activities that they identified as “religious outreach” (I., *dakwah*), from preaching to participation in village “mutual self-help” (I., *gotong-royong*) development projects.

Maintaining genealogical ties to figures such as Habib Abdurrahim and Teungku Tjik di Kila also required on-going narrative work. As historical circumstances of the post-colonial period shifted, so did the contexts in which those in Nagan Raya cultivated genealogies linking them to the regency’s Islamization. Members of the Habib Seunagan and descendants of Teungku Tjik di Kila cultivated their genealogical ties to Nagan Raya’s period of Islamization through an ever changing array of narrative, social, and ritual practices. Chapter 6 introduces further ways in which the past of Nagan Raya’s Islamization was readable in emplaced and embodied manners, for example, through graves that dotted the Nagan Raya countryside and ritual practices that occurred at these graves. First, however, I turn to two spatial-temporal frames (i.e., the world and the afterlife) through which residents in Nagan Raya approached questions of ethical risk and responsibility.

Chapter 5

“Young People are Seeking Their Blessings”: Eschatology, Contingent Lives, and Temporalities of Ethical Practice in Nagan Raya

This chapter examines different temporal orientations Muslims in the regency of Nagan Raya brought to pursuits of Islamic learning and ethical practice. Much recent ethnographic literature on Islamic practice that intersects with the temporal experience of practitioners has tended to focus on what I here call “striving time,” a temporal orientation that entails a progressive and self-reflective refinement of the self and, in some cases, society (Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Khan 2011; Mahmood 2005). In a subsection of this literature, the adoption of striving time by individual Muslims is motivated in part by encounters with the Islamic eschatological tradition (Hirschkind 2006). In these accounts, the juxtaposition of the mundane and frail temporariness of the present world with invocations and vivid images of horrid tortures of the grave, trials of the day of judgment, and sufferings of hell helps to bring practitioners to self-reflective pursuits of ethical self-refinement. Eschatological literature, thus, helps to produce the striving time that underpins revivalist projects. Such striving time, concerned with the progressive transformation of self and society, was an important mode through which Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya oriented their pursuits of Islamic practice during my fieldwork in 2008 and 2009. However, it was not the only, nor even the predominant, one.

In Nagan Raya, striving time was most closely tied to discourses of the provincial state apparatus, involved in a project of Islamic legal reform designed to transform Acehnese society through encouraging more thoroughly Islamic practice. Activists, religious teachers, government

officials, and villagers of various social and occupational statuses all proclaimed support for these reforms, which were identified with the term *syariat Islam* (I.). In other moments, however, these same interlocutors revealed more “contingent” temporal sensibilities (Bledsoe 2002). In these moments they approached their own religious practice, and that of others, not as a progressive process of self-refinement, but as linked to such factors as age, social position, and individual life circumstances. The contingent temporalities I observed in Nagan Raya were directly tied to the basic eschatological concepts of the “world” (Ac., *dōnya*, I., *dunia*) and the “afterlife” (I., *akhirat*), in some cases as a result of the study of Islamic eschatological writings. Thus, despite the power of activist and revivalist discourses, Muslims in Nagan Raya approached religious and ethical life in a manner that reflected complexity, conflicted attitudes, and commitments to multiple and competing ethical orientations, as has been observed among Islamic practitioners in other contexts (Marsden 2005; Schielke 2010a, 2010b). Much of this complexity arose from within the Islamic tradition itself, which supported both striving and contingent temporalities.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of ethnographic literature on Islamic eschatology and ethical practice, drawing attention to how anthropologists have tended to stress striving temporalities rather than the ways Muslims relate Islamic discourse and practice to such things as aging and the life course. I then move to an ethnographic account of Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya pursuing Islamic practice and education in manners that reflected contingent temporalities. Beginning with religious lessons for non-specialist practitioners (I., *majlis taklim*), I look first at articulations of idealized relationships between aging and Islamic practice. I then turn to more individualized notions of the ethical risks and responsibilities associated with one’s relationship to the world and the afterlife. Building on the ethnography

presented to this point, I reflect on how the two nodes of the world and the afterlife organize ethical risk and responsibility, objectifying Islamic practice, but often in a manner inconsistent with striving temporalities. Finally, I conclude by suggesting that attention to such non-striving temporalities, in addition to providing tools for ever more nuanced accounts of Islamic practice and history, highlights problematic assumptions that remain in much ethnographic and historical literature regarding what constitutes Islam ethical practice.

Striving Time, the Life Course, and Eschatology in the Anthropology of Islam

One of the most fruitful fields of study for anthropologists of Islam in recent decades has been examining the ways in which Muslims have adopted attitudes and sensibilities conducive to processes of self-reflection connected to a striving towards improved Islamic practice. While most recently associated with well-known work on Islamic revivalist movements and individual practices of ethical self-formation (Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005), this field has a much longer history. It can be traced, for example, to work on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Islamic reform movements, from as early as the 1960s (Abdullah 1971; Bowen 1993b; Geertz 1960; Metcalf 1982; Noer 1973). Perhaps the most influential articulation of such a field has been the formulation offered by Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori (Eickelman 1992; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). Eickelman and Piscatori found increasing access to Islamic knowledge and debates over normative practice to be characteristic of a twentieth century form of “objectification,” a process through which factors such as increased literacy and internationally circulating notions of orthodoxy resulted in an ever greater self-reflective awareness on the part of Islamic practitioners.⁸⁹ Though critiqued in its particulars by some of

⁸⁹ See also the summary and analysis of Eickelman and Piscatori’s objectification thesis in Osella and Soares (2010, 4).

the authors discussed here (Deeb 2006, 20-23; Mahmood 2005, 53-57), Eickelman and Piscatori's formulation continues to influence these and other studies of Islamic practice.

Central to the analyses cited here, from accounts of Islamic reformism in the 1960s to recent work on Islamic revivalism, is a particular notion of temporality and temporal experience reflected in the intention of Muslims to achieve progressive self-improvement. This temporality, which I here call "striving" time following work by Naveeda Khan (Khan 2011, 2012), is most often embedded in narratives of individual or collective projects of political or ethical striving.

Khan writes:

My argument, in brief, has been that the creation of Pakistan inaugurated the aspiration to strive to be Muslim. This aspiration did not concern itself with final ends. Thus while the emphasis of striving was on self-perfectibility, it never emphasized perfection. Although undoubtedly Pakistan has seen leaders, movements, and parties with notions of what kind of society, state, or self Pakistan should forge, the particular tendency that I track [...] maintained the necessity of an open future to enable striving and experimentations on the self. I take the construction and maintenance of mosques in neighborhoods of Lahore to be sites of such experimentation [...] Other scenes of aspiration appear in the theological arguments within the weave of everyday life and the assiduous attempts at piety that may involve bold moves to seek out extraordinary guidance within a milieu beset by ambiguities over religious authority. I even incorporate state efforts to develop a position on the Ahmadi question as a possible scene of aspiration [...] (Khan 2012, 203)

As Khan suggests, the precise end of such ethical striving can be difficult to pin down. Indeed, the end is often less significant than the project of striving itself. For those attempting to emulate the Prophet Muhammad, such striving may necessarily end in failure, which in turn prods further striving (Metcalf 1993). However, all such striving is underpinned by models and experiences of time that are at least potentially progressive and oriented to a moral end.

This chapter asks whether there might not be other temporalities that inhere in Islamic ethical practice besides the progressive striving time of self-refinement. During fieldwork in Nagan Raya, I became attuned to how my interlocutors pursued religious and ethical practices in

manners that were deeply influenced by age and other life circumstances. Such age- and life circumstance-contingent practices reflected how practitioners understood themselves to be tied to the “world” (Ac., *dōnja*; I., *dunia*) and the “afterlife” (I., *akhirat*).⁹⁰ Ethical pursuits were differentiated and uneven in time, some deferred until later periods, others embraced in earnest immediately at particular moments. While notions of striving abounded, other temporal models and sensibilities informed ethical pursuits in manners that at times seemed to contradict the imperatives of striving time.

The ethnography that follows attends closely to the ways in which Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya linked their pursuits of religious and ethical practice to their age and personal histories, and to the ethical nodes of the world and the afterlife. It thus participates in a scattered but suggestive ethnographic and historical scholarship that has treated aspects of Islamic practice and sociality along with attention to the life course. This work has drawn attention to, for example, historical patterns of migration by young men in Islamic Southeast Asia (Abdullah 1971; Andaya 1993; Mrázek 1972; Siegel 2000), the centrality of life-staged categories in the practice of Islamic jurisprudence (Peirce 2003, 149), and gendered moral codes reflecting the positions of men and women of different ages vis-à-vis forms of Islamic authority (Abu-Lughod 1988; Boddy 1989). Islamic life passage rituals such as circumcision, marriage, and the adoption of sartorial markers are also common topics of historical and ethnographic treatments, though usually without commentary on the broader resonances these rituals have for models of ethical

⁹⁰ *Akhirat* might be more properly translated as “end times,” especially when referencing the apocalypse and the post-apocalyptic realm. As a short hand, however, it was used by my interlocutors to indicate the period in an individual life following death, including the time in the grave, the resurrection, the apocalypse, and after. Alternately, my interlocutors would refer to this second node of ethical risk and responsibility as the “grave” (Ac., *koeboe*; I., *kubur*). Both terms appear in the ethnography that follows. Here I use *akhirat*, loosely translated as “afterlife,” in order to capture the sense in which this second node encompassed the entire period following one’s death, while linking one’s personal history with a more general cosmic history of divine reward and punishment.

practice.⁹¹ Similarly, age and life stage has been incorporated in analyses of Islamic practice through the inscription of “generations” of reformers or revivalists, with different waves of activist or pietistic sensibilities being associated with different age cohorts (Abdullah 1971; Brenner 1996; Deeb 2006).⁹²

My own approach to the life course might be termed “contingent,” following Caroline Bledsoe’s analysis of non-linear temporal experiences and imaginations through which women experience fertility and childbirth (Bledsoe 2002).⁹³ I examine how my interlocutors understood the progress of their own and others’ lives in terms of specific occurrences and circumstances that placed them in relation to the world, the afterlife, and common idealizations of the life course.

I see the contingency of these notions as two-fold. They involved contingent life courses in Bledsoe’s sense, that is, life courses that never simply progressed from an idealized start to an idealized finish, but were the products of multiple and contradictory historical pushes and pulls. In addition, these notions were contingent in a second way. They allowed for the formulation of ethical practices that were underpinned by a temporality based in the contingencies of actual life courses, rather than the progressive ethical striving of reform and revivalist movements. I examine these contingent temporalities in contexts framed, explicitly and implicitly, by Islamic eschatological literature.

⁹¹ The obvious counterexample is literature on women’s dress. See, for example, Abu-Lughod (1988) and Boddy (1989).

⁹² These accounts can be divided into those that deal primarily with generations as political idealizations (Abdullah 1971), and those that examine generational differences at the level of individual practice (Brenner 1996; Deeb 2006).

⁹³ For a similar approach that I also have found productive, see Jennifer Johnson-Hanks’s discussion of “vital conjuncture” (Johnson-Hanks 2002).

Islamic eschatological traditions describe the happenings following one's death and at the end of time. They frequently include graphic portrayals of the various tortures believed to be inflicted on the body in recompense for earthly sins and during the trials of the apocalypse. They are the focus of many ethnographic and historical studies, most recently as an important genre of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamic reform and revivalist movements (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Rudnyckyj 2009, 104, 125-126, 128). Charles Hirschkind, for example, describes the rhetorical use of these traditions in Islamic sermons aimed at producing a particular kind of ethical sensorium, a body of senses properly attuned to the world and its moral resonances:

One of the primary tasks of *khutaba'* is to afford listeners [...] a taste of death, to portray death in its manifold dimensions and ramifications with a vividness and moral depth so as to root it in their sensory experience, to constitute it as a habit of thought, heart, and body. The tasting of death through continual acts of remembrance enables an ethical orientation in this world, a moral emotional bearing proper to pious human action [...] [F]ear of the horrors of the grave and the fires of hell [...] is [...] a virtue of character, a condition not only for the avoidance of error but for the proper performance of good as practiced in all fields of human endeavor [...] That is to say, an experiential knowledge of death is a condition of moral agency. (Hirschkind 2006, 176)

Accounts of eschatological literature in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Islamic revivalist movements have suggested these traditions have worked to produce a striving temporal orientation among Islamic revivalists.⁹⁴ The ethical orientation that Hirschkind describes as being fostered by the above described homiletic traditions both motivates ethical action and represents ethical action itself. Muslims, thus, have often juxtaposed the coming period of the grave and end times with the present world in order to provoke a turn towards self-refinement and to provide practitioners with the ethical and emotional tools to pursue such a project. This

⁹⁴ Other aspects of Islamic eschatological belief and practice that have received scholarly attention include their role as a site of contestation regarding orthodoxy (Bowen 1993b; Halevi 2007, 226-233; Hurgronje 1906, II, especially 269-357) and ideas regarding the tortures of the grave as purgative, i.e., as preparing an impure soul for paradise (Halevi 2007: 215-225).

end is not simply the purview of recent revivalist movements. Indeed, Muslims repenting upon mystical visions of the grave and fires of hell is a common theme in the biographies, some centuries old, of renowned Muslim figures (Reynolds 2001, 188, 193).

Like the practitioners described in such literature, my interlocutors discovered and molded ethical imperatives by juxtaposing Islamic eschatological concepts with the circumstances of their own lives. The results of these juxtapositions, however, frequently varied markedly from the progressive self-refinement typical of striving time. Striving time was linked to ethical projects stressing certain kinds of moral risks and responsibilities. In Aceh these were especially associated with the continuing Islamization of the province that was an explicit goal of Islamic legal reforms. The existence of other temporal orientations and sensibilities, however, entailed different configurations of such risks and responsibilities.

Majlis Taklim and the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah

As discussed in Chapter 1, styles and forms of Islamic practice in Nagan Raya were varied, with at least three main institutional networks of practitioners identified locally: devotees of the Habib Seunagan, the followers and students of the Naqsyabandi Sufi teacher Muda Waly, and cadres of Islamic reformists inspired by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Cairo-based scholars Muhammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā. While many in the region professed an affiliation to one or more of these groups, in daily practice participation in religious activities often was eclectic, with some people seeking knowledge, blessings, and instruction from representatives of more than one of these networks.

This eclecticism was apparent in religious lessons for adults who were not themselves religious specialists, lessons known locally as *majlis taklim* (I.). Phillip Winn has noted that the term *majlis taklim*, drawn from Arabic but exclusively Southeast Asian in its usage, can indicate

a range of educational and devotional practices involving relatively non-specialist Islamic practitioners (Winn 2012). In Nagan Raya, *majlis taklim* were regularly meeting, often weekly or monthly, and involved gatherings at which a teacher would instruct participants using one or more religious texts. These lessons were closely associated with the boarding school networks controlled by the intellectual descendants of Muda Waly, and were usually taught at these boarding schools. Attendees at these lessons, while predominantly rural villagers who often shared the sensibilities of these teachers, nonetheless included those who in other contexts represented themselves as reformed or who participated in the ritual activities of the Habib Seunagan. Groups tended to be segregated by gender and age, although a few were mixed by gender. Groups attended by the eldest participants, men and women in their sixties and over, were attended most regularly.⁹⁵

Lessons participated in patterns of the aural transmission of Islamic knowledge found in different forms widely throughout the Muslim world in different times and places (Dhofier 1999; Messick 1993; Nelson 1985). The teacher, usually the head of the boarding school at which a lesson was held, led the study of a text from a corpus of Malay language sources written in Arabic script.⁹⁶ These texts were most often translations of and commentaries on revered Arabic-language originals. In other instances, they were compilations of basic elements of

⁹⁵ There is much in the following description of *majlis taklim* in Nagan Raya that is consistent with Julian Millie's description of "non-specialists" attending Majelis Istighotsah Ukkasyah bin Mihshon in Bandung, West Java in the early 2000s (Millie 2008). In particular, his stress on the importance of such non-specialists in the intellectual and ritual life of the *pesantren*, as well as the efforts of the head of the school to incorporate such non-specialists into this life through adjusting his teaching to their knowledge and interests, is strikingly consistent with what I observed. An important difference, however, is that, while some exhibited the kind of lack of engagement with textual exegesis that Millie describes as being common among such non-specialists in the context in which he conducted his fieldwork, those who attended *majlis taklim* in Nagan Raya, especially older participants, often were intensely engaged in making sense of the text. This was in large part due to reasons that will become apparent in what follows, as to an important organization difference. *Majlis taklim* in Nagan Raya were overwhelmingly only attended by non-specialists, unlike Majelis Istighotsah Ukkasyah bin Mihshon, which was attended by both students at the *pesantren* where it was held and the general public.

⁹⁶ On the use of these kinds texts and the history of educational practices associated with them, see Dhofier (1999) and van Bruinessen (1990; 1995).

belief, jurisprudence, and mysticism.⁹⁷ The most common form of these works consisted of lines in Arabic followed by a Malay translation or commentary. At lessons, the teacher read a source out loud, adding his own Acehnese language gloss following each Arabic and Malay pairing.⁹⁸ The teacher then often added his own commentary or explanation, also in Acehnese. Sometimes he simply defined a key concept, but in other cases the teacher offered several minutes of extended commentary designed to move attendees to more pious understanding, belief, or practice. Some attendees brought their own editions of the texts under study to lessons, following along as the teacher read the work out loud. But most attendees simply listened.

Between August of 2008 and June of 2009, I regularly attended six different *majlis taklim*, taught by three different teachers.⁹⁹ The various *majlis taklim* I attended in Nagan Raya tended to focus their studies around three general, and overlapping, topics: foundational belief and practice, sometimes glossed as *usuluddin* (I.); practical Islamic jurisprudence, into which fit a range of topics, including, for example, how to perform ablutions and the proper procedures for figuring and collecting the religious tax; and eschatological literature on the tortures of the grave and the apocalypse.

The *majlis taklim* that I first attended, and at which I came to feel the most comfortable, was the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, held on the grounds of the Dayah-Pesantren Mutaallamin, a boarding school in the village of Nigan.¹⁰⁰ The members of Majlis Taklim Ansharullah studied

⁹⁷ For the specific texts that I most often observed being studied in Nagan Raya, see Appendix 1.

⁹⁸ Indonesian is a dialect of Malay. Thus, although these texts were marked by a distinct and somewhat archaic style, the Malay sections were relatively easy to understand for attendees, all of whom were fluent in Indonesian as well as Acehnese.

⁹⁹ For a list of *majlis taklim* in Nagan Raya at the time of my fieldwork, see Appendix 2.

¹⁰⁰ In this chapter, I use pseudonyms for all of my interlocutors with only one exception. “Abon Nigan” was the term of address used by most in Nagan Raya for the teacher of the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah. It would have been impossible to disguise his identity without also disguising the name and location of this *majlis taklim*,

several texts during the months that I attended their lessons. These included *Sayr al-Salikin*, a well-known eighteenth-century translation of a work by the eleventh- and twelfth-century mystic Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Aqidah al-Najin*, a nineteenth-century work on basic elements of faith, and other works on *usuluddin*, the basic elements of religion.¹⁰¹ While these texts each covered a wide range of topics, Majlis Taklim Ansharullah tended to focus their studies on eschatology, reading selections from the above works that focused on the spectacular and frightening details of the ordeals of the grave and the afterlife. Topics covered in these selections included, among others, the size and weight of the mallets that are used by the angels Munkar and Nakir to punish the bodies of dead sinners, the razor thin bridge Muslims will one day cross into paradise, and the mysterious instruction that at the apocalypse one should always remember to “turn to the right” (Ac., *wét oeneun*).

One of the things that impressed me from my earliest visits with this group was the apparent fit of the usual subject matter of the lessons and the age of the attendees. All members of Majlis Taklim Ansharullah were men, and all but one of these men were over the age of sixty. At least two claimed to be one hundred. Members in their seventies, eighties and nineties outnumbered the “young” attendees in their sixties. Already from the first few times I attended Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, I was struck by how participants seemed acutely aware of the imminent relevance of the material under study. Given their advanced age, after all, the ordeals of the afterlife were neigh.¹⁰²

something which went against the wishes of its participants. Abon Nigan, who died shortly after I left Nagan Raya in July of 2009, gave me permission to use this term of address in my publications.

¹⁰¹ See Appendix 1 for a more detailed description of the texts listed here.

¹⁰² Others have made similar observations in Java. See, for example Dhofier (1999, 261, 272), Geertz (1960, 182-184), Howell (2001, 715-718), and Peacock (1978, 84-85).

Majlis taklim that I attended in Nagan Raya typically were quite lively, even rowdy, as participants forwarded questions and commentary to their teachers and fellow classmates in manners that sometimes exhibited bravado and that sometimes interfered with the progress of the lesson. At Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, the connection between the age of participants and the subject matter under study was further reflected in the specific questions put forward at these sessions. Inquiries regularly involved such topics as the number of litanies one might need to recite while still alive in order to purify one's heart before death, the consequences for failing to respond appropriately to a specific test of the apocalypse, and the status of one's ritual purity in the unfortunate event that one passed on to the next life while using the toilet.

Not everyone found all such questions equally edifying. Pak Panyang, a man in his seventies who had initially invited me to Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, once privately complained, "Those people asking all the questions are dumb! If they knew already, they wouldn't ask." Nonetheless, they were an inescapable part of each lesson, and most attendees seemed to enjoy them. Sessions frequently remained light-hearted, with a lot of joking and gentle teasing, despite the heavy subject matter. Nonetheless, through both the object of study and the questions forwarded by participants, I observed an intense interest in death and the hereafter. The sessions held a distinct air of meetings for those who were gathering to prepare for their own afterlives.

"At the Least You Should Make Your Worship Consistent with Your Age": Aging and Ethical Pursuits

Majlis Taklim Ansharullah and most of the other *majlis taklim* that I attended or about which I gathered data during my field research were dominated by older attendees who frequently showed intense interest in death and the afterlife. But what of the young? As mentioned above, eschatological traditions of graphic literature on the ordeals of the grave and the day of judgment have been a major genre invoked in the activism of Islamic revivalist

movements. These accounts often highlight the engagement of adolescents and young adults with this literature (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005). Acehnese, both young and old, regularly reminded me during my fieldwork that the moment of one's death (*I. ajal*) was both preordained by God and unknown to the individual in this world. With only a few exceptions, we would each be accountable for our lifetime of sins, both in the grave and at judgment day.¹⁰³ Further, Acehnese ritual practice, especially in Nagan Raya, was inextricably tied to graves and funerary ritual. The ritual cycles of village life, then, were full of reminders of death and the period of trial thereafter, and they often involved the recitation of litanies to lessen these trials for oneself and one's deceased associates.

Majlis Taklim Ansharullah was exceptional for just how old its participants were, however, it was very rare at any of the *majlis taklim* I studied that anyone under the age of forty would attend. “Younger” groups for forty or fifty year olds tended not only to be smaller, but also less engaged, as some attendees dozed along the short walls of open-air pavilions where lessons were held. Almost no adolescents or young adults came, and the sessions for “college students” at the boarding school where Majlis Taklim Ansharullah was held seemed to be perpetually postponed, “until school holiday,” as I was repeatedly told.

After several visits to the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, I offered my observations about the lack of youth at the *majlis taklim* I was attending. “Why is it the case that most people who attend *majlis taklim* are old?” I asked in the informal and friendly moments before our teacher arrived to give the lesson. A short pause was followed by soft chuckles. Then Pak Mudin, in his sixties and always smiling, offered an answer to my inquiry: “Ah, actually, young people are seeking their blessings (Ac. and I., *rezeki*). They want to get married. So they work. And they

¹⁰³ Among these exceptions, of which my fellow attendees regularly reminded me during the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, are the sins of non-Muslims who convert to Islam.

go out. We are close to death. So we think about the tortures of the grave and the day of judgment. And we defend ourselves (I., *menjaga diri*).” I was intrigued by Pak Mudin’s response. I pressed further, referring directly to the topic to be discussed when our lesson began in a few minutes: “But should they not also be interested in the day of judgment? I mean, only God knows when we will die, right? If they do not defend themselves today, and they die tomorrow, will they not suffer greatly in the grave?”

This question provoked a longer pause, and lots of smiles. Finally one of our companions, a bit younger than Pak Mudin, exclaimed, “He’s right!” As the room erupted in laughter, Teungku Rofik, an instructor at Darul Mutaallimin and by far the youngest member of the group in his late forties or early fifties, began an explanation that did less to address my confusion than it did to reiterate my inquiry. “It is true, Nil. If young people (I., *pemuda-pemudi*) do not study about the tortures of the grave and the day of judgment, then they may not understand, and they will be tortured as a result of their sins. They should come to our lessons.”¹⁰⁴ Despite the self-evidence of the proposition, I found myself less than convinced by the lack of enthusiasm I observed in its deliverance. On one hand, Teungku Rofik and others in the room clearly believed that young people should pay more attention to questions of death and repentance, however, none of them seemed terribly moved by the prospect of younger people joining their own, or any other, *majlis taklim*. Not only did it seem that they did not expect it to happen, they appeared genuinely disinterested in whether any younger people came or not.

After this exchange, I began to raise the same inquiry with others. This included men and women, both young and old, outside of *majlis taklim*. The responses I received nearly always mirrored those of the members of Majlis Taklim Ansharullah. Some of my interlocutors were more enthusiastic than others when it came to moralizing, even damning, the overwhelming

¹⁰⁴ In Nagan Raya, especially in Nigan, I came to be called Nil, a shortened version of my first name.

tendency of youth to be concerned with their material well-being and romantic pursuits. All admitted that a more focused attention on the concerns of the grave represented by attendance at *majlis taklim* and similar kinds of lessons would, in fact, be of great moral benefit to such young people, however, virtually no one were surprised by my characterization or seemed to expect that it would be any other way. All of those whom I questioned indicated that it is, in fact, expected that young people pursue such worldly concerns. Not only did many seem genuinely disinterested, quite a few were sympathetic. The reasons for this ambivalence seemed to rest in common understandings of human nature, ethical responsibilities and the development of capacities to control one's baser desires. Different people stressed different configurations of these three elements in their commentaries about religious study and ethical action. Yet nearly all with whom I spoke acknowledged differences in the moral capacities and responsibilities of people of different ages and life circumstances.

Consider, for example, the following comments by a young man, Andi, in his early twenties and living on his family's homestead as a not-yet-married son:

- Daniel (D): Why do more old people (Ac., *oereuëng toeha*) attend *majlis taklim* than those who are young (Ac., *njang moeda*)?
- Andi (A): Because they (i.e., old people) are afraid of the tortures of the grave. Because they are near death[...] They are closer to death, aren't they?
- D: Yes, yes. But if, for example, one waits until one is old, and, let's say, sins a lot, won't it be the case that one's torture in the grave will also be a lot?
- A: Oh, a lot!
- D: So why wait until you're old?
- A: It is like I said earlier[...] Because those who are young sometimes still have a lot of desire (I., *nafsu*)[...] They still like to have a good time. They don't yet have conviction (I., *pendirian*).
- D: Conviction? What do you mean by that?
- A: Conviction, it means certainty of the heart (I., *penetapan hati*). For example, I want to do this, and continuously, until I'm old. An example would be if we had opened a business. If there isn't conviction then maybe the business will close. What remains is for

- it to be built. We open it, but work remains, and there must be conviction.
- D: I understand. So young people, their desire is high and their conviction is low. And old people have a low level of desire?
- A: Ah. Maybe their desire is high, but old people might also have a lot of experience. Life experience (I., *pengalaman hidup*). As a result, they might have conviction. Even more if they are already married.

Andi's articulation of why young people do not attend *majlis taklim* rested on a model of moral action that entailed the control of one's desires through the acquisition of appropriate psycho-moral tools. It in some ways resembled the ideas of mid-twentieth century Acehnese Islamic reformers, who employed the language of Islamic mystical practice to identify the rational intellect (Ac., *akaj*, I., *akal*) as the means of checking one's desires (Ac. and I., *hawa nafsu* or *nafsu*) (Siegel 2000). However, rather than posing the intellect as that which guides desire, Andi suggested that a different quality served this function, that is, *pendirian*, which might translate as "conviction" or "standing."¹⁰⁵ In doing so he revealed himself to share in the sensibilities of the Naqsyabandi Sufis descended from Muda Waly, members of whose lineage held the vast majority of the *majlis taklim* that Andi indicated young people chose not to attend. For these Sufis, the notion that the rational intellect alone might check one's desire represented an impoverished psycho-moral model. The intellect itself must be guided by other faculties, for example the soul (Ac., *rōh*, I., *roh*) and the heart (Ar. *sirr*), which, in descriptions these Sufis offered me, were the seats of the sort of conviction that, to borrow Andi's language, entails "a certainty of the heart[... a desire] to do this, and continuously, until I'm old."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *Pendirian* is an Indonesian noun form based on the root *diri*, "to stand" or "to exist."

¹⁰⁶ For a short discussion of the role of capacities of moral reflection and discernment in Islamic mystical practice, sometimes identified as the "subtle organs," see the entry for *sirr* in the Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition (Amir-Moezzi 2012). For a discussion of popular ideas about proper conduct that rely on a similar notion of moral capacities related to *akal* and *hawa nafsu* that appear in different distributions in people of different genders and life stages, in this case Egyptian Bedouins, see Abu-Lughod (1986, 85-99, 124-133).

Many of my interlocutors who were Naqsyabandi teachers would no doubt hold that the process of cultivating the necessary capacities to form something akin to Andi's *pendirian* might as well begin immediately through, for example, attendance at *majlis taklim*. Andi seemed less convinced. His comments did not, in fact, suggest the purposeful cultivation of virtuous capacities described in recent literature on ethical self-formation. It was not the attendance at lessons that allowed people to cultivate *pendirian* in his model. Rather, it was the development of *pendirian* that brought one to these lessons. This was achieved through "life experience" (I., *pengalaman hidup*), the precise meaning of which Andi left unspecified. However, what he did specify is revealing. He began and closed his response to my inquiry by indicating important moments in an idealized life cycle when *pendirian* might develop, i.e., as one approaches death and after one is married.

The understanding that ethical and ritual practice was contingent upon one's life stage was not limited to just the young or those who held affinities with lineages of Naqsyabandi teachers. Teungku Ramli, for instance, was of an advanced age, already in his seventies. His wealth, reputation and descendants were firmly established. When he was not in the bureaucratic office where he still held a government appointment, he spent most of his time attending family and community events. He was a critic of the forms of authority and religiosity associated with the network of boarding school teachers who trace their lineage to Muda Waly. As such, he chose not to attend the kinds of *majlis taklim* that I describe above. Instead, he participated, often as a teacher, in occasional public lessons for small groups of members of the organization Muhammadiyah, and its women's wing, Aisyiyah, both of which derive from an Islamic reformism traceable to the nineteenth-century figure Muhammad 'Abduh. Nonetheless, during a discussion in which he explained to me the importance of remembering the apocalypse as a

means of keeping oneself motivated to carry out moral and ritual acts (I., *amal* and I., *ibadat*) he articulated a model of religious learning and pursuits that paralleled those of my other interlocutors:

Daniel (D): So you, yourself are of an advanced age [...] are you preparing yourself[...]?
Teungku Ramli (R): Yes.
D: How?
R: It is like this. For a long time I have always, in my sermons, told people that at the least you should make your worship (I., *ibadat*) consistent with your age.
D: Consistent with your age?
R: Ah-ha! When one is sixteen years old, and the obligatory prayer time comes, one should pray. Then add a little more, add to this with what is optional but full of merit (I., *sunat-sunat*). If one is around my age now, it is no longer enough to do the optional prayers [immediately before or after the obligatory prayers...] One has to add to it with others [...] [w]ith prayers at night, at least three more sets[...]

Here, Teungku Ramli clearly described an age-contingent model of devotional practice. For the youngest practitioners, the basic requirements of the practicing Muslim (i.e., the five daily prayers) are sufficient. As one grows older, however, more and more prayers should be added. Teungku Ramli's suggestion that older practitioners might rise at night to perform additional ritual activities was consistent with a notion that such practitioners are relatively free of the kinds of worldly concerns that must preoccupy the young. This is a point I discuss in the next section, and one also made by my interlocutors in the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah. In fact, Teungku Ramli frequently seemed exhausted, often dozing during public meetings, suggesting that he did in fact maintain the night time regimen of optional prayers that he prescribed. Not unlike my interlocutors at Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, however, Teungku Ramli became more ambivalent when I asked specifically about whether it was not true that youth should attend to the affairs of the grave with the same intensity as do the old:

D: And how about this[...] I frequently attend *majlis taklim* in the villages. Those that come to the *majlis taklim* are old people... Young people very rarely come[...] So, according to your reasoning, is this actually appropriate? If a child is sixteen to twenty-five is it appropriate that they only do their five daily prayers? The older they get, the more they add, [then] going to *majlis taklim*?

R: No. It doesn't have to be that way. They should go from the time they are young. What I mean is that if someone already gets to be old and is not yet conscious (*I. sadar*), that's going to be difficult isn't it? It shouldn't be that way. They should come from the time they are young. Because it is like this[...] The messenger Muhammad said that repentance is good[...] It is even better from the time of one's youth[...] Why did I say consistent with one's age[...] I said] at least consistent with one's age. What is good is if it is from one's youth[...] It is better if it is since the beginning. But at the least [it should be] what I said earlier. For example, if I am already forty years old, I observe that which is optional but full of merit. I increase it again, it is not enough to do what is optional at the five prayer times, adding to it with other optional things. Because it is like this, if we are already old then it is true that later we will be behind what is appropriate for our age. Like someone of my age. One (i.e., of Teungku Ramli's age) should not be allowed to sleep anymore at night. Decrease one's sleep, do more, bringing oneself closer to God. One should not be able to [sleep] anymore[...] I now, after the required night time prayer, I recite litanies (Ac., *meurateb*), then I do more.

Jami (J)¹⁰⁷: At two o'clock [in the morning], three o'clock, one gets up again.

D: Gets up again? Are you like this too?

J: Sometimes. (Said while chuckling.)

In the second quotation Teungku Ramli shifts to a description of ritual practice and religious study that, in some ways, more closely approximates discourses of the progressive cultivation of ethical capacity common in recent ethnographic literature. This is especially evident in the way he characterizes the increase of ritual practice that he prescribes in terms of a layering of ritual that sets the foundations for the increased quantity of religious activity at the next level: “[I]f we are already old then it is true that we will be behind what is appropriate for our age.” Here it is possible to see an idea of the progressive development of a religious and

¹⁰⁷ Jami was a second interlocutor approximately the same age as Ramli.

ethical capacity designed to bring one “closer to God.” Yet Teungku Ramli’s description, even in asserting that it is better to begin such practice at a young age, continues to adhere to a distinctly age-contingent frame. It is, after all, the goal of not getting “behind what is appropriate for our age” that drives this practice, not an attempt at cultivating moral virtue in general.

The ambivalence found in Teungku Ramli’s statement is not uncommon. As pointed out above, it also existed in the sentiments expressed to me by *majlis taklim* participants. I raise it in order to stress that the contingent pursuits of Islamic learning and ethical action that I describe here were not limited to those who might otherwise be thought of as least affected by the styles of objectification associated with twentieth-century Islamic reform and revivalism.¹⁰⁸ One might expect Teungku Ramli, as a committed Abduh-style reformer who continued to actively engage in projects of individual and social critique through reformed Islamic practice, to more consistently adhere to a progressive striving time. Yet, even in his rejoinder to my suggestion that contingent approaches to religious practice might be appropriate, he returned to a frame dependent on age and examples drawn from his own age-contingent practice.

The Pursuit of *Rezeki* as Ethical Imperative

Andi and Teungku Ramli indicated that young people, especially the unmarried, chose not to attend *majlis taklim* because they had not yet developed the capacity to do so. Others subtly suggested that it might not yet be ethically prudent for someone like Andi to do so. Recall that on the morning that I vocalized my observation regarding the lack of young people who

¹⁰⁸ In his study of “reformist psychology” in Southeast Asia in the 1970s, James Peacock compared life-staged elements of the histories and experiences of Muslims influenced by different strands of Islamic reformism with those not influenced by reform (Peacock 1978, 52-100). He, indeed, found many differences between these groups, although his final analysis was somewhat conflicted on their significance (Peacock 1978, 187-206). My own point, however, is precisely the opposite. While I do not have broad survey data to suggest how widespread these sensibilities might have been, it was clear that at least some committed reformers, such as Teungku Ramli, engaged in both striving and contingent approaches to piety, as did those involved in types of religious practice that he and others like him criticized.

attended *majlis taklim*, my classmates at Majlis Taklim Ansharullah responded that young people were still pursuing their “blessings” (I. and Ac., *rezeki*), especially love and financial gain. This was the most common response I received when inquiring into why such lessons were nearly absent of young attendees. Interlocutors commonly responded that young people were simply too busy with the world (Ac., *dōnja*, I., *dunia*) to attend. I first understood this response as one meant to chide those overly focused on the world instead of the concerns of the afterlife, but I soon came to realize that this was not the case.

Rezeki, the term chosen by my classmates at Majlis Taklim Ansharullah to indicate the blessings being pursued by young people, regularly was used in daily speech in Nagan Raya. It referred to a range of valuables that one might obtain through sincere and serious efforts, including income, children, and knowledge. *Rezeki*’s most common usage in daily conversation was to indicate material gain, especially legitimate earnings or unexpected windfalls. In this sense, the term was used by Acehnese in contexts where the Indonesian term *peruntungan*, translatable as “profit” or “benefit,” might also be appropriate. However, Acehnese rarely used *peruntungan* in these contexts. The preference for *rezeki* was so strong, in fact, that my use of the term *peruntungan* was corrected on multiple occasions. In these instances, after I drew attention to my own or someone else’s good fortune using the term *peruntungan*, my interlocutors frequently looked up and said, “Not *peruntungan*, *rezeki*!” (Ac., *Kòn peruntungan, rezeki!*).

This preference pointed to nuances in common Acehnese usages of *rezeki* that have significance to the arguments of this chapter. In some parts of Indonesia, *rezeki* refers primarily to money or earnings, and can be more properly translated as “livelihood,” rather than “blessing.” In Aceh, however, *rezeki* reflected a shared divine-human agency that was central to

its wide usage to refer to the pursuit of material gain. Some Acehnese described *peruntungan* as a term belonging to a system of secular and capitalist socio-economic relations that treats human beings as the agents of their own material success. They defined *rezeki*, conversely, in terms of the responsibility of humans to strive for the material opportunities that have been made manifest for them by God. Underlying this definition was the assumption that the pursuit of material gain is itself a divinely sanctioned activity, when it is carried out in a manner consistent with divine will.

The pursuit of one's *rezeki* was an intense concern among both Acehnese men and women, for whom the failure to achieve material success could have grave consequences, ranging from the inability to meet expectations of neighborly and familial reciprocity to true indigence. Striving for one's *rezeki* was not morally optional, but an ethical responsibility of great importance. This was all the more the case given the fact that *rezeki* was tied to the reproduction of one's family line, and thus social relations generally, through marriage and reproduction. In particular, young Acehnese men frequently worried about their ability to present themselves as financially stable, especially if they wished to pursue a marriage to a woman who had caught their attention. These worries were stoked by stories that circulated among these young men about true loves lost to older and more financially stable suitors, while their younger and poorer competitors worked frantically to save enough money for their own proposals.¹⁰⁹

Thus, most of my interlocutors took the pursuits of wealth and marriage to be not only legitimate, but also ethically imperative upon young Muslims. This placed the young in a different constellation of relationships with the world and the afterlife than their older

¹⁰⁹ Acehnese comedies, sold on video compact discs, often revolved around related plots. See, for example, the extremely popular series *Eumpang Breuh*.

coreligionists. Those “close to death” were freer to focus their religious pursuits on the grave and the end times, attending *majlis taklim* and engaging in ritual practices designed to prepare them for the trials of their afterlife. Young, especially unmarried, men and women were engaged in virtuous pursuits of a different kind, namely, the righteous struggles for wealth, a suitable marriage partner, and children. Even if they wanted to join *majlis taklim*, some doubted that they had the ethical wherewithal to remain committed to such study, or to participate in an effective manner.

Sensibilities linking age and life-circumstance to the appropriateness of taking up different kinds of religious practice were not limited to participation in *majlis taklim*. Nor was it only by choice that youth did not participate in certain religious pursuits. A young man in his thirties, married with one child, once complained to me that he had repeatedly asked to join the practice sessions of the group of men in his village who led the *samadiyah* recitations at funeral feasts. He desperately wanted to join these weekly practices, for reasons that he did not make clear to me. But the older men who ran the practice had repeatedly rejected his requests: “They say I am not yet ready. But I am ready! Still, every time I go they do not give me permission.”

The life-staged notions of ethical capacity and responsibility discussed in this and the previous section are themselves instances of a “contingent” ethical temporality when compared to the striving time of activists and revivalists (Bledsoe 2002). They take participation in religious pursuits and ethical formation to be uneven and qualitatively specific to particular life contexts, rather than part of a single continuous stream of ethical development. In the next section, however, I turn to how this basic framework of aging was complicated further by the ways in which my interlocutors understood themselves to be tied to the ethical nodes of the world and the afterlife in a manner that reflected their specific circumstances. The examples in

the next section involve contingent temporalities individualized to reflect the details of particular lives.

Dōnja and Akhirat: The Contingency of Life and Death

The discourses on aging and religious practice that I discuss in the previous section appear to support a model that, if not exactly staged, associates the passage of years in a Muslim's life and the ever progressive approach of the grave with a decreasing involvement in worldly affairs and an increased interest in the afterlife. This parallels some ethnographic scholarship on aging and religious practice that has taken an orientation towards the afterlife to be geared at a process of exiting the world (Eberhardt 2006; Lamb 1997, 2000).

There is much about ethnographic literature on aging and decreased involvement in worldly affairs that is consistent with my observations in Nagan Raya. Participants in Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, for example, were clearly involved in a process of retiring from the world, no longer holding much responsibility in the day-to-day affairs of village or family life. Further, younger groups of *majlis taklim* participants, those in their forties and fifties, tended to focus their studies on basic religious doctrine and practical jurisprudence, foci that belie a more worldly orientation than the eschatological literature that was common fare at Majlis Taklim Ansharullah. Andi's description of *pendirian* suggested another wrinkle in this model, namely, that the development of the psycho-moral faculties necessary to engage in religious studies and to pay sustained attention to the grave might not yet be available to younger practitioners.

While models linking aging to retirement from worldly affairs were powerful ways in which my interlocutors structured their religious pursuits and interests, in themselves they are insufficient for understanding the ways in which people in Nagan Raya approached the navigation of ethical risks and responsibilities associated with the world and the afterlife. While

these two nodes could, and frequently were, emplotted in a directly inverse fashion on an abstract life course (i.e., as worldly responsibilities fade, those associated with the afterlife increase), the world and the afterlife impinged on the experiences of men and women in different fashions and degrees, depending on one's individual circumstances.

Vital for understanding the ways in which the world and the afterlife served as nodes through which my interlocutors oriented religious and ethical pursuits is Aceh's recent history of guerrilla war and natural disaster. Since 1873, there have been roughly ninety years in which some form of guerrilla conflict has raged in the province. The most recent conflict, between the Indonesian military and the Free Aceh Movement, resulted in a brutal counterinsurgency in which anywhere from twelve to twenty thousand people, most of whom were non-combatants, lost their lives. Many others were kidnapped, raped or tortured (Aspinall 2009, 2). This conflict ended in 2005, following the devastating December 26, 2004 earthquake and tsunami. The earthquake and tsunami took another 140,000 lives, almost a full three percent of Aceh's 4.3 million people at that time (Aspinall 2009, 221). Both the conflict and the tsunami have become central episodes in narratives of Acehnese history that stress Acehnese suffering in the post-colonial period.

In the memories of most of those whom I knew in Nagan Raya, the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian military only reached the regency in 1998. However, once it did, it did not spare the population of Nagan Raya its brutality. Most people living near Jeuram remember nightly crossfire and regular kidnappings that began at that time. Based on oral histories, the fighting in Nagan Raya had less of an ideological flavor than it did in other parts of Aceh, ironically making it even more difficult for local residents to avoid. Kidnapping and the collection of protection money became a sort of cottage industry, associated in the

memories of my interlocutors with greedy gangs more interested in turning a profit than in any ideological cause. While most in Nagan Raya blamed the beginnings of the conflict in the regency on Free Aceh Movement guerrillas “coming [to Nagan Raya] from Pidie” (Ac., *dja’ keundë dari Pidie*), it was clear that the military was widely feared as well. One of the most brutal massacres carried out by Indonesian military personal during the conflict occurred at a boarding school in Nagan Raya’s mountainous interior in July of 1999 (Aspinall 2009, 99).¹¹⁰

Similarly, with the bulk of its population living in the hills away from the coast, Nagan Raya did not suffer the effects of the tsunami to the degree that those on Aceh’s west and north coastal regions did. Yet it sits just fifty kilometers from the city of Meulaboh, the epicenter of the disaster. Many from Nagan Raya commuted to Meulaboh on a regular basis, as it was the closest urban center to the regency’s heartland. Further, during the initial months of relief and recovery after the tsunami, supplies were delivered to Meulaboh via the mountain road that runs through Nagan Raya, as the coastal highway had been washed away.

Thus, the experiences of Nagan Raya’s residents with both the recent conflict and the December 2004 natural disasters were in some ways less prolonged than in other parts of Aceh. They nonetheless entailed intense periods of suffering and brushes with death. In light of this history, placing the afterlife at the end of a period of youthful engagement with the world was something flagrantly at odds with the lived experiences of many, if not most, Acehnese, including my interlocutors in Nagan Raya.

¹¹⁰ This massacre, of a religious teacher named Teungku Bantaqiah and fifty-six of his students, may be one of the reasons why most in Nagan Raya pegged the beginning of the conflict in the region to 1998. Bantaqiah actually had been arrested in 1993, accused of supplying logistical support and esoteric knowledge used in self-protection to Free Aceh Movement cadres who had set up camp near his boarding school in the mountainous region of Beutong Ateuh (Aspinall 2009, 99). 1998 was also the year of the Indonesian dictator Soeharto’s resignation from the presidency, perhaps making it overdetermined that those in Nagan Raya would associate it with new kinds of uncertainty and unrest.

Consider, for example, Teungku Sum’s story of the path that led him to pursue religious knowledge. A student-teacher at Darul Mutaallimin, where Majlis Taklim Ansharullah met, Teungku Sum was in his early thirties at the time of my fieldwork. He was already well-respected for his intelligence and learning among the other student-teachers at the school, and was known as a skillful composer of didactic poems called *qasidah* (I.). He was withdrawn and somewhat aloof, traits often considered appropriate for religious teachers. One afternoon we sat together next to the school’s library and talked about his life history. He narrated a string of events, the details of which he left vague, in which he had found himself in a series of troubles as a result of the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian government. As a result he was forced to flee successive homes over a period of several years. Moving from boarding school to boarding school, half out of a desire to learn more and half out of the necessity to flee something or someone that he clearly did not feel comfortable naming, Teungku Sum finally had landed at Darul Mutaallimin, finding “peace” (I., *tentram*) and “safety” (I., *aman*). He settled there and became one of Abon Nigan’s assistants.

Teungku Sum described his journey as one that had been brought about by God, a life history in which his own human agency worked together with and was guided by that of the divine. In his typically aloof fashion he accepted his life history, both the hardships and the opportunities, with resignation. Chief among the rewards of his life was the religious knowledge he had accumulated during his travels, which he counted among his “blessing” (I., *rezeki*). Yet his withdrawn manner turned a shade of melancholy when he broached the topic of marriage: “I am not objecting. But I think about it a lot. How will I ever get married? I am rich in knowledge (Ac., *eleumèë*), but I have no money.” A man in his early thirties, considered a prime age for contracting a wife, Teungku Sum had taken a different path than one he assumed to be

compatible with the goals of material wealth and marriage. In so doing he had prioritized knowledge that most of my interlocutors deferred to moments when they felt closer to death, if they pursued it at all. While he studied and taught a wide range of subjects, he described his knowledge as that pertaining to the afterlife, contrasting it to the knowledge pursued by his age-mates engaged in studies at universities.¹¹¹ Perhaps it was his own brushes with death to which he alluded in his life history that had pushed him to pursue these concerns of the grave and the hereafter. Regardless, he clearly felt deep concern over the way in which this life course might have stalled or even foreclosed the possibility of marriage. While life circumstances, his own choices, and divine agency had led him on a path that differed from the models of age-appropriate practice described above, these models weighed heavily on his anticipation of the future.¹¹²

Teungku Sum's life history reveals a relation to the world and the afterlife that, rather than moving along the age-inflected arc described by, for instance, Andi or Teungku Ramli, involved a different kind of "contingent" experience of time and the life course (Bledsoe 2002). Thrust face-to-face with the afterlife as a result of the armed conflict in his homeland, he found himself drawn to a life of religious study, partly as a result of desperate circumstances and partly as a result of the mysteries of divine intervention. Yet death and the afterlife were not only culled into people's consciousness as a result of violence of this kind.

¹¹¹ This was a common rhetorical move on the part of boarding school teachers of this milieu, but also anyone who wanted to mark an imparting of knowledge as religious.

¹¹² One common alternative model of age-appropriate practice in Aceh and in Indonesia more broadly reflects precisely the path taken by Teungku Sum, i.e., devotion of one's youth to pious study in Islamic boarding schools, especially by young males. The goal of marriage is not discarded, even for these young scholars. However, this goal must be deferred until completion of one's studies or when the opportunity to marry, often within networks of scholarly families, presents itself. In my visits to boarding schools in rural Aceh in 2006 and 2007-2009, I frequently heard the kind of complaint articulated by Teungku Sum. Young men wondered how they would get married when they had no money and were restricted from socializing with women by their teachers. Several suggested that they hoped to leave their studies and pursue more lucrative trades or educations. These kinds of concerns have a wider resonance in Islamic boarding school circles throughout the archipelago. For a humorous depiction of them, see the short story "Kang Amin" by A. Mustofa Bisri (Bisri 2003).

Near the end of my fieldwork, in May of 2009, a young man from a village near my residence was killed when a riptide pulled him out to sea. After searching for his body through the night, young men from his village finally located it the next morning and brought it back to the village for burial. It was washed in his family's house, and then wrapped in cloth before being put into a simple, perfumed coffin. After being wrapped in batik cloths, the coffin was laid on several pillows. Men lined up in rows next to it, women behind them, to perform prayers. This was followed by a homily.

The man who delivered the sermon at this young man's funeral was identified by those who sat next to me as a "religious teacher" (Ac., *teungku*), although I was not able to gather any information about his educational level or style of religiosity. Often such functions are carried out by a village official known as the *teungku meunasah*, a role that requires little religious training aside from knowledge of basic life cycle rituals and good rapport with one's village neighbors. The *teungku* in this case had led the prayers and now addressed the assembled community:

We all knew Zaini. He was a child of our village. Just two years ago he graduated from high school. Some might say we should be sad. But think about this. In Islam, one's actions only begin to be counted from the time one is sixteen. Sixteen. Zaini was just two years out of high school! So he was 18, 19? If he had lived until old age, like the rest of us, think about his tortures in the grave. He did not live long enough to be tempted. His sins were few. Much fewer than those of us who have outlived him. Zaini was lucky. We will be tortured in the grave. But Zaini? No! He will suffer only a little.

Notice how this portion of the sermon reflects the age-contingent senses of ethical practice described above, but also introduces elements that are specific to the circumstances of the untimely death of the young man. Unlike the explicit statements of my classmates at Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, who while sympathetic to the pursuits of youth also asserted that the young would suffer greatly in the grave if they died before they began the practice of "defending"

themselves, this religious teacher asserted the opposite: “Zaini[...] did not live long enough to be tempted. His sins were few.” While Teungku Sum’s brushes with death had propelled him to a life of religious study, one that he feared might indefinitely defer the fulfillment of his worldly wishes and responsibilities regarding marriage, Zaini’s death was here portrayed as circumventing, or at least deemphasizing, both his worldly concerns and those of the grave. His life was short, his sins were few, and his punishment would be similarly abridged.¹¹³

A similar, if also reverse, logic appeared in a session of Majlis Taklim Ansharullah. The lesson on this day focused on a section of *Sayr al-Salikin* that discussed the basic elements of faith. This has given rise to a discussion of repentance (I., *taubat*). In one string of questions and answers, our group discussed the fact that a non-Muslim who converts to Islam is not held responsible for sins that he or she may have committed prior to the point of conversion. Abon Nigan was careful to stress the circumstances under which such a conversion counted, noting that conversions wrought under duress or out of fear were not valid and would have no effect. Here he used the example of Chinese-Indonesians, living in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, stories about whom were circulating widely in Aceh at the time of my fieldwork. These stories alleged that some of these Chinese converted to Islam as the tsunami waves approached in December 2004, with some versions including miraculous accounts of waves parting for those converts in manners evoking Moses’ flight from Egypt. As was usual, however, my classmates had their own interpretations and questions to discuss. Pak Mudin gave me a sideways glance and grinned. “Nil! That means you can do whatever you want! If you convert later, it all gets erased! We are not so lucky. Our sins count. So, maybe, you should wait until you are near death, and then convert, huh?”

¹¹³ For a similar sentiment, offered in relation to the death of an infant, see Siegel (2000, 107).

While some in the room, not least of whom Abon Nigan, seemed skeptical of this strategy, everyone was in agreement on the first point. I was lucky because if I was to convert, I would not be answerable for the sins I had committed to that point. Much of the conversation that followed revolved around questions that attempted to discern just how long one might defer repentance without suffering too much in the way of divine punishment. “What if Nil was to wait to convert until his last breath?” “What about a Muslim? Can a Muslim repent (I., *bertaubat*) just before death?” Pak Mudin, in particular, progressively pushed the boundary of repentance ever closer to one’s last moment of life: “What if one repents halfway through his last breath?” Then, later, “What if one repents halfway through that?” Abon Nigan, who tended to be extremely scrupulous in making pronouncements about the jurisprudential status of various acts that attendees forwarded during discussion, was clearly troubled by this line of inquiry. Nonetheless, he seemed unable to deny the implications of Pak Mudin’s questions. After each time Pak Mudin halved the previous fraction of a breadth, Abon Nigan responded not with a definitive answer, but with friendly, if firm, advice: “Don’t [be like that]!” (Ac., *Bè’!*).

The examples of Teungku Sum, Zaini’s funeral, and Pak Mudin’s persistent questions illustrate aspects of the contingent nature of ethical pursuits and knowledge in Nagan Raya. One may have the ethical node of the afterlife thrust upon one in one’s youth, or one may attempt to defer it through a potentially risky delaying of repentance until one’s last fraction of a breath. For those born Muslims, the last strategy may guarantee entry to paradise, but not defense from the tortures of the grave. For converts, conversion brings a clean slate, but only under specified circumstances. In each case, different sorts of ethical and temporal relationships are established between the period of the afterlife and one’s years in the world.

Dōnja and Akhirat: Nodes of Ethical Risk and Responsibility

Since 1998, Aceh has been the site of a series of legal reforms designed to create a more thoroughly Islamic state and society. Identified with the term *syariat Islam* (I.), these series of reforms ostensibly have been geared at implementing a more thoroughly Islamic legal system and explicitly Islamic legal codes in the province. However, very little in the way of formal or procedural law has changed in this time period. Instead, the fruit of these much touted reforms has been a new layer of bureaucracy that includes the Department of Syariat (Dinas Syariat) and the morality police (Wilayatul Hisbah, WH), on one hand, and a powerful vision of “social engineering” through Islamic law, on the other (Feener 2012). Identifying the roots of such a vision in multiple strands of twentieth-century Acehnese Islamic thought, R. Michael Feener traces some of the most important influences on Aceh’s contemporary Islamic legal project to *dakwah* movements of the 1970s and 1980s that, like their counterpart movements elsewhere in the Muslim world, sought to transform society through gaining the commitment of individual Muslims to repent and rededicate themselves to a more thoroughly Islamic life. The vision behind the recent round of Acehnese legal reforms, Feener argues, shares this sensibility, combining it with the expectation that the state will intervene in society in order to bring about desired social outcomes.¹¹⁴

The vision behind recent Islamic legal reforms in Aceh, thus, participates in strands of Islamic activist thought that call for immediate commitment to Islamic renewal. It participates in the striving time of certain types of objectified practice discussed above. Its architects and supporters seek the transformation of Acehnese society through progressive moral refinement. One of the most important ways that this is attempted is through the legislation of visible, and

¹¹⁴ Feener argues this expectation originates in the New Order period (1968-1998) when the authoritarian state intervened in a variety of fields. Further, much of the religious bureaucracy that has become prominent during the recent legal reforms was actively pioneered during the New Order, in some cases serving as a model for national-level institutions, such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majlis Ulama Indonesia) (Feener 2012).

often explicitly symbolic, aspects of Islamic practice: women's dress, the building of mosques, Friday communal prayers, the yearly fast, etc. (Feener 2013). This focus has had the effect of devaluing subtler and more contingent articulations of Islamic ethical practice, at least in the public sphere, where highly visible Islamic practice and symbols have become the *sine qua non* of Islamic ethical action and identity. For example, popular traveling preachers who make appearances at events and holidays around the province frequently rail against Acehnese society. They lament young people's lack of interest in religious study and the afterlife. In these sermons the positive valuation of worldly pursuits, especially by those such as my interlocutors at Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, while not wholly disavowed, are deemphasized and give way to a rhetorical figure of the world and worldliness as a site of intense temptation.

Consider, for example, the following excerpt from a sermon in a village in the regency of South Aceh, south of Nagan Raya, delivered by Teungku Hasani:

This is the first time this year that I have accepted an invitation [to give a sermon...] from college kids. I do not share the same principles as college kids (I., *seprinsip dengan mahasiswa*). College kids are free. In Blang Pidie they make demonstrations against the injustice of the regency head, but they go out and commit adultery[...] Nowadays you can commit adultery with your cell phone. "Honey. I'm waiting for you at Krueng Raya!" "Okay Honey, I'll be right there[...]" If we look at what constituted prostitution in Arabia, before, in the time of ignorance (I., *jahilliah*), a man could not even meet a woman who was not of his blood[...] College girls come to me and say, "But Teungku, if I do not dress like this, how will I find my soul mate (I., *jodoh*) [...]" But before marriage there is no such term as "coupling" (I., *pacaran*) in Islam.¹¹⁵

Here Teungku Hasani, himself widely identified as a "young" religious teacher in his early thirties, attacked the moral failings of young people, especially young female college students,

¹¹⁵ Using tone and dialect, in this quotation Teungku Hasani imitated the voices of young female college students calling their boyfriend via cell phones. These kinds of performative features of his sermons were exceptionally important to his rhetorical style. Audiences loved them, even when attendees explicitly questioned aspects of the preacher's message. In his reference to Arabia, Teungku Hasani was implying that sexual mores were stronger among pre-Muslim Arabs in the period before the Prophet Muhammad than among Acehnese Muslims in the contemporary period. The Indonesian term *pacaran*, here translated as "coupling," might also be translated as "dating," with the full range of connotations this term carries in English. However, in moralizing commentary such as Teungku Hasani's, the term nearly always implies scandalous sexual activity.

who he took as inviting sexual temptation, failing to fulfill responsibilities to adhere to divine law and risking further moral compromise. These were common recurrent themes in his preaching, as they were in the sermons of other popular traveling preachers. Teungku Hasani preached widely on Aceh's west coast during my fieldwork, also giving a sermon, for example, in the Nagan Raya town where I resided in 2008. He had been invited by the village head after the latter listened to him deliver a sermon in a neighboring village. While some with whom I spoke had questions about the content of his talk, finding it too "harsh" (Ac., *kreuēh*), his sermons were popular and clearly enjoyable for those assembled, who reacted with verbal interjections and laughter as he, for example, imitated the tone and Jakarta-inflected dialect of a stereotypical college couple newly in love.

For those more sympathetic to the pursuits of the world, the risks given voice in the sermons of traveling preachers like Teungku Hasani were certainly acknowledged. For example, in commenting on shortcomings of neighbors, both real and imagined, my interlocutors in Nagan Raya, as well as Acehnese living in the regency of Aceh Besar (Kloos 2011), sometimes described a very fine line between the honest striving for one's *rezeki* and misguided efforts that ultimately might end in the extreme of greed, destructive of both the self and community. Similarly, while flirtation and pre-marital socializing between members of the opposite sex was nearly always frowned upon, many tacitly recognized a need for young men and women to meet each other in order to move towards marriage. Similar to the pursuit of one's material gain, these actions carried with them serious risks, especially that they might lead to one's moral ruin as a result of allowing oneself to be drawn into morally illegitimate sexual pursuits.

Both those defending premarital romance and those attacking it, like Teungku Hasani, acknowledged these moral risks. What differed was the stance these parties took towards the

question of how such dangers should be navigated. These risks, especially those around sex and marriage, were not distributed evenly. The consequences of moral missteps for women were frequently more serious than for men, especially in the field of sexuality. This was apparent in Teungku Hasani's sermon, in which he compared female college studies to prostitutes, an accusation that would have carried much less resonance if made about men. Despite the admonitions of traveling preachers that young people should dedicate themselves to religious study instead of actively pursuing wealth and marriage, for many of those whom I studied, pursuing wealth and marriage remained legitimate Islamic activities, worldly pursuits incumbent upon young Muslim men and women.

A telling exchange that reinforces this point occurred when a friend from the coastal city of Meulaboh, the closest urban center to Nagan Raya, explained to me his thoughts on the love magic for which Aceh's west coast is infamous. Rather than condemn the practice as not Islamic (as some reformers have) or suggest that instead of concerning themselves with romance young people should devote themselves to religious study, he noted in a matter-of-fact manner that the moral status of love magic "depends on one's intentions": "If he wants to marry the girl, there is nothing wrong with it! If he just wants to fool around with her, that is not allowed."

The different models of ethical action described here are not coterminous with commonly invoked sociological divisions, be they those of age, gender, class, education level, varieties of religious practice or others. It is true that the progressive striving time inherent in Aceh's legal reforms is propagated in powerful ways by traveling preachers, editorials by journalists and intellectuals, political speech, the morality police, and other particularly authoritative sites and figures. Very few in Aceh, however, would explicitly stand against the project of progressive transformation through Islamic revival that underpins these discourses. These discourses'

authority is in part a product of the authoritative sources that circulate them and in part the result of their appeal to a universal standard that explicitly claims not to see moral significance in human differences. This helps to explain why nearly all of my interlocutors who defended the lack of interest in the pursuit of certain kinds of religious knowledge by the young also claimed, when pressed, that the young should still attend such lessons. This was true of young and old alike, men and women, urban and rural folk.

However, while on an abstract level most would express concern over Aceh's declining moral state and support for the transformative *syariat* reforms, when it came to interpreting the behavior of closely known others, a lack of interest in projects of moral self-refinement on the part of young, especially unmarried, people often could be tolerated. Many unmarried adolescents and young adults defended their own borderline immoral activity (e.g., riding on motorbikes with members of the opposite sex or staying out late) as appropriate to their legitimate pursuits of wealth and marriage, or as a result of an underdeveloped but not immediately correctable sense of self-control that led them to admittedly immoral acts. The older *majlis taklim* participants described above were similarly sympathetic, openly acknowledging that young people were pursuing their *rezeki*. Even the project of implementing Islamic law in the province, which especially targeted moral lapses associated with the young and unmarried, ironically seemed premised at times on one of the very assumptions that ran through many of the discourses on age and ethical practice that I describe in this chapter, namely, that young people do not yet have the capacity to engage in sustained ethical or religious activity. Thus, the community, in the form of the state, must use its power to help these young people navigate the moral risks of their legitimate worldly concerns. This helps to account for the countless youth and college students with whom I spoke who adamantly supported specific

legislation designed to restrict socialization between members of the opposite sex, yet discussed with relish their own past and anticipated infractions against this legislation.

It would not be difficult to read the inconsistencies in moral discourses in contemporary Aceh in any number of analytically familiar ways. As suggested above, one such reading might look for fault lines between different sociological groups, for example, generations, activists and non-activists, gender groups, and others. As already discussed, this is not consistent with contemporary practice. Great numbers of young people, even young people who flaunt *syariat* legislation in practice, support the legislation in the abstract. *Majlis taklim* participants are both sympathetic to a lack of youthful interest in religious study, and acknowledge that young people should attend their lessons. Not only were discursive and embodied stances taken according to these two different models of ethical action not reflective of general sociological categories, they were often present within the same person in different moments.

One might take these inconsistencies as evidence of the ways in which Muslims are motivated by multiple “grand schemes,” pursuing Islamic virtue in some contexts and, for example, romantic love or the advantages offered by a liberalized and consumerized public sphere in others (Schielke 2010a, 2010b). While it is no doubt true that such schemes influence Muslims in Aceh, these were not common ways in which my interlocutors explained the pursuits of youth that kept young people from religious study. Returning to Andi’s comments above, he did not describe his age cohort’s general lack of interest in *majlis taklim* and other forms of religious learning in terms of an alternative model of Islamic ethical practice that opposed the knowledge sought by those who do attend *majlis taklim*. Nor did he articulate, either explicitly or implicitly, an alternative “grand scheme” in place of Islamic ethical norms. Further, Andi did not simply leave his description of the lax religious studies of his age cohort as an example of

Aceh's moral degeneration. It would not have been surprising if he had. These kinds of discourses were commonly deployed in Aceh during my fieldwork, for example, to justify the on-going *syariat* reforms or as a moral explanation of the 2004 earthquake and tsunami. Instead Andi's narrative frame was one in which he set such lack of commitment in a longer process of maturation through life experience, referencing specific life stages. Andi's response rested on the logic I heard again and again from my interlocutors: "They (i.e., old people) are closer to death, aren't they?"

What matters most for my arguments here, is that very often articulations of youthful disinterest in certain kinds of religious pursuits were not articulations of generational conflict, the embracing of an alternative non-Islamic grand scheme, or simply descriptions of youth being bad. They were instead subtle articulations of ethical action, based not in the progressive striving time of activists and the Acehnese state but on a more contingent temporal model. My interlocutors in Nagan Raya, while often espousing a progressive model of self-refinement in the abstract, tended to orient their own religious pursuits and ethical practice through a consideration of their personal relationship to the ethical risks and responsibilities of the world and the afterlife. While the risks associated with the world, for example greed or illicit sex, were apparent and frequently stressed in the public sphere, they could not simply be held at arm's length. They were inherent in important ways to the fulfillment of worldly ethical responsibilities, for example, marriage, progeny, financial gain, and the seeking of *rezeki* more generally. Similarly, the benefits of the fulfillment of one's responsibilities in relation to the afterlife seemed fairly obvious to my interlocutors (e.g., the avoidance of damnation and the lessening of divine punishment in the grave), however, the fulfillment of these responsibilities entailed time and energy that might not be available to those otherwise engaged in appropriate

worldly responsibilities. Further, engrossing oneself in the affairs of the afterlife could entail the risk that the fulfillment of one's worldly responsibilities might be put in jeopardy. Here, one is reminded of Teungku Sum's predicament, and his earnest, if resigned, question, "How will I ever get married?" For my interlocutors in Nagan Raya, then, the pursuit of religious knowledge and ethical action involved navigating these two nodes of risk and responsibility with attention to the ways their specific life circumstances placed them in relation to both the world and the afterlife.

Concluding Remarks

Before concluding, I want to first stress that my description of the ways in which those in Nagan Raya navigated their religious pursuits and ethical practice through attention to the nodes of the world and the afterlife is not meant as an argument that those I studied, especially the young and unmarried, were uncommitted Muslims. This should be evident on several levels. For one, although I have stressed the lack of interest on the part of many young people in certain kinds of religious study, using *majlis taklim* as my primary example, there were, of course, young people who did engage in the pursuit of religious knowledge. Some, like Teungku Sum, described this pursuit in a way that was consistent with the framework of contingent time that I explore in this chapter. Others, especially college students and activists in the provincial capital of Banda Aceh, were more attuned to the kinds of progressive, self-refining temporalities of Islamic revivalist movements. They understood their religious practices in terms of a personal striving for on-going ethical improvement.

Further, the pursuit of Islamic knowledge through *majlis taklim* was not the only form of Islamic practice in which the young and unmarried might engage. Andi, for instance, pointed out elsewhere in our conversation that young men did frequently join Qur'anic recitation circles and attended ritual events such as funerals in order to fulfill needs for recitation. Similarly, it was

predominantly young, unmarried men who engaged in recitational practices at yearly reciprocal feasts celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Women of all ages gathered at sometimes weekly readings of Qur'anic verses, most frequently the surah known as "Ya-Sin" (Surah 36).

However, it was significant that participation in these practices by the young seemed predicated on contingent models rather than on striving time. Young men participated in the recitation at reciprocal feasts in part because their young, male bodies were thought to have characteristics that increased the quality of their recitation. Both the Qur'anic recitations at funerals and the reading of Ya-Sin by women were closely tied to the achievement of divine reward and lessened punishment for a deceased acquaintance or family member. In these cases the young participated not only, or even primarily, out of a concern for their own afterlife, but also as a part of communal rituals in which ties of reciprocity were maintained between the living and the dead, ties associated with kin networks on which the young depended in the pursuit of their worldly blessings.

Most important for my arguments here, however, is the point that even youthful disinterest in religious study described above was frequently not understood as a forsaking of one's ethical responsibilities, but as a measured fulfilling of them in a manner that was consistent with one's specific life circumstances. This was, of course, dependent on which temporal framing a practitioner brought to an evaluation of ethical action. As should be clear by now, some of the very same people who expressed sympathy towards, or even justified, youthful disinterest in religious study in terms of the pursuit of *rezeki*, were, in other contexts, the very same people who condemned this behavior or expressed unease at it, suggesting that young people should pay more attention to the affairs of the grave. Nonetheless, when approached through a contingent framing, the framing I found to be most common in daily practice in Nagan

Raya, the pursuit of romance and wealth, even at the expense of religious study, could hardly be dismissed as un-Islamic. Quite the contrary, these pursuits were ethically incumbent upon most Muslims, even if they also entailed salient and serious risks.

What ramifications do contingent models of ethical pursuits have for the anthropology of Islam? While accounts that examine ethical and religious action that occur in or in conjunction with some form of striving time have been exceptionally productive in bringing to light patterns of practice that characterize twentieth- and twenty-first century Islamic revival movements (Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Khan 2011; Mahmood 2005), they may unintentionally steer us towards specific understandings of proper Islam that prevent us from seeing other ways in which Muslims act as religious subjects.

This tendency has been critiqued by some, often by drawing attention to the nearly exclusive focus on activist subjectivities in much of the ethnographic literature on ethical self-formation (Schielke 2010a; 2010b). In some respects my critique runs parallel to this one, however, it differs in important ways. I am less concerned with differences between activists and non-activists than I am with different models and experiences of time, models and experiences that, as my examples above illustrate, can exist simultaneously within the same people, whether or not they engage in Islamic activism. Further, I do not share these critics' sense that the solution to problems found in accounts that rely on what I here call striving time can be alleviated simply by describing non-Islamic motivations and contexts motivating ethical and social practices. These contexts are no doubt of importance in the lives of Muslims, and it is undoubtedly true that Muslims, like Christians, Jews, secularists, and others, engage in ethical and social projects for a wide range of reasons. However, seeking a foil to accounts of activist subjectivities in explicitly non-Islamic action only reifies the notion that good Muslims

participate in striving temporalities and the specific projects of moral self-improvement they engender. This chapter has been meant to illustrate that pursuits of Islamic knowledge and ethical practice come in many varieties, each underpinned by different temporal models and experiences and often simultaneously pursued by members of one social group or even one individual practitioner.

Chapter 6

Putting the Habib Seunagan in Their Place: Narrative, Ritual, and Genealogies of Islamization in Nagan Raya

This chapter returns to practices through which Muslims in Nagan Raya have linked themselves and others to the past of Nagan Raya's Islamization. One way in which this has been achieved has been through the recognition of genealogies tying Muslims to ancestors widely believed to have played central roles in converting Nagan Raya to Islam. Chief among the ancestors believed to have participated in Nagan Raya's Islamization was Habib Abdurrahim, the progenitor of all surviving lines of the Habib Seunagan. Most Muslims in Nagan Raya recognized Habib Abdurrahim as the primary actor in a process of Islamization carried out by a group of companions who were identified locally using titles derived from Sufi cosmological hierarchies (e.g., *qutub*, *autad*). The role of Habib Abdurrahim in this process lent added prestige to the patriline of the Habib Seunagan.

In the post-colonial period, the Habib Seunagan's links to the past of Nagan Raya's Islamization via Habib Abdurrahim proved a particularly fruitful ground on which members of the Habib Seunagan engaged in reconfigurations of their genealogy, ritual practice, and political position. Beginning in the 1950s, members of the family began to cultivate links in their genealogies in manners that inserted the Habib Seunagan's ancestors into prestigious histories of the Indonesian archipelago's Islamization. However, the Habib Seunagan's genealogical histories reversed some of the most fundamental spatial-temporal resonances of the histories that

were being published in the same period by intellectuals such as Ali Hasjmy, in large part by reversing the direction of Islamization from westward out of Aceh to eastward into Aceh. The resulting constellations of genealogy and narrative history placed the Habib Seunagan's patriline at the center of three interrelated spatial-temporal frames: a universal mystical cosmology, a realm of local customary practice, and the Indonesian nation.

Members of the Habib Seunagan involved in these processes deftly articulated the reconfigurations of genealogy that placed their patriline into prestigious histories of the archipelago's Islamization. The ways in which the genealogical links and narrative episodes cultivated by these members of the family resonated with and came to frame social and ritual practices in Nagan Raya helped to make the Habib Seunagan's genealogical narratives compelling for Muslims in the regency. In particular, the periodic *kandoeri* at the graves of the Habib Seunagan served as points at which ordinary Muslims in Nagan Raya encountered and engaged with the three interrelated spatial-temporal frames of the Islamic cosmos, the realm of Nagan Raya's customary practice, and the Indonesian nation. These three frames converged in the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization, and they came to serve as primary frames through which Muslims in Nagan Raya oriented their ritual and mystical practices towards local Islamic pasts.

The Habib Seunagan's narrative and ritual inhabiting of the three above-mentioned spatial-temporal frames, each of a radically different scale, resembles similar instances in which potent Islamic mystics have been understood by their devotees to operate in multiple spatial-temporal fields at once (Gilsenan 1973; Ho 2004, 2006; Sila 2001; Werbner 2003). In particular, patterns of mystical and devotional practice surrounding the "friends of God" (Ar., *aūlīyā*; I., *wali*), frequently glossed in English as "saints," often have entailed the expression, negotiation,

and transformation of creative tensions and potentials that exist in the claims of these figures to belong to multiple scales and types of space and time. The case of the Habib Seunagan suggests that the different constellations of space and time such figures narratively, socially, and ritually inhabit challenge any simple notion of locality one might use to classify Islamic practice. The case is also particularly apt for considering the spatial-temporal orientations of Muslims to local Islamic pasts.

“A Local Customary Practice... Having Its Origins in Islam”

In 1962, the head of the sub-regency of Seunagan, Teuku Azman, filed a “yearly report” (I., *lapuran tahunan*) (Azman 1962).¹¹⁶ On the surface, the filing of this report was rather unremarkable. The document reflected common post-colonial bureaucratic forms, offering a snapshot of population statistics, data on land use, information on infrastructural projects, and lists of indicators of economic development in the sub-regency. The report probably was intended to be passed up a bureaucratic chain, from the regency to the district-level government. From the very beginning of the report, however, there were indications that the filing of the document involved more than the fulfillment of bureaucratic protocol. In particular, the “General Overview” (I., *Pemandangan Umum*) very quickly identified three groups in the regency, two of which were named minorities threatening to the national interest, and one a majority constituted of loyal Indonesian citizens.

Recall that 1962 was also the year in which Darul Islam in Aceh ended. Teuku Azman, a local hereditary chief (I., *raja*; Ac., *oelèëbalang*) who had married one of Habib Muda’s daughters, had been a key figure in opposing the rebellion. Along with his father-in-law, Teuku

¹¹⁶ The territory that at the time of my fieldwork constituted the regency of Nagan Raya was a sub-regency of the regency of West Aceh when Teuku Azman filed his yearly report in 1962. In this chapter, when discussing the period of the 1962 report, I sometimes refer to Nagan Raya as “the sub-regency of Seunagan,” or simply “Seunagan,” in order to maintain consistency with the language of the archival document.

Azman was passionate in his opposition to Darul Islam, aligning himself with the prominent religious teachers who opposed the rebellion on religious grounds. Thus, it should come as little surprise that one of the groups identified as threatening to the national interest in Teuku Azman's 1962 report consisted of villagers who aligned themselves with Zakaria Yunus, the leader of Darul Islam in Nagan Raya.¹¹⁷ For much of the previous decade, Yunus had been at war with Azman and the Indonesian Republic. The rebellion had just come to its end a mere six months before the filing of the 1962 report.¹¹⁸ Azman clearly remained unconvinced of Yunus' loyalty and took the opportunity offered by the filing of the yearly report to raise his doubts about his rival's allegiances.

It should be similarly unsurprising, then, that Azman's report asserted that the patriotic majority in Nagan Raya consisted of the followers of the Habib Seunagan. More interesting are the reasons he offered for the relative strength and nationalist loyalties of the Habib Seunagan and their followers. These reasons, and not the threat posed by Yunus, was the rhetorical focus of the 1962 report's general overview. Azman attributed the loyalty of the Habib Seunagan to the "leadership and direction" (I., *pimpinan dan ashuan*) provided by Habib Abdurrahim, the deceased eponymous ancestor of all living members of the Habib Seunagan. Azman's report identified Habib Abdurrahim as the transmitter of Islam to Nagan Raya. It also identified Habib Abdurrahim as the "qahtubul ujud," the term *qutub* (I.; Ar., *qutb*) being drawn from the Sufi cosmological discourses that were central idioms through which residents in Nagan Raya linked

¹¹⁷ The second group Azman identified as potentially having compromised loyalties was constituted by immigrants who had come to the region in order to work on local palm oil plantations. Most likely Azman was referring to Javanese agricultural laborers. What reasons Azman had for identifying this group as potentially disloyal are unclear.

¹¹⁸ Daud Beureueh gave up his guerrilla struggle in May of 1962. Teuku Azman's report was filed in November.

themselves genealogically to the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization.¹¹⁹ The report further identified Habib Abdurrahim as the founder of Nagan Raya's local customary practice (I., *adat*). Azman left what he meant by "local customary practice" undefined, but he was sure to note that it "had its origins in Islam" (I., *bersumbur pada Islam*). Further, Azman identified Habib Abdurrahim as the descendant of "the saints who built the great mosque of Demak," a reference to the famous "Nine Saints" (I., *wali songo*) who are widely believed in Indonesia to have converted the island of Java to Islam (see Map 1).¹²⁰

In a local government report such as this one, clearly aiming to draw attention to the Habib Seunagan's loyalty at the end of a decade-long period of open and violent conflict, why also highlight the family's role in the Islamization of the region, or the founding of local customary practice? Why mention Habib Abdurrahim's descent from the Nine Saints of Java, or his status of *qutub*? What did these claims bring to the family's narrative of loyalty to Jakarta that was not already apparent in their nine years of opposition to Darul Islam? In order to answer these questions, this chapter considers the ways in which local Islamic pasts have mediated the relationship between the Indonesian nation and Muslims in Nagan Raya through entwined narrative, genealogical, and ritual practices.

Graves and Genealogy: Grounding the Habib Seunagan in Nagan Raya

At the time of my fieldwork, the Nagan Raya countryside was dotted by grave complexes, some hidden in difficult-to-reach wooded areas, others humbly, but carefully, cultivated in small villages, and still others lying at the center of grand courtyards that included

¹¹⁹ Recall that all of this is consistent with the narrative and social practices described in Chapter 4. These practices named Habib Abdurrahim the *qutub*, attributing the Islamization of Nagan Raya to him and his companions, who held lesser titles and positions in a mystical hierarchy (i.e., Teungku Tjik di Kila).

¹²⁰ The Nine Saints are central figures in popular Islamic narrative and ritual practice throughout Java. See Florida (1995) and Rinkes (1996). For a discussion of the Nine Saints in relation to narratives of the Demak mosque's construction, see Florida (1995, 319–351).

mosques and shelters set aside for the performance of the rhythmic recitation of the names of God (Ac., *ziké* or *dike*; I., *zikir*, Ar., *zíkr*), praises to the Prophet Muhammad (Ac., *seulaweuët*; I., *selawat*, Ar., *ṣalawāt*), or other verbal formulas used in mystical and devotional practices. Residents in Nagan Raya widely believed these graves to belong to members of the Habib Seunagan.

The graves that dotted the Nagan Raya countryside were closely connected to practices of recalling the Habib Seunagan's genealogy. Each grave was a sort of mnemonic device, connected not only to the genealogical web that linked the entirety of the countryside, but to narrative fragments that could be pieced together through connecting genealogical links in a chain.¹²¹ Those narrating these fragments usually began with the grave in their immediate vicinity, relating stories of the person buried within it. Then, if someone held the requisite knowledge and were so inclined, he or she would begin to point in different directions on the horizon, indicating where one might find the grave of the son, student, or companion of the person in the local grave. These graves inscribed on the landscape a web of genealogy akin to what, for example, Engseng Ho has described for the graves of 'Alawi Sayyids spread across the Indian Ocean (Ho 2006).

While the metonymic character of Nagan Raya's graves allowed for an inscription of genealogical history and narrative fragments across the Nagan Raya countryside, the relatively imprecise and broken genealogies that Nagan Raya's graves inscribed stood in marked contrast to the well-kept family records found among many Sayyids in other parts of the Indian Ocean world (Ho 2006). The Habib Seunagan carried no family name, making it impossible to place

¹²¹ For an insightful illustration of how genealogical forms are particularly conducive to bringing together narrative fragments in such a fashion, see Shryock (1997).



Figure 10: *Déah* in front of Intu's Grave, Kuta Aceh, Nagan Raya

them, even in a very vague way, within the often meticulously-recorded genealogies of other Sayyids. As different narrators forwarded different versions of the Habib Seunagan's genealogy, links in the chain frequently changed names, and connections between figures were broken and rearranged.

Nonetheless, most of the genealogies I collected from interlocutors at these graves included several key figures in the Habib Seunagan's patriline. In Nagan Raya, this line began with an individual who was buried in a relatively small complex in the village of Kuta Aceh, just a few kilometers from the district's commercial center, Jeuram (see Figure 10 and Map 3). Commonly referred to as Intu, the person buried in this grave was associated by many narrators with the Nine Saints of Java alluded to in Teuku Azman's 1962 report. These narrators recognized Intu either as one of these Nine Saints himself, or as a close descendant of one of them.



Figure 11: Déah on Habib Abdurrahim's grave complex, Pulo Ie, Nagan Raya

Following Intu, several generations passed with little agreement among my interlocutors about the links in the Habib Seunagan's genealogy. All versions, however, converged on the figure of Habib Abdurrahim as the next major link in the chain. Habib Abdurrahim was buried just a few kilometers from Intu's grave, in the village of Pulo Ie (See Map 3). As described above, Habib Abdurrahim was widely believed to be the progenitor of all of the patrilineages of the Habib Seunagan that existed at the time of my fieldwork, and he commonly was credited with Islamicizing all of Seunagan. His grave was one of two sites at which regular large ritual gatherings occurred at several points in the year (see Figure 11).

The second site at which such large ritual gatherings occurred was the grave of Habib Muda, the charismatic and influential figure featured prominently in oral histories of the Darul Islam rebellion and of Nagan Raya in the early to mid-twentieth century more generally. Habib



Figure 12: Inside of Habib Muda's Grave Complex, Peuleukung, Nagan Raya

Muda's grave was located several kilometers inland and upland from those of Intu and Habib Abdurrahim, in the village of Peuleukung, where Habib Muda lived (see Figure 12 and Map 3).

The Habib Seunagan's Ritual Practice and the Syattariyah Sufi Order

The Habib Seunagan, whose ancestors constitute the majority of those people buried in the graves just described, were also the central figures in a complex of mystical and ritual practices associated with a branch of the Syattariyah Sufi order (I., *tarekat syattariyah*, Ar., *tariqa shatṭāriya*) (Kraus 2010). These mystical and ritual practices, like similar practices described elsewhere in the world, served to invest the family's devotees in the Habib Seunagan's genealogical histories, forging links between the living and the dead in powerful ways (Cornell 1998; Gilsenan 1973; Green 2004; Ho 2006; Werbner 2003).

My efforts to meet the members of the Syattariyah in Nagan Raya who held the authority to initiate and teach members of the order (I., *khalifah*: Ar., *kalīfa*) proved difficult. It was at

times not easy to tell whether this was because I was being diverted from such people, or because the organizational structure of the order itself was quite diffuse. The knowledge passed through the order was, of course, esoteric, and it would not have been surprising if I were being purposefully kept from it for that reason. However, many members of the Syattariyah were quite open in discussing with me what they knew of the order's mystical and ritual practices. Some members made a point of cautiously identifying the group as having affinities with the sixteenth-century figure Ḥamzah af-Faṇṣūrī. Recall that in common histories of the seventeenth-century Acehnese Sultanate, af-Faṇṣūrī's followers were purged by the religious scholar ar-Ranīrī. This was the result, according to the most popular versions of these histories, of af-Faṇṣūrī's followers adhering to a mystical philosophy known as *wujudiyah*.¹²² One member of the Habib Seunagan identified *Al-Durr al-Nafīs*, an eighteenth-century work once popular in the archipelago among *wujudiyah* devotees (van Bruinessen 1998), as a text studied by more serious members of the Syattariyah.

For the vast majority of the Habib Seunagan's followers, however, participation in the Syattariyah meant attending events at which groups of people gathered to conduct *ratéb* (Ac.), that is, the recitation of the names of God, praises to the Prophet Muhammad, and various other formulas. These gatherings occurred at the graves dotting the Nagan Raya countryside. I was told that semi-weekly gatherings were held at small grave complexes in Nagan Raya's villages. These events were said to have been attended mostly by women.¹²³ Large gatherings, which I

¹²² See Chapters 1 and 2 for brief discussions of af-Faṇṣūrī, ar-Ranīrī, and *wujudiyah*. For discussions of *wujudiyah* more generally in Indonesia, see Al-Attas (1966; 1970), Drewes and Brakel (1986), and Florida (1995). While *wujudiyah* was an issue in the history of Indonesian mystical thought that continued to capture the imaginations of Indonesian Muslims at the time of my research, polemics surrounding *wujudiyah* have been a part of a much broader, and often equally vitriolic, series of debates among Muslims in various times and places, especially the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Indian sub-continent. On these related polemics, see Damrel (2000), Friedmann (1971), Haq Ansari (1984, 1998, 1999), and Schimmel (1975, 344-402).

regularly attended myself, were held several times yearly at Habib Muda's and Habib Abdurrahim's graves. These were attended by mixed groups of men and women from around the Nagan Raya countryside and beyond. These gatherings occurred on the anniversaries of the deaths of the people buried in each grave complex, on each of the two major Islamic feast days (i.e., Idul Adha and Idul Fitri), and at other times during the year.

At these large gatherings, sponsored by the senior living members of the Habib Seunagan, the most distinctive aspects of the mystical and ritual practices of the Syattariyah order were on display. These included litanies recited collectively in loud voices and with demonstrative rocking back-and-forth. These litanies often employed the pronoun *Hu*, Arabic for "He," and were understood by many with whom I spoke as a means through which ordinary people might experience absorption into God's oneness and unity (I., *fana*; Ar., *fanā*). Both members of the Syattariyah and other groups of Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya believed these litanies were distinctive features of Syattariyah practice.¹²⁴

Some critics, including both 'Abduh-style reformers and members of the Naqsyabandi, felt that Syattariyah litanies gave undue stress to the physical body rather than the inner heart. Other critics objected to the ways in which Syattariyah practice encouraged relatively unadvanced mystics to seek a loss of self in God's unity before they had engaged in longer periods of mystical self-discipline. Nonetheless, these litanies, and the events at which they were

¹²³ I never had the opportunity to attend these semi-weekly events. I suspect that this was because they were strongly identified as women's practice. When men and women spoke to me about the shelters next to these smaller graves, they most frequently identified them as places where "women recite litanies" (Ac., *oereuëng inòng meuratéb*). Because I was unable to attend these events myself, I cannot confirm that they occurred as often as my interlocutors suggested. Nonetheless, the descriptions that people offered me of them were consistent with the kinds of practices of recitation that I observed elsewhere. Further, next to many of these graves were shelters erected for the purposes of reciting litanies (Ac., *déah*). In these shelters I found evidence that the buildings were, indeed, used regularly (i.e., prayer mats, discarded plastic cups, prayer books, etc.).

¹²⁴ A recently published biography of Habib Muda closes with an extensive section in which the specific methods of these litanies are described and explained at length. See Daud (2009, 189–235). For a comparison of different forms of Syattariyah practice prescribed in different texts, each popular in different parts of the archipelago, see Fathurahman (2008, 180–185).

recited by large numbers of people, remained the focal point of Syattariyah practice. When I asked members of the order about the Syattariyah, rather than answering my questions, they frequently invited me to such events.

A *Kandoeri* at Habib Muda's Grave: The Feast of the Sacrifice at Peuleukung

One early December evening in 2008, I hopped on my motorbike to attend the celebration that would occur to mark Idul Adha, the “greater feast” or “feast of the sacrifice,” at the grave of Habib Muda in Peuleukung. I arrived just after evening prayers. The large courtyard around the grave complex, which included several open shelters and a mosque, was just beginning to attract groups (I., *rombongan*) of reciters from various parts of Nagan Raya and other parts of Aceh. I sat at a makeshift coffee and noodle stall that had been erected along the road just outside the courtyard and watched as flatbed trucks, each hauling groups of fifteen to fifty people, made their way slowly down the road looking for places to park.

It was a wet evening. It had been raining much of the afternoon, and the grass, now covered by tarps, was still very damp. All of this made the night air rather cool, and some of the senior members of the Habib Seunagan with whom I spoke indicated that this kept some people away. Still, by the time the event began, just after night prayers, there were several thousand people at the grave, sitting with their groups. These individuals had brought food and drink, which they periodically pulled out and shared with those around them. They gathered in multiple places around the courtyard, in the shelters, on tarps on the lawn, and in the mosque. Wherever they sat, they faced the grave complex in which Habib Muda and several members of his family were buried. Inside this complex were the most senior members of the family, including Habib Muda’s last surviving son, Abu Kodrat, who was recognized at the time of my fieldwork as the head of the Syattariyah.

As I walked around the courtyard, I observed an aural and visual frenzy akin to what I had observed at the *kandoeri maulid* described in Chapter 4, but in this case the sheer number of participants amplified the effect. Unlike the *kandoeri maulid*, both men and women participated, with groups of women sitting behind or next to men. Each group recited litanies in unison, often jerking their bodies back-and-forth with each syllable. Groups did not attempt to choreograph their litanies or movements with other groups, even the ones immediately adjacent to them. The result was overwhelming, especially for anyone who wandered around the courtyard battered by a cacophony of sacred syllables at every turn.¹²⁵

The litanies consisted primarily of two types: praises to the Prophet Muhammad and recitations of the names of God. As the evening wore on, they seemed to shorten. First, praises to the Prophet Muhammad began to drop out of the aural mix. Eventually, many groups came to focus on litanies involving only the Arabic pronoun “Hu,” repeated in slowly building crescendos of increasing speed and volume. The litanies of each group would eventually stop, only to start again, once more growing faster and louder with each repetition.

Approximately two hours before midnight, there was a short lull in these recitations. Many people took this opportunity to eat. When the litanies began again, Abu Kodrat and several other senior members of the Habib Seunagan came out from Habib Muda’s grave complex. They slowly worked their way through the crowd, ritually greeting each devotee in attendance. Abu Kodrat and his companions reached out their hands to devotees, one-by-one. Each person thus greeted responded by taking the hand, often leaning over it and sniffing its

¹²⁵ I was not the only one walking around the courtyard in this way. While others were not doing so for reasons of ethnographic observation, people regularly got up from their group to seek food or visit friends in other groups. Such people undoubtedly experienced the same effect that I did, although I could not tell how they interpreted it from their vantage point as participants in the ritual.

backside in a common display of respect and affection offered to parents and religious teachers.¹²⁶

While Abu Kodrat and his companions greeted those assembled, I found myself in a ginger tea stall outside the grave complex with a middle-aged man, perhaps in his late forties or early fifties. He was from the remote regency of Gayo Lues, in Aceh's mountainous highlands not far from the border with Medan. He was a Sayyid, although not of the patriline of the Habib Seunagan. Nonetheless, he was an enthusiastic devotee of the family, and he claimed that he would never miss an event at the family's graves, if it could be helped. He did not say exactly how long it had taken him to reach Peuleukung, but given the distance from Gayo Lues and the state of the mountain roads on which he traveled, it undoubtedly had been at least an eight-hour journey.

This man's interest in talking about his devotion to the Habib Seunagan caused us both to miss what had been identified to me by multiple people as the climax of the Idul Adha rituals at Peuleukung. Sometime around midnight, Abu Kodrat led those assembled in a circumambulation of Habib Muda's grave. This ritual has been targeted by critics, who see it as an unauthorized innovation in Prophetic tradition and as an idolatrous imitation of the circumambulation of the Kaaba, the large stone structure around which pilgrims walk while on the major and minor Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca. The major pilgrimage to Mecca occurs in the days before and after Idul Adha, thus highlighting the scandalous parallel to the circumambulation of the Kaaba, although the circumambulation of the graves of renowned Sufis is not, in itself, an unusual practice among mystically-inclined Muslims. I first had decided to travel to Nagan Raya in August of 2006 in large part because residents of the nearby coastal city

¹²⁶ This gesture was used by members of Majlis Taklim Ansharullah, for example, to take leave of Abon Nigan at the conclusion of a lesson.

of Meulaboh had told me stories of a “strange” (I., *aneh*) family in the hills whose practices were, if not unorthodox, unusual. Chief among the practices cited by those who recommended that I go to Nagan Raya was the practice of circumambulating Habib Muda’s grave.

Once I realized that I had missed the circumambulation of the grave, I quickly excused myself from the ginger tea stall, determined not to miss anything else. People were settling back into their groups, and the recitation of litanies in the manner described above continued until the early morning hours. At times the volume and intensity of the litanies seemed to wane, as attendees grew tired and groups took breaks in order to eat and rest. Nonetheless, the recitations continued until daybreak, when morning prayers were followed by a sermon, delivered by someone I could not identify. The sermon was given from the mosque on Habib Muda’s grave complex. Afterwards various animals (e.g., cows, water buffalo) were sacrificed, and the meat distributed, presumably to a combination of the poor and family members of the sponsors who had purchased the animals for sacrifice.¹²⁷ By the time the sacrifices had begun, however, most of the family’s devotees already had piled into the tens of flatbed trucks that would carry them home.

Entwined (but Unclear) Lines of Authority: Descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through Eminent Sufis of the Past

Events such as the Idul Adha rituals just described tied together ritual practice and genealogical histories through the occurrence of the rituals at the Habib Seunagan’s graves. One way the ritual accomplished this linkage was to highlight key links in the family’s genealogy, as well as the Habib Seunagan’s mystical descent via a Sufi lineage, both of which served to underpin their authority among their followers. This dual line of authority based on genealogical descent from the Prophet Muhammad and the holding of a mystical lineage resembled lines of

¹²⁷ This reflected general practice in Indonesia.

authority imagined for similar figures in other times and places (Ho 2006). However, neither the Habib Seunagan's extended genealogy nor their mystical lineage buttressed their authority in ways consistent with idealized notions of unbroken chains of descent.

The ritual practices at the grave of Habib Muda were grounded in a genealogical history inscribed in the territory of Nagan Raya. Beyond the local links in the family's genealogical chain, inscribed on the Nagan Raya countryside, the family claimed to be Sayyids, that is, descendants of the Prophet Muhammad via the Prophet's close family members, usually the Prophet's daughter Fatimah and son-in-law Ali. This claim was performed via several aspects of the Idul Adha celebration discussed above, including the respect paid to the members of the family during ritualized greetings and the litanies bestowing peace and praises on the Prophet Muhammad.¹²⁸ The Habib Seunagan's claim to descend from the Prophet Muhammad's family was not documented. Nonetheless, the family and its supporters stressed certain important links within their genealogical patriline.

Before Intu, the ancestor of the Habib Seunagan whom many recognized as the first member of the patriline to be buried in Nagan Raya, there were three key links on which nearly all members of the family and their devotees agreed.¹²⁹ The first of these links involved the Prophet and his direct descendants. However, without a definitive genealogy, the family had no way of verifying the specific genealogical path through which they could trace their links to the Prophet Muhammad. This, however, may have worked to their advantage, as it allowed them to

¹²⁸ These two practices can be classed with forms of devotional practice bestowing honor on the Prophet Muhammad and his family, forms that Marshall Hodgson labeled “Alid loyalism” (Ho 2006; Hodgson 1955; Hoffman-Ladd 1992).

¹²⁹ I should note that unlike the graves of Habib Abdurrahim and Habib Muda, there was some disagreement as to the precise identity of the person buried in Intu's grave. Not all people with whom I spoke were even certain that Intu was, in fact, an ancestor of the Habib Seunagan. Nonetheless, it was common for people in Nagan Raya to associate Intu with the Habib Seunagan's patriline, and those who challenged this notion did so under the assumption that most people believed Intu to be an ancestor of Habib Abdurrahim.

claim a rather unusual combination of ancestors that included the other two major links on which some of their most important genealogical claims rested.

As mentioned above, those who forwarded genealogies of the Habib Seunagan to me frequently understood Intu to have descended from the renowned Nine Saints of Java. Some with whom I spoke identified Intu as one of the Nine Saints himself. Others took him to be the son or grandson of one of these Saints. Precisely which of the Nine Saints was Intu's ancestor changed from account to account, with the names of Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Giri, and Sunan Gunung Jati frequently appearing. Some of my interlocutors did not offer the name of a particular ancestor at all, simply noting, as did the 1962 yearly report of Teuku Azman cited above, that Intu descended from the Nine Saints. The narrative episodes told to me regarding this link between Intu and the Nine Saints were sometimes fantastic. One man, for example, suggested that the body in Intu's grave was actually that of Sunan Kalijaga, who had sent his son to Nagan Raya in order to facilitate the region's conversion to Islam. After Sunan Kalijaga's death, this man suggested, the great Saint had mystically transported his own body to the grave now recognized as Intu's, in order to be close to his son's descendants.¹³⁰

Between the Prophet Muhammad and the Nine Saints, there was a period of eight to ten centuries in the Habib Seunagan's genealogy that no one with whom I spoke, either from within or outside of the family, could describe in any detail. One genealogical link, however, was an exception. The Habib Seunagan claimed the eleventh- and twelfth-century Sufi 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī as their ancestor. This was a strange link indeed. 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī remains one of the

¹³⁰ By the late nineteenth century, some Sayyids in Southeast Asia were tracing genealogies that linked the Nine Saints to the Prophet Muhammad through the patriline of the 'Alawi branch of the Prophet's descendants. This made the Nine Saints the ancestors of 'Alawi Sayyids (Laffan 2011, 8). That the Nine Saints were claimed as ancestors here, in an Acehnese and non-'Alawi context, is peculiar in ways that I discuss below. Also of interest was the frequency with which my interlocutors in Nagan Raya mentioned Sunan Kalijaga as an ancestor of the Habib Seunagan. While many of the Nine Saints have been recognized as descending from Arabs and other non-Indonesian peoples, Sunan Kalijaga has widely been taken to have descended from a native Javanese genealogical line. See, for example, Geertz (1968, 25-29).

pre-eminent historical personages in Islamic mystical circles. Believed to be the founder of the Sufi order that bears his name, the Qādirīya, he is revered throughout the world for his mystical prowess and esoteric knowledge, and many consider him without equal. He was also a Sayyid (Braune 2010; van Bruinessen 1989).

Throughout Aceh, Sufis with whom I met regularly told me stories of ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī. This was true of both mystical adepts and Muslims who had studied only basic levels of mystical practice. All of these Sufis took ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī as a primary example to be emulated and as a mediator between humans and God. The patrilines of Sayyids common in Southeast Asia, however, do not have ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī in their genealogies. Nonetheless, ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī was widely recognized in Nagan Raya as an ancestor of the Habib Seunagan.

I once asked a young man in a coffee shop who had introduced himself as a descendant of the Habib Seunagan what his family name (I., *marga*) was. Most Sayyids do carry family names, which link them to the particular patriline within the family of the Prophet Muhammad through which they tie themselves to the Prophet. Because the Habib Seunagan had no definitive genealogy, this question should have been impossible to answer. But this young man quickly and confidently responded “al-Qādiri,” thereby identifying himself not by any recognized patriline linking him to the Prophet Muhammad, but with ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī directly. Even many of the Habib Seunagan’s critics recognized the Habib Seunagan’s descent from ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī. Recall that Nyak Nur’s genealogy discussed in Chapter 4, for example, noted ties of marriage in the distant past linking Nyak Nur’s patriline to that of the Habib Seunagan. The genealogy also noted that “Banta Sultan,” the ancestor of the Habib Seunagan described in the

genealogy as the brother-in-law of Nyak Nur’s ancestor, had a child who “went to Iran and was the ancestor of the Habib Seunagan via Syekh Abdul Qadir Jailani.”

Thus, what emerged from the genealogical and narrative fragments that circulated regarding the Habib Seunagan’s descent was a rather unusual genealogy. This genealogy consisted of long stretches, sometimes covering centuries, of unclear chains of descent punctuated by six key links: the Prophet Muhammad and his family, ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, one or more of the Nine Saints of Java, Intu, Habib Abdurrahim, and Habib Muda.¹³¹

The assertion of genealogical links to the Prophet Muhammad through these key figures represented just one source of the Habib Seunagan’s religious and social authority. A second arose from their claim to a mystical lineage (I., *silsilah*; Ar., *silsila*) tying them to the Syattariyah mystical order (Bowen 1989b, 602-604; Krauss 2010, 223-224). The Habib Seunagan’s mystical lineage, however, like their genealogy, was unclear (Kraus 2010, 223-224). I never was shown a complete mystical lineage, nor was one ever recited for me or in my presence.

In a recent biographical work about Habib Muda and the Syattariyah Sufi order in Nagan Raya, published with the involvement of prominent members of the Habib Seunagan, no links between the family and any documented Syattariyah lineages are established. A Syattariyah lineage is published in this biography. However, this is the lineage of the seventeenth-century scholar Sheikh Yūsuf of Makassar (Daud 2009, 190-191). That the lineage of Sheikh Yūsuf is employed in this manner, even for illustrative purposes, is curious, given the importance in Aceh, and more widely in the archipelago, of ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf, the seventeenth-century Acehnese holder of a Syattariyah lineage who has a major place in the well-known “Mecca’s verandah” narrative

¹³¹ See Appendix 3.

strand.¹³² Indeed, one member of the Habib Seunagan claimed to me that their lineage did run through ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf. Another, however, claimed a different lineage that ran directly through the genealogical family line of the Habib Seunagan without meeting either ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf or Sheikh Yūsuf. Neither presented a lineage to me, however, in either written or recited form.

My inability to locate a more detailed mystical lineage might have resulted from a desire on the part of Syattariyah adepts to keep me from accessing this knowledge. As described above, there were clearly times in my interactions with members of the family and their close associates when my questions regarding mystical doctrine and practice seemed to be deferred. Whether this was the case or not, the ambiguous status of both the Habib Seunagan’s genealogy and their mystical lineage had, in the past, resulted in criticism of the family and its claims to genealogical and mystical preeminence. At the time of my fieldwork, however, such criticism had not resulted in a lessening of the Habib Seunagan’s importance in local ritual, social, and political affairs. Quite the contrary, the ambiguity in the Habib Seunagan’s genealogical and mystical lineages may have allowed members of the family to engage in narrative and ritual work that buttressed their claims to prestigious lines of descent.

One central factor that aided the Habib Seunagan in buttressing their claims to prestigious genealogies were the ways in which narrative, social, and ritual practices in Nagan Raya tended to draw attention to the significance of the period of Nagan Raya’s Islamization. This allowed the Habib Seunagan to highlight their role in the process of Islamization, a role for which they were widely recognized in Nagan Raya. In post-colonial Indonesia, as narratives of the archipelago’s Islamization were being given new political resonances, the narrative practices of

¹³² ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf is a primary link in the lineage of a Syattariyah complex in Minangkabau, a region to the south of Aceh (Fathurahman 2008, 173). Werner Kraus points out that neither of the two major branches of Syattariyah practice in Aceh, located in Nagan Raya and Seulimum respectively, traces their lineage to Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf.

the Habib Seunagan also allowed members of the family to recast their family's history in a new manner, tying it to local and national histories of Islamization as well as staking a claim to the family's cosmic significance.

The Nine Saints of Java and the Habib Seunagan: Reversing the Direction of Islamization

In the 1950s and 1960s, members of the Habib Seunagan began to cultivate narrative and genealogical histories in the form of common post-colonial narratives of Islamization. The versions of these narratives espoused by the Habib Seunagan tied together Nagan Raya, Aceh, the Indonesian nation, and the Habib Seunagan in ways that undermined some of the most fundamental spatial-temporal and political resonances of the histories of Islamization being written and popularized by intellectuals such as Ali Hasjmy in the same period.

John Bowen offers an account of the popularization of narratives of Islamization in the 1950s that focuses on the difficulties these narratives posed for local intellectuals in Aceh's Gayo highland regency (Bowen 1989a). Recall that many of these histories of Islamization were underpinned by a chronotope of temporally and spatially progressive Islamization. Because the histories of Aceh being cultivated in the 1950s insisted on a process of Islamization that was progressive and unidirectional, moving from the west to the east and from the coasts to the highlands, they challenged Gayo histories of the coming of Islam to Gayoland that gave a more prominent place to the highlands. By the 1980s, however, some Gayo intellectuals had found ways to insert their own historical materials into the chronotope of Islamization. They did so by introducing episodes of Gayo village histories into progressive narratives of Islamization, interpreting characters in Ali Hasjmy's histories as Gayo historical figures, and through other narrative strategies (Bowen 1989a, 687-690).

In the 1950s and 1960s, Habib Muda and several of his associates seem to have engaged in a similar strategy to bring local Nagan Raya narratives into the chronotope of Islamization. Further, Habib Muda cultivated these links in a manner that was particularly compelling locally. Instead of simply finding a place to insert his family's patriline along the chains of conversion characteristic of the Islamization chronotope, Habib Muda managed to flip several of the most important political and spatial-temporal valences of the histories of Aceh being developed in the 1950s and 1960s. In the process, he placed the Habib Seunagan at the center of three spatial-temporal frames: a cosmologically all-encompassing Islamic universe, a realm of Nagan Raya's local custom and history, and the newly independent Indonesian nation.

A key to understanding how Habib Muda successfully inserted his family's patriline into prestigious histories of the coming of Islam to the Indonesian archipelago is the manner in which he cultivated his family's links to the Nine Saints of Java. I cannot say for certain when the association with the Nine Saints became a dominant strand in genealogical narratives of the Habib Seunagan. The earliest documentary evidence for such a link is the 1962 report by Teuku Azman described above. Based on oral histories anchored to objects in the Nagan Raya countryside, it was in the 1950s, during Darul Islam, when these ties began to be stressed in earnest. Habib Muda, his associates, and his descendants have gone to great lengths to highlight these links ever since.

One story featured prominently in oral histories I collected from members of the Habib Seunagan and their devotees involved a trip that Habib Muda took to Java during Darul Islam.¹³³ Habib Muda's descendants claim that on this occasion, President Sukarno invited Habib Muda to the national capital of Jakarta as a gesture of gratitude for Habib Muda's loyalty in combating

¹³³ This story is also a central episode in the recently published biography of Habib Muda (Daud 2009, 65-68).

Darul Islam. Stories of Habib Muda's trip suggestively paralleled similar stories told by Muda Waly's followers of a journey Muda Waly took to West Java in the 1950s to participate in a meeting of *ulama*, a meeting at which he met Sukarno.¹³⁴ I have yet to uncover independent evidence verifying that Habib Muda's trip occurred. Members of the Habib Seunagan, however, were adamant that Habib Muda's journey to Jakarta had taken place.

While on Java, Habib Muda was said to have conducted ritual visits (I., *ziarah*; Ar., *ziyāra*) to the graves of several of the Nine Saints. He was also said to have received two gifts from the president. The first was a Land Rover, long since destroyed, but the memories of which still sparked excitement among members of the family old enough to remember Habib Muda cruising the rural Nagan Raya landscape in it. The second gift, more substantial in its own way, was a Javanese dagger (I., *kris*). This dagger was alleged to have belonged to Sunan Kalijaga, one of the Nine Saints. At the time of my fieldwork it was displayed inside the main pillar of the mosque on the complex where Habib Muda was buried (see Figure 13). It was renowned for bringing calamity upon those who entered the mosque with ill-intentions, and it served as a potent symbol of the family's ties to the Nine Saints, both as an index of Habib Muda's trip to Java and as an icon of the family's Javanese descent.

By the time of my fieldwork, the narrative of Habib Muda's trip to Java was well-known. Nearly all versions of the story I heard conformed to the basic outline presented above. Most importantly, the links Habib Muda cultivated to the Nine Saints of Java, via his visitations at their graves and his return with Sunan Kalijaga's dagger, were the central themes of these narratives. The presence of the Javanese dagger in the mosque on Habib Muda's grave complex anchored these narratives in the Nagan Raya landscape and tied them to Habib Muda's

¹³⁴ Photographs of Muda Waly meeting Sukarno circulated widely among Muda Waly's followers during my field research.



Figure 13: Javanese dagger in main pillar of mosque at the grave complex of Habib Muda, Peuleukung, Nagan Raya

grave just a few meters away. In fact, most people who told me about Habib Muda's trip to Jakarta closed their story by encouraging me to go to Peuleukung to see the knife for myself.

But what, precisely, did stressing these genealogical links to the Nine Saints accomplish? Remember that in most histories of the coming of Islam to the archipelago, it was from Aceh that Islam spread throughout the archipelago. It was this point, in large part, that made these histories compelling for Acehnese in the 1950s. Especially attractive were the ways in which these histories of Islamization asserted Acehnese priority over Java, with Java coming to be seen as the

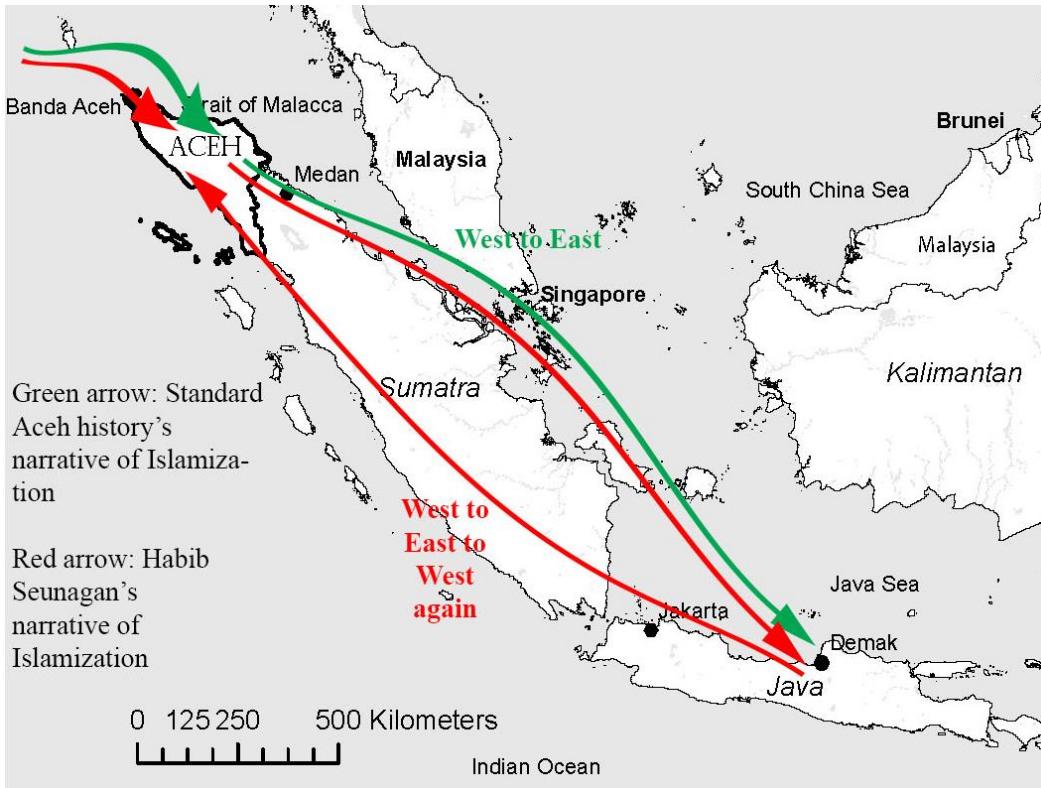


Figure 14: Two versions of Islamization

source of a counterinsurgency that Darul Islam supporters frequently understood to emanate from an anti-Islamic and Javanese-dominated central government. The Nine Saints of Java, however, lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Aceh's Islamization was believed to have begun as early as the thirteenth century, if not before. If the Habib Seunagan were responsible for the Islamization of Nagan Raya, yet were also the descendants of the Nine Saints, this implied that Java had been Islamicized before Nagan Raya, potentially challenging value-laden geographies that took Aceh as the font from which Islam spread throughout the archipelago.

The members of the Habib Seunagan with whom I spoke during my research did not deny that Islam, indeed, had come first to Aceh before spreading to Java. But they went on to claim that the initial coming of Islam to the archipelago landed only on Aceh's north coast before passing to Java. Their own ancestors, descendants of the Nine Saints, had then returned to

Aceh's west coast, Islamicizing Nagan Raya. The Habib Seunagan thus asserted a place in the history of the conversion of the archipelago that constituted a moment of Islamization from Java to Aceh (see Figure 14). This assertion began in earnest with Habib Muda's cultivation of genealogical links to the Nine Saints of Java during a period when he found himself opposing Darul Islam.

Habib Muda's cultivation of these links in the manner described above turned relational hierarchies associated with Aceh, the Indonesian nation, and Islamization from their usual rhythms. Darul Islam supporters, like most Acehnese and many Javanese, regularly represented Java as comparatively less Islamicized than Aceh. The chronotope of Islamization and its stress on continuous and progressive narratives of conversion had itself been part of efforts to end Darul Islam in Aceh. These efforts were carried out through stressing the primacy and grandeur of an Islamic past that all Acehnese were alleged to share, a past thought sufficient to justify the granting of special autonomy to Aceh, and widely taken as marking Aceh as unique and primary in relation to Java.

Habib Muda, however, came to express his family's loyalty to Jakarta in terms of his descent from the Nine Saints of Java. As a result, the Habib Seunagan's patriline was inserted into the history of the archipelago's conversion to Islam in a manner that adhered to the Aceh history's pattern of spatial and temporal progression while simultaneously flouting one of its most fundamental political valences. In claiming to be the descendant of Javanese Muslims who brought Islam to Acehnese converts, Habib Muda not only articulated his allegiance to a central government perceived by most Acehnese as dominated by Javanese, but asserted a measure of Javanese primacy in the Islamization of at least his own portion of Aceh. Further, he did this

through a historical narrative of conversion that was originally cultivated in part to do precisely the opposite, that is, to assert Acehnese primacy over Java.

These unusual resonances would grow only stronger, and more counterintuitive, as time passed. When the Free Aceh Movement broke out in 1976, Acehnese nationalists were even more resentful towards Javanese dominance of Indonesian political and social life than Darul Islam guerrillas had been (Aspinall 2009, 70-74, 193-219; Tiro 1984). Free Aceh Movement activists portrayed Java as comparatively less Islamicized than their Acehnese counterparts and used histories of Aceh's glorious past as rallying points for Acehnese nationalism, stressing the ways in which this past established Aceh as different from and primary to Java. "Java" became the alterity against which Acehnese nationalists came to define their project, articulating Indonesia as synonymous with Java in a manner that made it difficult to claim both Acehnese and Indonesian identities (Aspinall 2009, 70-74).¹³⁵

Nonetheless, throughout the period of the Free Aceh Movement, the Habib Seunagan continued to cultivate their links to the Nine Saints, Java, and the Indonesian central government. They did so while continuing to claim that Habib Abdurrahim had brought Islam to Nagan Raya and founded authentic customary practice there. Their senior family members frequently boasted about the family's links to both Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, and the man who deposed and replaced him, Soeharto. They stressed their close ties to the Indonesian military throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, including during Darul Islam, the massacres of the Indonesian Left in 1965 and 1966, and the conflict between the Free Aceh Movement

¹³⁵ Narratives of Islamization were an extremely minor part of the Free Aceh Movement's historical propaganda. I would suggest that this was because the telos of such narratives had, by the 1970s, become so thoroughly entwined in notions of the Indonesian nation that it seemed counterintuitive to stress them as part of an Acehnese nationalist project. Nonetheless, notions of fundamental differences between Acehnese and Javanese were sometimes expressed using the idiom of Islamization (i.e., Acehnese Islam versus Javanese Hindu-Buddhism). More importantly, the ways in which the Habib Seunagan's narratives of Islamization asserted Javanese historical primacy over Nagan Raya openly flouted the Free Aceh Movement's insistence that Aceh held historical precedence over Java in just about every social, political, and historical category.

and the Indonesian state. Important symbols of these relationships to Indonesian central authority hung in their homes and grave complexes, for example the abovementioned dagger of Sunan Kalijaga, photographs of family members with civilian and military officials in the field, and a framed copy of the service star posthumously awarded by the Indonesian government to Habib Muda for his service to the Republic. Thus, at the time of my fieldwork, they resolutely expressed their loyalty to an Indonesian central government that most Acehnese had, at the very least, come to distrust. They did so through the idiom of Islamization, which held deep historical resonances at the regency, provincial, and national level.

Placing the Habib Seunagan: Three Entwined Spatial-Temporal Frames

It is probably the case that very few people outside of Nagan Raya were even aware of Habib Muda's recasting of Aceh's place in narratives of Indonesia's Islamization. While the cultivation of genealogical links with the Nine Saints of Java seemed aimed, in part, at illustrating the Habib Seunagan's loyalty to Jakarta, these genealogical histories proved popular mainly among those living in or near Nagan Raya. Nonetheless, that a large number of people within the regency accepted the validity of these ties, despite the ways in which they were so flagrantly were at odds with common narratives of Indonesia's Islamization and more robust standards of genealogical verification, begs a question. Why?

One answer to this question lies in the ways in which, aside from inserting his patriline into the chronotope of Islamization, Habib Muda's cultivation of genealogical links with the Nine Saints simultaneously placed his patriline in three spatial-temporal frames that overlapped in the period of Nagan Raya's Islamization. The first of these spatial-temporal frames, described in the previous section, was that of the Indonesian nation articulated in terms of progressive Islamization. By cultivating ties to the Nine Saints, Habib Muda and his descendants placed the

Habib Seunagan's patriline within prestigious histories of the coming of Islam to the Indonesian archipelago. As discussed in earlier chapters, narratives of Islamization have been a powerful way Acehnese and other Indonesians have come to imagine their place in the Indonesian nation. In the case of the Habib Seunagan, narratives of Islamization facilitated the family's links to the Indonesian Republic in periods in which they found themselves in opposition to anti-government guerrilla movements. At the time of my fieldwork, Habib Muda's descendants and followers continued to remember him as an Indonesian patriot.

Yet there were at least two other spatial-temporal frames in which the Habib Seunagan, through their genealogical links to prestigious Islamic pasts, could claim a central place. Recall that the genealogies of the Habib Seunagan claimed that the family's patriline descended from 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī. 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī has remained perhaps the single most paradigmatic figure in traditions of Sufi devotion in the Indian Ocean Islamic world. He has been assumed by many devotees to be the most likely candidate to fill the role of cosmic pole (I., *qutub*) in his own age. While the status of *qutub* is not usually associated with genealogical descent, recall that in Nagan Raya the title has been bequeathed along the Habib Seunagan's patriline. Thus, this link to 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī strengthened claims of the Habib Seunagan to the status of *qutub* in their own right.

By the late nineteenth century, an increasing number of genealogical histories of the Nine Saints of Java linked the Nine Saints to the patrilines of Sayyids resident in the Indonesian archipelago. None of these histories tied the Nine Saints to 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī. Nonetheless, placing the Nine Saints in a genealogical line between the Habib Seunagan and 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī further suggested the esoteric prominence and power of the Habib Seunagan. The Nine Saints were widely taken in Java to be figures active in the kinds of mystical hierarchies

associated with the *qutub*. Thus, drawing attention to links with the Nine Saints of Java augmented the Habib Seunagan’s central place in a cosmological geography in which their family line was, quite literally, the “central pole” of the universe. This mystical Islamic cosmos was the second of the spatial-temporal frames the Habib Seunagan’s genealogy allowed them inhabit.

This cosmological position as central pole reinforced the Habib Seunagan’s place in the third of the spatial-temporal frames under discussion here. This was the realm of Nagan Raya’s local customary practice. Recall again the claim made in Teuku Azman’s 1962 report that Habib Abdurrahim brought into being a local customary practice in Seunagan that “had its origins in Islam.” The category of local customary practice (I., *adat*), which was a key concept in the Dutch narratives of Islamization discussed in the Introduction, has a long and contested history in the archipelago (Benda 1958; Bowen 2003, 1-63; Hurgronje 1906; Lev 1972, 1985; Spyer 1996; Steedly 1993; van Vollenhoven 1981). One of the chief lines of contestation regarding this term has been whether or not, and under what circumstances, local custom is considered forbidden or allowed according to Islamic jurisprudence (Benda 1958; Bowen 2003, 1-63; Lev 1972, 1985). In classical Islamic jurisprudence, however, ‘*āda* (Ar.), or the related term ‘*urf* (Ar.), could be construed as a category of local practice that, if not inconsistent with Islamic legal principles, was itself legally binding. In this sense, ‘*āda* was a category used to bring local norms and practices into the Islamic legal tradition (Stewart 2012). In twentieth-century Indonesia, however, the general assumption has been that the category of local custom includes things that are resolutely local and that stand against Islamic practice or outside of it.

Herein lies much of the significance of Teuku Azman’s claim that Seunagan’s customary practice “had its origins in Islam.” By virtue of its inception at the moment of Habib

Abdurrahim's conversion of the region, Seunagan's local customary practice was taken as a fully Islamic customary practice, self-consciously contrary to the unmarked category of *adat* in its common Indonesian usage to mean local practice in opposition to or outside of Islam. Its very existence was the result of the actions of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī and the Nine Saints of Java.

The centrality of the Habib Seunagan to the realm of Nagan Raya's local customary practice was further reinforced by the ways in which the cosmological realm in which they claimed the status of *qutub* was symbolically replicated in daily social relations in Nagan Raya. Recall that the titles of *qutub* and *autad* descended through genealogical patrilines and that many in Nagan Raya continued to recognize the representatives of these patrilines as carrying these esoteric titles. Beyond the two most elevated titles (i.e., *qutub*, *autad*), a full range of lesser ones associated with the Sufi cosmologies described in Chapter 4 also passed in this manner (Bowen 1989b, 687-690). This meant that a great number of people in Nagan Raya could be associated with such titles, and thereby place themselves, or be placed by others, in a systematic hierarchy that simultaneously reflected local customary practice and universal cosmological gravitas. Even those not personally moved by the Sufi cosmologies, for example Nyak Nur, could not help but know their place within this hierarchy of local customary practice.

Thus, by cultivating key links in their genealogy, the Habib Seunagan were able to stress their place in three intersecting spatial-temporal frames: the Indonesian nation articulated in terms of progressive Islamization, a cosmological realm in which their patriline represented the central pole of the universe, and a locality in which they were the originators and arbiters of a thoroughly Islamic customary practice. Each of these realms reinforced the other two. They all in some way were refracted through the key period of Nagan Raya's Islamization, where local,

national, and cosmological frames were entangled. This was apparent in Teuku Azman's 1962 yearly report, which linked the nationalist loyalties of the Habib Seunagan and their followers with Habib Abdurrahim's status as *qutub* and his role as transmitter of a conjoined Islam and customary practice.

Returning to Peuleukung: Grounding the Habib Seunagan in a Different Kind of *Kandoeri*

While the three entwined spatial-temporal frames of the Indonesian nation, Islamic cosmos, and Nagan Raya's realm of customary practice were eloquently expressed in the narratives and genealogies of the Habib Seunagan described above, this eloquence in itself does not explain why these frames became so compelling for many Muslims in Nagan Raya. Part of the answer to this question lies in the social practices described in Chapter 4. Genealogical histories served as a dominant idiom of social life in Nagan Raya, linking prominent Nagan Raya patrilinees to the region's Islamization and predisposing Muslims to orient themselves to this period. Given this common orientation to the local past of Islamization, a local past in which all three of the spatial-temporal frames described above entwined, the various symmetries and interconnections between these frames have been apparent to many in Nagan Raya.

Those in Nagan Raya also encountered the interconnected spatial-temporal frames that arose from the Habib Seunagan's genealogy through their participation in ritual practices at the graves of the Habib Seunagan. Almost five months after I attended the Idul Adha *kandoeri* in Peuleukung, I returned to Habib Muda's grave complex for another *kandoeri*, this one to mark the anniversary of Habib Muda's death. This *kandoeri* was described by the Habib Seunagan and their devotees as a *haul* (I.), a term used throughout much of the Islamic world to indicate an event commemorating the anniversary of the death of a renowned Sufi. In many ways, this *kandoeri* resembled the one I attended on Idul Adha. Large numbers of attendees arrived in the

evening by truck. These attendees sat in groups and recited litanies without paying much attention to the litanies being recited by the groups adjacent to them. This resulted in the cacophony of sacred syllables that had impressed me at Idul Adha. Finally, attendees remained throughout the night, leaving the next morning.

There were, however, some significant differences between this event and the one that had been held for Idul Adha in early December. For one, there was no circumambulation of Habib Muda's grave. Rather than being arranged around Habib Muda's grave complex, all of the groups in attendance sat in or near a large building that served as a shelter for reciting litanies (Ac., *déah*). Not only was this building outside the walls of the courtyard surrounding Habib Muda's grave, it was across the street. The floors of the two-story building were crammed with attendees, as was the small courtyard outside of it. Rather than being oriented to a single point, groups of attendees sat facing any number of directions.

Further, there were no makeshift food or drink stalls lining the street in front of the complex as there had been in early December. Instead, behind the shelter in which most of the attendees were reciting their litanies stood a large cooking area. Men prepared pots of rice and Acehnese goat curry, which was served all night to those in attendance, free of charge. The food was sponsored by Habib Muda's close relatives, and the men who prepared it volunteered to me that they were happy to have been selected for such an honor.

At first glance, the differences between the *kandoeri* commemorating the anniversary of Habib Muda's death and the one held on Idul Adha might seem insignificant. From one point of view, the only major ritual difference between the two events was that no circumambulation of Habib Muda's grave took place at the latter event. There was no noticeable difference in the litanies recited at either *kandoeri*, for example. While there was no time set aside for Abu

Kodrat and his companions to greet each of the attendees at the *kandoeri* on the anniversary of Habib Muda's death, Abu Kodrat and several other prominent members of the family remained stationed at various points on the grounds. They received all visitors who wished to speak with them. Yet the different spatial arrangements of the two events, and the fact that food was served to all attendees on the anniversary of Habib Muda's death, signaled important differences between the two *kandoeri*. Further, it suggested one of the most important ways in which the genealogical histories of the Habib Seunagan were tied to ritual practice in Nagan Raya.

Much of the *kandoeri* commemorating the death of Habib Muda participated in wider patterns of practice associated with the devotion of mystically-inclined Muslims toward renowned Sufis (Cornell 1998; Gilsenan 1973; Hoffman 1995; Werbner 2003). What is important for the purposes of this chapter, if not unique to Nagan Raya, is how the Habib Seunagan defined the large events at the graves of Habib Muda and Habib Abdurrahim as *kandoeri*. In certain respects, referring to these feasts as *kandoeri* simply reflected the use of this term to indicate any sort of gathering at which prayers were recited and food exchanged. Yet the commemoration of Habib Muda's death conformed particularly well to common Acehnese ideals of *kandoeri* feasts, which were tied to notions of social reciprocity and generosity among Muslims. The relatives of Habib Muda, in fact, went to some length to highlight this fact, receiving guests at the complex the entire day before the feast and drawing attention to the copious amounts of food that were available to anyone who attended.

Members of the Habib Seunagan regularly described the practices of the Syattariyah Sufi order in terms of the bonds of social solidarity that *kandoeri* were imagined to facilitate. Consider the comments of Sayyid Bas, a young and well-educated descendent of Habib Muda, still in his twenties. He identified "three foundations" (Ac., *lhèē bòh dasar*) for understanding

his family's "community" (I., *komuniti*). The first foundation was the remembrance of God through the litanies described above, with the eventual goal of absorption into awareness of the oneness of God through this remembrance. The second two foundations were *kandoeri* and *silaturahmi*. Recall that *silaturahmi* roughly indicates cordial relations between individuals or groups, and was valued highly in Nagan Raya. In citing both *kandoeri* and *silaturahmi*, Sayyid Bas referenced the ritual feasts and visits that occupied the center of ritual and social life in Nagan Raya. Both terms were intimately tied to metadiscourses on properly Islamic customary practice.

It would not be correct to claim that the Habib Seunagan held a monopoly on these terms or their usage to describe properly Islamic customary practice. One would have been hard pressed to find a Muslim in Aceh who did not value *silaturahmi* as an expression of Islamic sociality. While various reformers have criticized *kandoeri*, most Acehnese, especially on Aceh's southwest coast, openly embraced the term and nearly all of its resonances with Acehnese customary practice. Nonetheless, it was difficult to disentangle the Habib Seunagan from what was considered by most in the region, and even some outside of it, as the exceptionally strong customary practice of Nagan Raya. The family cultivated this close association with *kandoeri* and local custom through their sponsoring of ritual feasts such as the ones previously described. This association also was embedded in their genealogy, which highlighted their role in the coming of an entwined Islam and customary practice to the region.

In a very important sense, it was through these gatherings, understood locally as ritual feasts that entailed bonds of spiritual and material reciprocity, that the genealogical history of the Habib Seunagan came to be compelling for those people who attended them. In my conversations with attendees at these events, it became clear that a nexus of concerns motivated

followers of the Habib Seunagan to attend, including personal devotion, social reciprocity, the seeking of supernatural aid, and the desire to achieve mystical knowledge. These followers tended to express these motivations in a manner that mirrored the tripartite constellation of spatial-temporal frames that arose from the Habib Seunagan's narrative and genealogical practices. This was especially apparent at the grave of Habib Muda, who personified the family's place in cosmic, national, and local spatial-temporal frames. Different devotees with whom I spoke at the *kandoeri* marking the anniversary of Habib Muda's death, for example, described Habib Muda's "superiority" (I., *kelebihan*) to me in terms of his being a national hero who defended the Indonesian Republic, a mystical mediator through whom devotees could more effectively secure divine grace and favors, and a local figure to whom they were connected through networks of reciprocity that included the *kandoeri* at which we spoke.

The kinds of practices in which these three spatial-temporal frames would have been apparent to devotees included a range well beyond the various yearly gatherings at the graves of Habib Muda. Remember that the graves inscribing the genealogy of the Habib Seunagan on the Nagan Raya landscape dotted the countryside. At some of these graves, there were opportunities to recite litanies on a weekly basis. Perhaps even more importantly, people regularly visited these graves to make vows (Ac., *ka'ōj*; I., *nazar*) in which devotees promised to recite Qur'anic verses or to sacrifice an animal in exchange for help from the person in the grave in obtaining certain deeply held wishes. Sayyid Samsol, a descendant of the Habib Seunagan in his early sixties, once took me on a tour of the most powerful of these graves, most of which were at difficult-to-reach points in the Nagan Raya countryside. Spending a day outside Habib Muda's grave complex, I encountered approximately ten people seeking the intercession of Habib Muda in their worldly affairs. These included schoolboys seeking higher test scores, a young couple

struggling with infertility, and a middle-aged man who could not figure out why his new business was not bringing in more profit.

Again, it should be stressed that such practices are not unusual. The graves of renowned and powerful Sufis are the sites of such activity around Indonesia and the greater Islamic world (Cornell 1998; Gilsenan 1973; Werbner 2003). But it is notable how ritual practice at the graves of the Habib Seunagan encouraged those in Nagan Raya to participate in emplaced and embodied practices that depended on the three spatial-temporal frames inherent in the Habib Seunagan's genealogy. These were not simply instances of Muslims seeking supernatural favors or engaged in transaction rituals with local holy men. Instead, they involved networks of reciprocity within the local, cosmic, and national spatial-temporal frames that arose from the Habib Seunagan's narration of their genealogical history. As such, these practices invested Islamic practitioners in Nagan Raya in the local Islamic histories that underpinned the Habib Seunagan's narrative, social, and ritual practices.

Certainly, not all people in Nagan Raya oriented themselves in uniform ways to the narrative, social, and ritual practices associated with the Habib Seunagan. It should be clear by this point that the ways in which the Habib Seunagan narrated their genealogies and conducted the social and ritual practices that underpinned their versions of local Islamic pasts were highly contested. One devotee explained to me, for example, that each year on the anniversary of Habib Muda's death, the mystic's soul (I., *roh*) returns to the grave, making it an especially auspicious time to recite litanies and seek intervention. Another devotee, however, told me this was nonsense. With the exception of the six links in the genealogy described above, nearly each genealogy I received from members of the Habib Seunagan and other residents of Nagan Raya involved a different chain of names and links. Similarly, following the death of Habib Muda in

1972, a controversy ensued over where to hold the Idul Adha *kandoeri* described above. Before Habib Muda's death, this event had been held at the grave of Habib Abdurrahim, but Habib Muda's social, political, and mystical prominence caused his descendants to believe that the Idul Adha *kandoeri* should be moved to Peuleukung. Other branches of the family resisted this move. At the time of my research, this controversy was no longer discussed openly. But some devotees of the Habib Seunagan still celebrated Idul Adha at Habib Abdurrahim's grave complex in Pulo Ie, while others traveled back and forth between the two complexes. All of these examples illustrate contestation among the Habib Seunagan and their devotees. Even more varied readings of the family's narrative, social, and mystical practices were to be found among the family's critics, for example 'Abduh-style reformers such as Nyak Nur.

Returning once again to Nyak Nur, however, brings us to the key point. It is true that the three entwined spatial-temporal frames linking the Habib Seunagan to central positions in a local customary realm, the Islamic cosmos, and the Indonesian nation were contested by different Muslims in Nagan Raya. But even the family's most ardent critics seemed unable to divorce themselves entirely from these frames and from the local past of Islamization to which they were connected. This was because these frames and local Islamic pasts inhered in daily embodied and emplaced practices of reading the past in the present. Such practices were layered into daily social and ritual interaction in Nagan Raya. Nyak Nur might have refrained from attending the *kandoeri* held at Habib Muda's grave in Peuleukung, but he seemed loath to renounce his genealogical links to Nagan Raya's Islamization. Some devotees of the Habib Seunagan did not hold prestigious genealogies, but attended *kandoeri* through which they took themselves to be participants in a local customary practice that linked them to networks of reciprocity that included a national hero and mystical cosmic pole (i.e., Habib Muda). Both Nyak Nur and these

devotees became invested in the tripartite spatial-temporal frames described here, albeit to different degrees and through different instances of social and ritual practice.

Waiting for the *Keramat* to Drop: The Continuing Work of Narrative and Its Limits

Habib Muda was an astute political player and a charismatic mystical figure, yet he could not have cultivated genealogical links to the Nine Saints of Java in any historical context. The particular configuration of events in and through which he acted helped to buttress the constellation of genealogy he forwarded. These events included the Darul Islam rebellion against the central government, the alliance of religious teachers opposing the revolt, his family's embeddedness in material and mystical networks of reciprocity in Nagan Raya, the Habib Seunagan's genealogy inscribed on the Nagan Raya countryside, and others. The histories in which he inserted his patriline, that is, new histories of Aceh underpinned by the chronotope of Islamization, were themselves expressed in a narrative form that was the product of his historical period.

Maintaining the Habib Seunagan's place in these local, national, and cosmic spatial-temporal frames has required on-going narrative, social, and ritual work on the part of Habib Muda's descendants. As Indonesia-wide efforts to more systematically document genealogical links between Sayyids and the patrilines descending from the Prophet Muhammad's family spread to Aceh, the question of where the Habib Seunagan fit into this larger family tree has become one of increasing concern for members of the family.¹³⁶ However, as is evident from the discussion above, the Habib Seunagan's authority has never derived from the existence of this kind of detailed genealogy.

¹³⁶ On the documentation of these genealogies in Indonesia, see Ho (2006, 325-326) and Rabithah Alawiyah (2012). At the commencement of my research, the group most interested in documenting these links, Rabithah Alawiyah, had recently opened a branch office in Banda Aceh.

Concern with newly popular standards of verifying genealogical descent may have been what motivated descendants and followers of Habib Muda to publish his biography in 2009. In this book the author, who claimed to be a spiritual deputy (I., *khalifah*) of the Syattariyah, admitted that the family has no definitive genealogy. Nonetheless, he continued to assert that Habib Muda descended from the Prophet Muhammad:

Abu Habib Muda Seunagan[... has] a lineage (I., *silsilah*) to the Messenger (i.e., Muhammad)[... Sayyids] have various family names (I., *marga*) or clans (I., *klan*) such as Al-Atas, al-Habsyi, Al-Ayrus, Al-Haddad, and others. Abu Habib Muda Seunagan who [only has] the family name Habib is still the descendant of the Messenger[...] History provides a strong justification for this. (Daud 2009, 25)

This rather unconvincing argument is not, in fact, accompanied by any historical justification at all in the text of the work. The extent of the argument presented by the author is, at its root, that Habib Muda was known to be a Sayyid, therefore he was one.

While such an argument may appear to have little hope of overcoming rigorous standards of complete and unbroken genealogies that could discredit the Habib Seunagan's status as Sayyids, consider the following. In a move strikingly reminiscent of Habib Muda's return from Java with Sunan Kalijaga's dagger, the book's sponsors arranged to hold a book opening, at the headquarters of the Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in Jakarta (anonymous 2009). Nahdlatul Ulama is Indonesia's largest mass-member Islamic organization and popularly perceived as closely associated with none other than the Nine Saints of Java. Recalling Habib Muda's visitation to the graves of the Nine Saints, the choice of venue for the book opening involved travel to Java in order to stress the Habib Seunagan's otherwise difficult-to-verify links to the Nine Saints. Such a move was clearly aimed not at overcoming the standards of complete and unbroken genealogies that may soon threaten the Habib Seunagan's genealogical claims, but

at buttressing the Habib Seunagan's genealogical history by cultivating relationships with living representatives of the Nine Saints (i.e., NU).

Rather than threats posed from newly ascendant standards of genealogical verification, one of the biggest challenges that faced the Habib Seunagan at the time of my research was the question of to whom the mystical powers (I., *keramat*) once possessed by Habib Muda would descend next. To contextualize the significance of this question, I first turn to a discussion I had with an elderly woman in Nagan Raya one afternoon. I was brought to this woman by a friend, a young, male devotee of the Habib Seunagan, who told me that she was somehow related to Habib Muda. As I attempted to steer the conversation towards questions regarding ritual practice, litanies, and similar topics, she continuously returned to what I came to realize was, perhaps, the central historical moment in her understanding of the order. She told me about a time when a light, which she described as the "Muhammadean light" (I., *nur Muhammad*), descended upon Habib Muda. Before I could hear much more in the way of details, however, my conversation with this woman came to an abrupt end, when a man much younger than she was stepped in and scolded her for circulating the story. He then turned to me and inquired into my purposes and visa status.

This was not the first or last time I would hear such a story. In fact, I heard a few different versions of it during my time in Nagan Raya. These stories were rarely more than fragments, and they frequently were more evocative than descriptive. However, clearly several people remembered an event at which something in Habib Muda's mystical status changed. Some told me that at this point he came to be called Habib Muda, translatable as the "young Habib." At least one of the Habib Seunagan's critics insinuated that it was only at this time that he began claiming descent as a Sayyid. In all versions of these stories, the event in question

involved the descent (Ac., *tron*; I., *turun*) of mystical power (I., *keramat*; Ar., *karāma*), often in the form of a light (I., *terang*).

Questions regarding to whom such mystical powers might descend next were a central concern of many of my interlocutors from the Habib Seunagan, although this concern rarely was discussed openly. The stories of the descent of these powers to Habib Muda helped to contextualize the preoccupation among so many of the Habib Seunagan with the question of to whom they might descend next. The descent of these powers involved the acquisition of miraculous abilities, often involving super-perceptive sensoriums or the ability to calm the forces of nature.¹³⁷ Yet much more was at stake. Habib Muda became the head of the Habib Seunagan in part because he exhibited powers that indicated his divinely-sanctioned spiritual superiority.

While the Habib Seunagan remained socially, politically, and religiously prominent at the time of my research, the leadership of the branch of the Syattariyah they formally headed had passed from one of Habib Muda's sons to another, and then another. To that point, there had been no dispute about succession to leadership in the order. But it was clear that some from the family were waiting to see to whom mystical powers would fall next. One member of the family, while showing me the grave of a particular powerful ancestor of Habib Muda, made sure to point out the negative effects that would occur if such mystical powers were to descend on him at that very moment. His proximity to this ancestor's power, now located with his body in the grave, would result in a kind of mystical short-circuiting, and his feet would become as heavy as lead. My interlocutor told this story in a hushed voice that suggested the expectation that at some point, such a thing might very well happen, if not to him then to another in his extended family.

¹³⁷ The miraculous powers of Sufi saints frequently involve these kinds of powers, especially super-perception. See, for example, Ewing (1994; 1997), Gilsean (1973; 2000, 75-141), Green (2004), Hoffman (2005), and Werbner (2003).

In fact, following Habib Muda's death in 1972, someone had indeed exhibited at least some of his most potent powers. This was Habib Muda's daughter, Hajjah Peunawa. Following her father's death, she led much of the ritual practice associated with the Syattariyah in Nagan Raya, despite the fact that the leadership of the order officially belonged to her brother (Helmy 1987, 44-45; Kraus 2010, 223). Upon her death, Hajja Peunawa was buried in the same complex as her father, along with her sister Won Doneh, the daughter of Habib Muda married to Teuku Azman, and her brothers. Some devotees, in fact, came to this complex to receive the benefits of this women's intercessionary power, and *kandoeri* were held at the complex yearly to commemorate the anniversary of her death. Yet, despite this, these women rarely were mentioned when someone noted that the mystical powers that once descended upon the Habib Muda had yet to fall to anyone since his death, nor were they counted in genealogical reckonings of the Habib Seunagan or Syattariyah.

The examples of the ways in which the Habib Seunagan remained attuned to the question of to whom mystical powers would descend next suggests that the creative potential of the Habib Seunagan's narrative, social, and religious practice was not unconstrained. Habib Muda was able to cultivate and assert the links of his genealogy in a specific set of historical circumstances. Hajjah Peunawa, widely-recognized to have received many of her father's powers, but not able to transmit the family's genealogical patriline, dropped out of most narrative accounts of the family, despite the fact that devotees continued to visit her grave. From these constraints, however, arose a creative potential. Genealogy, Sufi lineage, and mystical powers combined in unpredictable ways to bring a Javanese dagger to Aceh, an Acehnese woman to the leadership of Syattariyah retreats, an 'Abduh-style reformer to the title of *autad*, and a book opening to Java.

It is little wonder that so many of the Habib Seunagan I met seemed to be waiting for the *keramat* to drop.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a 1962 report in which Teuku Azman, the head of the sub-regency of Seunagan and the son-in-law of Habib Muda, lauded the locally-renowned Habib Abdurrahim as a proto-Indonesian patriot, a mystical “central pole,” and the transmitter of a conjoined Islam and customary practice to Nagan Raya. The broader significances of the configuration of local, national, and cosmic spatial-temporal frames expressed in this otherwise common yearly report should now be apparent. By 1962 Habib Muda and his associates had begun to cultivate and assert genealogical links to the Nine Saints of Java. In doing so, Habib Muda made his patriline central to three interrelated spatial-temporal frames: a cosmic mystical realm of Sufis and Sayyids, an order of thoroughly Islamic local customary practice, and the Indonesian nation expressed in terms of progressive Islamization. In so doing, he reversed some of the most prominent political and social valences these narratives usually held, identifying his own ancestors as the descendants of Javanese Sayyids and shifting the direction of Islamization from eastward out of Aceh to westward returning to Aceh.

The processes through which all this occurred, and through which these connections continued to be re-established at the time of my fieldwork, involved a nexus of narrative, social, and ritual practices that helped to enact these shifting spatial-temporal frames for the Habib Seunagan and their devotees. Social and ritual practices in Nagan Raya predisposed those in the regency to orient their Islamic practice to the local Islamic past of Nagan Raya’s Islamization, where each of these three spatial-temporal frames met. Further, ritual practice in the regency provided opportunities through which ordinary Muslims in Nagan Raya came to orient

themselves within these three frames. Muslims participating in ritual feasts at the graves of the Habib Seunagan, for example, focused their devotional practices on figures that they recognized as at the center of each of these three spatial-temporal frames (e.g., Habib Muda, Habib Abdurrahim).

The example of the Habib Seunagan illustrates the complexity with which Islamic practitioners often are emplaced in constellations of Islamic pasts, presents, and futures, potentially inhabiting multiple spatial-temporal frames at once. Muslims frequently do not feel the need to choose between local or global frames for their practice. This, of course, is not always the case. Some popular forms of Islamic reformism, for example, have encouraged Muslims to think of their own practice in terms of local versus universal traditions. But in many cases the necessity of making such a distinction is not apparent to Islamic practitioners who inhabit complex constellations of interrelated spatial and temporal scales. Even the Habib Seunagan's cosmic realm was immensely local in its horizons and contexts of practice. Even their claims to the founding of an extremely local customary practice were enacted only through their performance of a translocal cosmic authority. It is not so much that at different points in time the Habib Seunagan have chosen to represent or perform their narrative, social, and ritual practices in terms of one scale or the other. Instead, for the Habib Seunagan and their followers, there was no choice to be made.

Conclusion

On Localities, Peripheries, and Islam

This conclusion opens with a question to the reader. Should studies of Indonesian Islam leave the archipelago?

This dissertation has explored the spatial-temporal orientations of Muslims to local Islamic pasts. It has taken these orientations to be tied to spatial-temporal frames through which Muslims engage local moments in Islam's history. All of the chapters in this dissertation therefore touch on two sets of tensions that have long concerned historians and anthropologists of Islam. These are tensions between the local and the global, and tensions between centers and peripheries.

Concern over these tensions has been especially acute among historians and anthropologists of Indonesian Islam, with generations of scholars struggling with how to de-center, re-center, globalize, localize, or simply place in broader social-historical context Indonesian Islamic practice (Azra 2004a; Bowen 1993; Feener and Laffan 2005; Feener and Sevea 2009; Florida 1995; Geertz 1960; Laffan 2003, 2011; Noer 1973; Reid 2010; Ricklefs 2006; Ricci 2011; Riddel 1990; Roff 1985; Siegel 2000). Many of these scholars have been motivated to write accounts of Indonesian Islam that seek to move it from a periphery. They often have done so by showing how Indonesian Muslims have participated in central spaces,

networks, and institutions of a global Islamic world. To the question of whether or not accounts of Indonesian Islam should leave the archipelago, many of these scholars have resoundingly answered in the affirmative.

The approach of this dissertation, however, has been different. Very few of the people about whom I write ever left the Indonesian archipelago. Many of them never left Aceh. Nonetheless, I argue that approaching the orientations of these Muslims to local Islamic pasts suggests productive ways to understand tensions between the local and the global, and the center and the periphery.

Different historical and ethnographic approaches to Islam have configured the categories of local, global, center, and periphery in different ways. A large number of works on Islamic reformism, for example, have taken oppositions between the global and the local, and the center and the periphery, as central to their analyses (Azra 2004a; Bowen 1993; Geertz 1960; Gilsenan 1973; Kobo 2009; Laffan 2003; Noer 1973; Ricklefs 2012; Scheele 2007). This is one of their strengths, as such oppositions are themselves undoubtedly central to the reformist discourses and practices these works seek to describe. Indeed, they were central to my own description of Nagan Raya's history of reformist polemics because a distinction between local and Islamic practices was a primary analytic device my interlocutors in Nagan Raya used to determine different degrees of reformed practice.

Literature on Islamic revivalism and ethical self-formation, to take a second example, has tended to deemphasize tensions between global and local, as well as center and periphery (Deeb 2006; Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005; Metcalf 1993). This literature has focused on argument and debate among Muslims qua Muslims without much attention to how Muslims act as Muslims in relation to configurations of time and space aside from those arising from the foundational

sources of Islam.¹³⁸ This literature has been inspired by important work by Talal Asad, and one is here reminded of Asad's segue to his formulation of the Islamic discursive tradition: "[T]he most urgent theoretical need for an anthropology of Islam is a matter not so much of finding the right scale but of formulating the right concepts" (Asad 1986, 14).

Another group of studies, mentioned briefly above, have attempted to destabilize hierarchies of global, local, center, and periphery through drawing attention to how Muslims from around the world have traveled across the space of the Indian Ocean in order to participate in central Islamic spaces, networks, and institutions (Al-Attas 1966, 1970; Azra 2004a, 2004b; Feener and Laffan 2005; Feener and Sevea 2009; Ho 2004, 2006; Laffan 2003; Reid 1972, 2010; Riddell 1990, 2001, 2005; Roff 2005; van Bruinessen 1989, 1990). I have drawn much inspiration from this literature. But it continues to raise important unanswered questions for me. Do Muslims have to move to and from recognized centers of Islamic discourse and practice in order to challenge the notion that some parts of the Islamic world (e.g., Indonesia) are inherently peripheral? Does the movement of Muslims through the space of the Indian Ocean necessarily challenge notions of such peripherality?

Some of the above studies, while clearly showing Indonesian Muslims participating in translocal networks of Islamic practice, nonetheless continue to depict a starkly unidirectional movement of Islamic knowledge from the Middle East to Southeast Asia (Azra 2004a, 2004b; van Bruinessen 1990). Even those scholars who set out to challenge an analytic narrative in which Islam moves from west to east across the Indian Ocean often rely on evidence of Muslims

¹³⁸ To the extent that scholarship on ethical self-formation has approached the practice of Muslims in terms of extra-Prophetic spatial-temporal frames, it has tended to do so by contextualizing Islamic practice in secular space and time, often the space and time of the respective nation-states in which such studies are set. This is no doubt a vitally important focus. But it is not the only one worth exploring. For considering Indonesia, I wonder how relevant it really is. Indonesia has never been a secular nation-state in any straight forward way, as I hope my discussion of the ways narratives of Islamization have mediated national belonging for some Acehnese has suggested.

from the archipelago leaving the islands to join or found some other geographic center (Feener and Laffan 2005). This is not without good reason. Just as an approach to local Islamic histories cannot deny that an orientation to the time and place of the Prophet Muhammad is a central spatial-temporal orientation of Muslims, it is impossible to ignore that the Islamic world has various kinds of geographic and temporal centers. Some of these have come and gone in different time periods, for example, Abbasid Baghdad, Ottoman Istanbul, and post-Revolutionary Iran. Others have been more enduring. Mecca and Medina were the sites of the Prophet's life where the Qur'an was revealed (in Arabic), and thus remain centers of pilgrimage. Notwithstanding recent scholarship on Islamic vernacular literatures that contextualize the centrality of even these instances (Florida 1995; Ricci 2011), these facts unquestionably inscribe the geographic and temporal space of the Islamic world with centers and peripheries.

How might recognizing that Indonesian Islam is not marginal to the broader Islamic tradition by tracing the movements of Indonesians to Islamic centers outside of the archipelago limit our understanding of the productive tensions produced by the categories local, global, periphery, and center? This question returns me, yet again, to the Habib Seunagan. I have been returning to the Habib Seunagan over and over since I first heard about their “strange” (I., *aneh*) practices during a preliminary research trip to Meulaboh in August 2006. Research, writing, revisions, public lectures, informal conversations among colleagues, and countless other moments in the history of this project have brought me back to the Habib Seunagan. Whether as a result of my scholarly instincts or their charisma, these periodic returns to their graves, to their followers, and to their *kandoeri* shaped nearly everything in this dissertation.

There are two dominant ways scholars have tended to treat those, like the Habib Seunagan, who claim to descend from the Prophet Muhammad. One has been to accept their

claims at face value. This has most often been the case in studies of Sayyids whose claims to descend from the Prophet Muhammad meet certain evidentiary standards that place them within recognized genealogies (Ho 2004, 2006; Reid 1972). In these treatments, Sayyids are described as properly belonging within a translocal Islamic world, if also sometimes enmeshed in social networks proper to specific localities that they have called home. These Sayyids are prominent figures in scholarly accounts of a pan-Indian Ocean Islamic world.

A second analytic approach to figures who claim to descend from the Prophet Muhammad has been to deny or deemphasize their links to the broader Islamic world. Scholars usually justify deemphasizing the links of figures like the Habib Seunagan to the broader Islamic world based on the fact that these figures do not hold the necessary evidentiary credentials to support their claims of Prophetic descent (i.e., verifiable genealogies). Additionally, scholars sometimes point to the allegedly heterodox or pre-Islamic practices of these would-be Sayyids (Kraus 2010; Sila 2001). This approach takes figures like the Habib Seunagan as inextricably local, sometimes interpreting their claims to descend from the Prophet Muhammad as delusional or manipulative. In short, in this approach, figures like the Habib Seunagan are taken to be a combination of local, peripheral, and inauthentic.

There were aspects of the Habib Seunagan's narrative, social, and ritual practices that rang true with an approach deemphasizing their ties to the broader Indian Ocean Islamic world (Kraus 2010). The Habib Seunagan's genealogies were, in fact, unverifiable, and some people identified the Habib Seunagan's ritual practices as infused with local, and sometimes heterodox, practices. The Habib Seunagan had no traceable mystical pedigree that I could uncover. They did not move through the space of the Islamic Indian Ocean world. In recent decades, some members of the family had begun going on the pilgrimage to Mecca. But this was the extent of

their authenticable ties to the broader Islamic world. Even their travels to Java remained interpretable primarily through eminently local networks of narrative, social, and ritual practices. Yet, to take the narrative, social, and ritual complex that surrounds the Habib Seunagan as an instance of the local and the periphery, in opposition to the global and the center, would be a grave misreading of the Habib Seunagan's place in the Islamic world. The complex configurations of space, time, and scale that so magnificently underpinned their claims to centrality in Nagan Raya, the Indonesian nation, and the Islamic cosmos challenge any simple reading of the Habib Seunagan as inherently local.

I have sometimes been surprised by just how important some of my academic interlocutors think the Habib Seunagan are after hearing my descriptions of them. Many do not realize, until I tell them, that very few Indonesians pay any attention, or even know about, the family's genealogical claims. I have watched as some of these interlocutors realize, sometimes with disappointment, that while the family has tens of thousands of followers, their influence lies almost entirely within a regency of one hundred forty thousand people in one of Aceh's most isolated regions. I secretly revel in the fact that my descriptions belie this family's relative unimportance to almost everyone outside of Aceh's southwest coast. That my descriptions make this family seem central, when by so many other measures they might be taken as peripheral, is, in large part, the point.

My treatment of the Habib Seunagan is in many ways a microcosm of the larger questions and interests motivating this dissertation. The Habib Seunagan's narrative, social, and ritual practices were saturated with the productive tensions that lie at the heart of much of this dissertation. The family's genealogical narratives and *kandoeri* rituals are perhaps the best examples of how orientations to local Islamic pasts have linked Acehnese to the Indonesian

nation in a manner fully dependant on Acehnese locality. I have argued that Islam mediates the Indonesian nation for Acehnese, but in a manner that ties Islam inextricably to the local. This has been possible through attention to the orientations of Muslims to ever-shifting constellations of Islamic localities (e.g., Mecca, Indonesia, Aceh, Medan, Nagan Raya, Java). If Aceh has increasingly come to be known as “Mecca’s verandah” in the course of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, this has made it not a new Islamic center, but a central locality in these constellations.

This observation returns to the question with which this conclusion began. Should studies of Indonesian Islam leave the archipelago? Literature on the movement of Indonesian Muslims in the Indian Ocean has drawn valuable attention to the long engagement of the peoples of the archipelago with Islamic knowledge and practice. Nonetheless, I want to suggest that enthusiasm for the study of the movement of people, ideas, and things through the Indian Ocean Islamic world might actually obscure some of the productivity that inheres in tensions between the local and the global, and the center and the periphery. Ironically, this is what scholars of Indian Ocean Islamic networks often set out to illuminate.

Let me return one last time to the Habib Seunagan to illustrate how studies of the Indian Ocean Islamic world might obscure productive tensions in the categories local, global, center, and periphery. From the sailboats, steam ships, and airplanes that have crisscrossed the Indian Ocean over the centuries, the full range of productive tensions in spatial-temporal scale that make the Habib Seunagan’s practice so compelling for their followers does not appear. Instead, one sees localism and syncretism (Kraus 2010). Conversely, it is only through spending extended periods on the shores of the archipelago that one is able to make sense of the Habib

Seunagan's practice in its own terms, as the product of engagements with Islamic pasts that bring together the local, the global, the center, and the periphery in sometimes unpredictable ways.

One might correctly note that such insights are based on rather traditional ethnographic sensibilities: single-sited fieldwork, interest in the marginal and peripheral, and an emphasis on understanding local frames of meaning and practice. Let me be clear that I am not suggesting a return to traditions of ethnographic scholarship on Islam that see locality primarily as an analytic with which to catalog the diverse practices of Muslims in different parts of the world (El-Zein 1977; Geertz 1960; Gilsenan 1973, 2001). This scholarship has much to offer. My interests, however, run counter to it. I see the local as a vantage point not in opposition to the global, but as a place from which tensions between the global and the local, and center and periphery, can become apparent in ways different than they might from other vantage points.

Further, I am not suggesting that interest in the movement of people and objects through the Indian Ocean Islamic world should be abandoned. The turn towards such studies has and continues to produce central insights about Islamic history and practice. Scholarship on the Indian Ocean Islamic world is vital for understanding many of the concerns of this dissertation. Some of the best instances of this work reflect upon how things look when one spends as much time on the shore as on the ship (Ho 2006). I simply suggest that we may overlook opportunities to explore productive tensions that inhere in hierarchies of global and local Islamic practice and the centers and peripheries of the Islamic world when we assume that it is by traveling through the Indian Ocean with Indonesian Muslims that we afford ourselves the best opportunity to reconfigure these hierarchies.

Should studies of Indonesian Islam leave the archipelago? Some should, because some must. Indonesian Muslims, after all, leave the archipelago. Scholars who choose to follow these

travelers, however, would do well to remember that the people they leave behind on the archipelago's shores may have just as many insights about the global and the center as the cosmopolitans who trek back-and-forth across the Indian Ocean.

Appendix 1: List of Texts Used in *Majlis Taklim* Attended by Author in Nagan Raya

Aqidah an-Najin [Creed of the saved]- Late nineteenth-century work on the basic elements of faith, authored by Zainal Abidin bin Muhamad al-Patani. Topics covered in the text include, among others, the twenty characteristics of God, God's prophets and messengers, and proper belief.

Kitab Perukunan Melayu Besar [Great Malay book of foundational (belief)]- Late nineteenth-century work widely attributed to Jamaluddin bin Syaikh Muhammad Arsyad al-Banjari, son of Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari, but likely authored by Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari's granddaughter Fatimah binti Syaikh Abdul Wahab Bugis (van Bruinessen 1995). This short work compiles basic studies in three fields: jurisprudence, the oneness of God (I., *tauhid*), and mysticism.

Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW dan Kelebihannya [The birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and its superiority]- This was a work justifying the practice of celebrating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. Majlis Taklim Ansharullah studied it just once during my field research, just before the beginning of Aceh's three month "maulid season" (I., *musim maulid*). It was clearly authored as a response to critics of *maulid* celebrations. The section of the text studied by members of the Majlis Taklim Ansharullah during my research reiterated the same argument multiple times, namely, that *maulid* celebrations are innovations on the practice of the Prophet (I., *bidah*), but that they are "good innovations" (I., *bidah yang baik*), and therefore consistent with Islamic jurisprudence.

Sabil al-Muhtadin [Way of the guided], - Eighteenth-century work, primarily of Islamic jurisprudence, authored by Muhammad Arshad al-Banjari (d. 1812?) (Laffan 2011, 30, 55; van Bruinessen 1995, 101). Martin van Bruinessen refers to *Sabil al-Muhtadin* as "the most important work of Islamic jurisprudence in the Malay language" (van Bruinessen 1995, 101). At the *majlis taklim* that I observed at which this text was studied, topics considered included, for example, how to properly conduct ritual ablutions under various and sundry conditions (e.g., if no ritually pure water is available, if one has two faces) and how to properly reckon and distribute the religious tax.

Sayr al-Salikin [Journey of the seekers]- Eighteenth-century work by 'Abd al-Samad al-Falimbani (1719-1789). This text consists mostly of a translation of original work on Islamic mysticism by the eleventh and twelfth-century Sufi Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali (1058-1111), with some additional materials on the mystical path of the Sammaniyah Sufi order (Laffan 2011, 30; van Bruinessen 1995, 63). The work is in the form of an interlineal translation, with lines in Arabic followed by Malay-language translations and commentary. At *majlis taklim* in Nagan Raya, *Sayr al-Salikin* was described to me as containing mysticism,

jurisprudence, and basic elements of faith. All of these fields were discussed in relation to the text in the lessons I attended.

Appendix 2: Majlis Taklim in the vicinity of Jeuram, Nagan Raya (July 2008-June 2009)¹³⁹

<u>Majlis Taklim</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Day and Time</u>	<u>Average Attendance</u>	<u>Gender of those Attending</u>	<u>Age of those Attending</u>	<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Texts used</u>
Majlis Taklim Tauhid-Tasawuf	Pesantren Babassalam, Meulaboh	Last Sunday of every month	100-150, but sometimes as many as 300, for public morning lesson; 20-30 students for more individual study in the afternoon	Mixed	Mixed, but at least 75% over the age of 40 and probably half over the age of 60	Teungku Amran Waly	None (at public lecture); I was unable to identify the texts used during less public afternoon sessions
Majlis Taklim Ansharullah	Dayah Pesantren Darul Mutaallimin, Nigan	Friday mornings before communal prayers	15-25	Male	All but one or two attendees over the age of 60, many much older	Abon Nigan	<i>Sayr al-Salikin, Maulid Nabi Muhammad SAW dan Kelebihannya, Aqidah An-Najin</i>
Majlis Taklim	Dayah Pesantren Darul Mutaallimin, Nigan	Saturday night following night prayers	8-15	Male	Younger married men, most in their forties with a few slightly younger or slightly older	Abon Nigan	<i>Sayr al-Salikin</i>

¹³⁹ This list consists of only those *majlis taklim* recorded by the author. It is not comprehensive.

Majlis Taklim	Dayah Pesantren Darul Mutaallimin, Nigan	Wednesday night following night prayers	10-20	Male	Married men in their forties, fifties, and sixties	Abon Nigan	<i>Sayr al-Salikin</i>
Majlis Taklim	<i>Pesantren</i> in Kuta Kembang	Friday mornings before communal prayers	10-20	Male	Mixed, ranging from pre-teen boys to very old men; over half of participants in the forties or older	Teungku Adami	<i>Kitab Perukunan Melayu Besar</i>
Majlis Taklim	<i>Pesantren</i> in Alue Toah	Thursday night following night prayers	15-30	Mixed (usually two-thirds male)	Mixed, but no one younger than forty attended	Abon Nigan (as guest)	<i>Sabil al-Muhtadin</i>
Majlis Taklim	Rotated to different locations in the vicinity of Nigan	Sunday morning	?	?	?	Teungku Ibrahim Gasni	?
Majlis Taklim	<i>Meunasah</i> at Kreung Ceh	Thursday night	?	?	?	Teungku Ibrahim Gasni	?
Majlis Taklim	Dayah Pesantren Darul Mutaallimin, Nigan	Sunday morning	?	Female	Young, unmarried women	Abon Nigan	?
Majlis Taklim	Dayah Pesantren, Darul Mutaallimin, Nigan	Sunday evening	?	Female	Married women	Abon Nigan	?

Appendix 3: Major Figures in the Genealogy of the Habib Seunagan

I. The Prophet Muhammad and his family (sixth and seventh centuries, Arabian Peninsula)



II. ‘Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī (11th and 12th centuries, Persia and Baghdad)



III. Nine Saints of Java (15th and 16th centuries, Java)



IV. Intu (time period unclear, Seunagan, buried in Kuta Aceh)



V. Habib Abdurrahim (19th century, Seunagan, buried in Pulo Ie)



VI. Habib Muda (19th and 20th centuries, Seunagan, buried in Peuleukung)

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