

**REPRESSION AND REGROUPMENT: RELIGIOUS AND NATIONALIST
ORGANIZATIONS IN WEST SUMATRA IN THE 1930s***

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Repression

In March 1937 West Sumatra's political landscape appeared calm, with no sign of agitation or disturbance.¹ Looking back from that tranquil viewpoint to the turbulent events of a few years earlier, A. I. Spits, the Dutch resident soon to become governor of Sumatra, drew a vivid picture of the situation that had precipitated his government's repression of local political activity:

The whole of Sumatra's West Coast was then in a state of political turmoil; the ideas of independence were being propagated by young and old in the various organizations of the Permi, PSII, PNI, and PI; "Indonesia free, now or within a few years" was sung in all keys, not only in the larger population centers, but also in the countryside. The Minangkabau politicians did not limit their activities to the West Coast, but sent their propaganda over all Sumatra. Police measures were inadequate to contain this, the government lowered its guard [*het gezag nam zienderoogen af*]; there was a threatened split among the Volkshoofden; duties towards the government were being carried out badly, further deterioration could only be checked by extraordinary means. Characteristic of the mentality of the Minangkabauer is the fact that by then the bloody lesson provided by the suppression of the disturbances at the beginning of 1927 seemed already to have been forgotten, or better perhaps, the facts had not been forgotten, that could not yet be, but the large majority had not drawn the correct lesson from them. The ideal of freedom put forward by reckless popular leaders still seemed to possess such a great attraction that the people let themselves be pushed on to a road that could lead to repetition of the occurrences of 1927.²

In response to these developments, in the summer of 1933 the colonial regime

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1. H. Bouman, *Enige Beschouwingen over de Ontwikkeling van het Indonesisch Nationalisme op Sumatra's Westkust* (Groningen/Jakarta: Wolters, 1938), p. 87.

2. Koloniën Memories van Overgave [henceforth MvO] van den aftredenden Resident van Sumatra's Westkust, A. I. Spits, *Mailrapport* [henceforth Mr.] 504/1937, p. 45. (Unless otherwise stated all documents cited are in the Algemeen Rijksarchief [henceforth ARA], The Hague).

had acted against the two most radical religious parties, the Permi (Persatuan Muslim Indonesia, Association of Indonesian Muslims) and PSII (Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia, Indonesian Islamic Union Party). It forbade meetings of these organizations,³ arrested and exiled their top leaders, and restricted the rights of lower-ranking members. After a transitional period, Resident Spits was able to conclude in 1937 that these measures had proved "completely effective."

By this date there had indeed been a fundamental change in the nature of political activity in West Sumatra. This article will examine the process by which the inability of the religious political parties to provide an effective vehicle for the nationalist movement led to the emergence of a more diffuse political constellation, wherein the anti-Dutch struggle was waged in a less openly confrontational manner. It will argue that, although the colonial authorities were successful in destroying the strongest nationalist religious party in the region, the goal of the nationalists did not change—only their strategy.

To understand the nature of the changes and the resulting regroupment of political forces, it is necessary first, however, to focus on events of the early 1930s and the character of the threat posed by the religious/political parties to Dutch administration. At that time, four religious organizations were dominant in the region. Two of them, Permi and PSII, were strongly political and would become major Dutch targets. The other two were the social and educational organizations, Perti (Persatuan Tarbiah Islamiyah, Islamic Educational Association) and Muhammadiyah.

Muhammadiyah

Founded in Yogyakarta in 1912, the Muhammadiyah spread to many parts of the Indies over the subsequent decade, but did not exert much appeal in West Sumatra until 1925. In that year, H. Abd. Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul)⁴ who was one of the leading Minangkabau modernist ulama and a co-founder of the Sumatra Thawalib schools, introduced the Muhammadiyah into the region. He saw its philosophy and aims as consistent with those of his generation of modernist religious teachers, and with their determination to confine their activities to the religious, social, and educational spheres, eschewing involvement in political affairs. Shortly after he established the Muhammadiyah, however, it became a haven for many of the former students from whom he had become alienated in the early 1920s as they had turned for leadership to radical Islamic/Communist teachers. With the Communist uprising of January 1927 and its suppression by the Dutch, these young activists fled the nationalist and Communist organizations they had joined, and sought protection within the apolitical Muhammadiyah. Thus, the Muhammadiyah's West Sumatra branch grew in size and energy, spearheading protests and demonstrations in 1928 against the government's proposal to extend the "guru ordinance" (a restriction on private schools) to West Sumatra.⁵

3. See "Memorandum" signed by Resident van Heuven, "Ten Uitvoerlegging vergaderverbod," dated August 5, 1933, and "Toepassing vergaderverbod," dated August 24, 1933, attached to Mr. 1249/33 (August 1933).

4. The fullest biography of Haji Rasul is Hamka [Haji Abd. Malik Karim Amrullah], *Ajahku [My father]* (Jakarta: Djajamurni, 1967).

5. The guru ordinance actually stipulated that: "Anyone wishing to give instruction on the Mohammedan religion to persons other than his immediate family

Alarmed at these developments, Dutch authorities warned the Muhammadiyah's executive board on Java of the dangerous course its Minangkabau branch was pursuing. Efforts by the central leadership to moderate these local activities then caused many of the Muhammadiyah's new activist members to break away to form another association tied to the Thawalib schools.⁶

Thus, after being established in 1925 as a purely social and educational body patterned on the Java Muhammadiyah, the West Sumatra Muhammadiyah enjoyed a brief period of political activity which came to an abrupt end in 1929. In response to Dutch pressure, the central leadership of the association on Java now condemned any political actions by its members, and under A. R. Sutan [St.] Mansur, who was to head its Sumatra consulate from 1931 to 1944, activists within the Minangkabau branch were demoted and the organization "cleansed."⁷

Permi

Permi was a direct descendant of the student organizations of the Sumatra Thawalib schools,⁸ many of whose members participated in the Communist-led activities of the early 1920s that culminated in the January 1927 uprisings. Suppression of the revolt shattered the radical student associations within the schools. Although scattered and subdued for a while, the young religious activists, as noted above, reunited in the Muhammadiyah with their moderate elders in opposition to the guru ordinance, and after a brief period of cooperation broke off to form the Sumatra Thawalib Union at the end of 1928. At its third conference in May 1930, the Union was transformed into the Persatuan Muslim Indonesia--known first as PMI and later as Permi. From its inception the Permi aroused Dutch suspicions, Resident Gonggrijp characterizing it as made up of those "religious intellectuals and small traders most receptive to Communist preaching."⁹

Over the next two years the Permi's influence expanded rapidly. Djalaluddin Thaib, a graduate of the Thawalib schools, was joined in its leadership by two dynamic returnees from Al-Azhar in Cairo, Iljas Jacoub and Muchtar Luthfi.¹⁰

should inform the regent, or patih, in Java or the district chief in the Outer Regions," and should get a letter of registration from the district office. See Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra 1927-1933* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1971), p. 112. On the development of the Muhammadiyah in West Sumatra, see *ibid.*, pp. 70-97; Hamka, *Ajahku*, pp. 163-70; Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 73-78; and MvO G. F. E. Gonggrijp, *Mr. 360/32*, pp. 3-6.

6. MvO Gonggrijp, p. 5. See also Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, pp. 91-92.

7. MvO Gonggrijp, pp. 6-7. A. R. St. Mansur (b. 1895) had been educated in government schools and in the Sumatra Thawalib, where he was a disciple of H. Rasul, marrying his eldest daughter in 1917. For a biography, see Hamka, *Ajahku*, pp. 257-60.

8. The authoritative study on the West Sumatra schools and the growth of the Permi is Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*. See also Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 46-56.

9. MvO Gonggrijp, p. 5.

10. For biographies of Djalaluddin Thaib, see Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*,

Retrospectively, Resident van Hoeven in 1934 was to portray these three men, together with businessman and trader, Abdullah gelar [glr.] Basa Bandaro,¹¹ as the core leadership of the Permi, with other central board members acting principally as their spokesmen.¹² By December 1932, when the party had to begin moves to evade growing government surveillance, it had about 160 groups throughout West Sumatra, with about 4,700 male, and 3,000 female members,¹³ a total which reportedly reached 10,000 in the following months. Its activities spread to Bengkulu, South Sumatra, Aceh, East Sumatra, and Tapanuli.¹⁴ With headquarters in Padang, it was particularly active in schools, educational associations, affiliated youth groups, and in publishing newspapers and pamphlets. It was also associated with trade unions, religious organizations, and merchants' associations.¹⁵

The party was distinguished from most other nationalist organizations by the equal importance it accorded to the roles of Islam and nationalism in opposing the Dutch and by its refusal to deemphasize one in favor of the other. This orientation was in tune with a widely held view among West Sumatran Muslims that much of the dissonance in the Indonesian nationalist movement sprang from its leaders' reluctance to recognize Islam as the strongest unifying factor for their struggle. According to this view, Indonesian nationalists were making a basic error in taking as their model the Indian nationalist movement, where indeed the major line of tension ran along the Hindu-Muslim rift. In Indonesia, however, where 90 percent of the people were Muslims, to be afraid of using Islam as a basis for the nationalist movement was like "a tiger fearing to flee to the jungle or water fearing to flow to the sea."¹⁶ The religious disputes between Muslims and Hindus which threatened the unity of the Indian nationalist movement had been transformed in Indonesia to secular/religious disputes which sapped the strength of Indonesian nationalism.¹⁷

In so viewing the nationalist movement, Permi clashed not only with non-political religious associations, but also with other nationalist political parties. Despite their differences, however, a rapprochement was reached with Sukarno's Partindo in the first half of 1932, largely through the efforts

pp. 64-65; Ilias Jacoub, see *ibid.*, pp. 139-40 and *Haluan* [Padang], August 12, 1976; Mughtar Luthfi, Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, pp. 145-46; and Hamka, *Ajahku*, pp. 133, 262-63.

11. One of the most important merchants in the Pasar Gadang of Padang, Basa Bandaro promoted ties between Permi and the Himpunan Saudagar Indonesia, a trading association which provided considerable funding to the Permi. He became treasurer of the party, and was described by Resident Gonggrijp as being behind all political activity in Padang. MvO Gonggrijp, p. 9. See also Mardjani Martamin, Ishaq Thaher, Amir B. Mahyuddin, *Sejarah Kebangkitan Nasional Sumatera Barat* (n.p.: Proyek Penelitian dan Pencatatan Kebudayaan Daerah, 1977/78), pp. 77.

12. Mr. 254/35 (MvO B. H. F. van Heuven [December 31, 1934]), pp. 26-27.

13. Mr. 357/33 (January 1933), p. 17.

14. MvO van Heuven, pp. 25, 28.

15. MvO Gonggrijp.

16. *Soeara Islam* [Bukittinggi], November 1, 1931.

17. *Ibid.*

of Basa Bandaro. The two parties agreed not to compete, and Partindo leaders, Muhammad Yamin and Gatot Mangkupradja attended a special Permi conference in July of that year at which the agreement was approved.¹⁸

Permi spokesmen voiced their nationalist and religious aims candidly, proclaiming in their speeches their opposition to colonial rule. Police agents, attending the party's public and private meetings, frequently halted the proceedings as Permi leaders, notably the party's most effective orator, Muchtar Luthfi, inflamed their audiences with attacks on Dutch colonialism. Equally outspoken was the party's outstanding woman leader, Rasuna Said, as can be seen from a report of her address to a public meeting of Permi in Payakumbuh in November 1932:

So long as Indonesia is still not free, Islam can not be exalted [hoog]; Indonesia can not be prosperous, the will of the Qur'an can not be fulfilled; the society can enjoy no peace, so long as Indonesia is still "colonized."

Imperialism is the enemy of the P.M.I. [Permi].

Everything that is ugly belongs to Indonesia, everything that is beautiful in our land, that is, the beautiful buildings and the asphalt roads, belong to "Hindia Belanda."

To die in damnation (the current situation) is like dying in wantonness, therefore you must free yourself from the bonds of colonialism. . . .

Though I am but a woman, I work and offer myself for the people, religion, and the fatherland; I will scorn the man who does less than I.

In our political struggle two fates are possible for us: should we fail we will have our later happiness in heaven; should we be successful, we will gain freedom.¹⁹

It is not altogether surprising that she was arrested the next month by the Dutch, together with a woman colleague, Rasimah Ismail, the first two members of the party to be sentenced to long jail terms.²⁰

Although Permi continued to expand over the first half of 1933, its meetings became less frequent because of the increased government surveillance.²¹ In July the crushing blows began, with travel restrictions imposed on many of the party's leaders. On July 11, the authorities arrested Muchtar Luthfi, and the following month imposed the ban on assembly (*vergaderverbod*) on Permi and the PSII and their affiliated youth organizations. To circumvent these restrictions, the party started to send out written courses; the authorities confiscated them, and in early September arrested their author, Iljas Jacoub, and publisher, Djalaluddin Thaib.²² All three leaders were exiled to Boven

18. MvO van Heuven, pp. 23-24, and Mr. 590 (February 1933), p. 15.

19. Mr. 115/33 (November 1932), pp. 9-10.

20. Rasuna Said was imprisoned for fifteen months (Mr. 227/33 [December 1932], pp. 10-11); Rasimah Ismail was sentenced to nine months in jail for a speech she had made in October (Mr. 590/33 [February 1933], p. 17).

21. Mr. 813/33 (April 1933).

22. Mr. 1187/33 (July 1933); Mr. 1249/33 (August 1933); Mr. 1367/33 (September 1933).

Digul at the end of 1934. With its organization decapitated, the Permi had to struggle to maintain skeletal communication among its members in the face of the continued ban on its meetings, publications, and travel, and its fear that government spies had infiltrated its ranks.²³

PSII

The Minangkabau branch of the Sarekat Islam was never very strong during the organization's early heyday in the 1910s. In part this was because in West Sumatra it split into different factions, supported by traditional and modernist ulama.²⁴ Also its foremost modernist adherent, Syekh Abdullah Ahmad, refrained from politics and concentrated on educational activities, founding the Adabiah school in Padang in 1908 and accepting Dutch support and advice in running it.²⁵ It was only at the end of 1928 that the PSII became active politically, when two *penghulu* (traditional village leaders) from Maninjau set up a section of the party there, and the fiery speeches of one of them, Hasanoeddin glr. Datuk [Dt.] Singo Mangkuto, brought the Dutch to arrest him at the end of July 1929 and sentence him to two years in jail. Largely inactive during his detention, the PSII revived after Dt. Singo Mangkuto's release, when he, together with H. Uddin Rahmany and Sabilal Rasjad glr. Dt. Bandaro, began to expand PSII influence beyond its Maninjau base.²⁶ Described by the Dutch resident in 1932 as "a noncooperative political organization which sees its goal as the full independence of 'Indonesia' within the shortest possible period, based on Islam, which as a truly democratic system must provide the foundation for the free 'Indonesian' state,"²⁷ PSII political goals were similar to those of the Permi. The local PSII leaders, however, were conscious of, and took pride in, the Indies-wide character and history of their party; in addition within West Sumatra they drew more support from the *penghulu* than did the Permi. These differences precluded any chance that the two organizations might merge.²⁸

In April 1932 the PSII held a provincial congress in Padang Panjang—the first congress of a political party after the 1927 uprising to espouse a platform of non-cooperation with the Netherlands Indies government.²⁹ The PSII's head office on Java later disavowed various decisions of the congress, but these continued to govern the party's actions not only locally but also in Tapanuli and the East Coast, where PSII branches had close ties with those in West

23. *Mr.* 2/34 (October and November 1933).

24. On the early years of the Sarekat Islam in West Sumatra, see Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, pp. 24-31.

25. See Hamka, *Ajahku*, pp. 234-36.

26. *MvO* Gonggrijp (*Mr.* 360/32), pp. 13-14. It had sections in Bukittinggi, Guguk, Suliki, and Padang Panjang.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

28. The Dutch in fact reported PSII attacks on Luthfi's espousal of Islam and nationalism, though such a position seems to have been close to their own. (*Mr.* 590/33, February 1933, p. 9.)

29. *MvO* van Heuven (*Mr.* 254/35), p. 32. At the congress, it protested the agricultural laws, letting of lands to large industry, *heerendiensten*, and various taxes.

Sumatra.³⁰ Although the party's membership numbered only about 2,800 before the mid-1933 crackdown, its influence was considerable in several districts of the Minangkabau heartland, particularly in the rural areas, with Padang Panjang its only important urban stronghold.³¹

The parent organization on Java denied its more radical West Sumatran offspring permission to set up an autonomous "West Sumatra section," although it did accept Dt. Singo Mangkuto as the party's local head.³² The Minangkabau branch had an added incentive to assert its autonomy, for the PSII leadership on Java was adopting policies that were generally critical of the adat, while much of the party's rural support in West Sumatra came from traditional leaders in the villages.³³

The government moved against the PSII and the Permi at the same time, viewing them as "the two most militant associations in this region." Permi "being purely Minangkabau, had a larger membership, yet in its fierceness of action the PSII held its own."³⁴ In August 1933, Batavia applied the ban on assembly to the PSII, and on September 2 Uddin Rahmany and Sabilal Rasjad were accused of violating the ban and arrested,³⁵ ultimately being exiled to Digul with the Permi leaders in December 1934.³⁶

Perti

As with Permi and Muhammadiyah, the Perti too grew from an educational association, this time one of the traditionalist Kaum Tua (Old Group) who relied on the Shafi'i madzab and saw themselves as its defenders in the region. To an even greater extent than in the modernist schools and surau, ulama in the traditionalist schools exerted a powerful influence over their students and the education they received. Syekh Abbas of Padang Lawas was the leading figure in bringing traditional ulama together to combat the modernist ideas penetrating the region via the Sumatra Thawalib schools. As early as 1918, while still providing traditional religious education in his school he had begun to introduce modern teaching methods. And in May 1928 Syekh Abbas sponsored

30. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

31. According to this report, Dt. Singo Mangkuto tried to establish the center of his personal support in Padang Panjang, but was pushed aside by a "fanatical local leader" Marzoeki Oesman. The centers of the party's rural strength were in the subdistricts of Empat Angkat, Kamang, Guguk, and Maninjau. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

32. *Mr.* 227/33 (December 1932), p. 2.

33. The anti-adat stance of the PSII was made explicit later at its congress in Banjarnegara in June 1934, where it passed a motion against adat and adat law, citing in particular (possibly at the instigation of H. Agus Salim) the matrilineal social order in Minangkabau. *Mr.* 877/34 (June 1934), p. 8.

34. *MvO Spits (Mr. 507/37)*, p. 47.

35. Hasanuddin Dt. Singo Mangkuto was visiting Java at the time and was not arrested. *Mr.* 1249/33 (August 1933), p. 6; *Mr.* 2/34 (October 1933), p. 6.

36. A third PSII leader, Ahmad Chatib glr. Dt. Singo Maradjo, who had been arrested in June 1934 for introducing political courses in PSII schools, was exiled to Digul along with his colleagues. See *Mr.* 877/34 (June 1934), pp. 9-10; *Mr.* 139/35 (December 1934), p. 6.

a meeting with other leading traditionalists (Syekh Sulaiman ar Rasuli of Candung and Syekh Muhammad Djamil Djaho of Padang Panjang) to unite their schools in an association called the Madrasah Tarbiah Islamiyah. Two years later, they again met to form a social organization, Persatuan Tarbiah Islamiyah (PTI or Perti), which they described as "the single defensive barrier" protecting the Shafi'i tarekat of Sunni Islam in the region.³⁷ The Perti soon spread outside the Minangkabau. It claimed to have branches in Indragiri, Tapanuli, Palembang, Bengkulu, East Sumatra, and Aceh, and even in West Sumatra itself had reached a membership of about 4,000 by 1932.³⁸ In its opposition to modernist Islamic teaching it cooperated with Minangkabau adat leaders.³⁹ Although the Dutch hoped that the Perti would act as a counterbalance to the more aggressive nationalist Muslim associations, seeing its leaders as loyal to the colonial government, they recognized that its conservative teachings were unlikely to attract a wide following among the younger generation.⁴⁰

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It was not only Islamic organizations that were active politically in West Sumatra in the early 1930s. Although specifically Communist associations had been outlawed in the mid-1920s, there were branches of most other Jakarta-based nationalist parties in the region. The most influential was the Pendidikan Nasional Indonesia (PNI-Baru) headed at the national level by Mohammad Hatta and Sutan Sjahrir. Mohammad Hatta formally introduced the party into West Sumatra on a visit home in November 1932, shortly after his return from the Netherlands, and he appointed a local youth leader, Chatib Suleiman, to lead it. The PNI-Baru attracted support mainly from among religious nationalists, particularly students and teachers, in Padang Panjang, youth leaders, and Muhammadiyah members. Its strategy, both nationally and locally, was to emphasize cadre building rather than agitation, a policy which its national leaders believed would yield more enduring results, although a smaller following. PNI-Baru membership had only reached about 250 at the time the government clamped down on party activity in the region.⁴¹

As the Dutch administration tightened its restrictions, leaders of the political parties initially tried all avenues to avoid abandoning their nationalist activities. They substituted written courses for public meetings, reformed the parties' executive boards to bring more moderate leaders to the fore, and loosened their bonds with affiliated schools, youth organizations, and publications. Nevertheless, the authorities continued to harass all attempts

37. *Kepartaian dan Parleментарia Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kementerian Penerangan, 1954), p. 431; *Riwayat Hidup dan Perjuangan 20 Ulama Besar Sumatera Barat* (Padang[?]: Islamic Centre Sumatera Barat, 1981), pp. 67-69; 78-80; see also Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 221, and Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, pp. 135-36.

38. According to Perti's own account, it had a membership of 350,000 by the time of the Japanese occupation. *Kepartaian*, pp. 430-31.

39. The Perti flag was a sun on a black background. According to one of its leaders, the sun represented the Perti and the black background symbolized the adat. *Mr.* 505/40 (January 1940).

40. *MvO Gonggrijp* (*Mr.* 360/32), p. 19.

41. *MvO van Heuven* (*Mr.* 254/35), pp. 37-39.

at political activity. This harassment was certainly aimed most directly against the Permi and PSII, but the PNI-Baru was also targeted. In Jakarta, Hatta and Sjahrir were arrested and exiled in late 1933. Party leaders in West Sumatra were not initially subject to such extreme measures, but the local authorities restricted the meetings of the PNI-Baru, forbade travel by some of its members, and greatly curtailed the party's activities. When they attempted to defy these orders, several PNI-Baru leaders in West Sumatra too were jailed.⁴²

Of all the parties, however, Permi was the hardest hit. Its members left in increasing numbers as it became clear that political actions were impossible within it. By 1937, at the time of Resident Spits' report, activity within the Permi had reached its nadir. Mohammad Sjafei, the sole remaining active member of its executive board, formally dissolved the party on October 18, 1937, but by then its dissolution apparently did not even spark political comment in the local press.⁴³

Regroupment

Anticolonial nationalists in West Sumatra, then, had tried the road of open revolt in 1927 and that of nonviolent political party activity in 1929-33. Both methods had failed, and the Dutch had effectively blocked both avenues of activity. This did not necessarily mean, however, that the regime was successful in blunting opposition to colonial rule, nor did the character of the nationalist movement in West Sumatra change to one of cooperation during these final prewar years.

Demands coming from those nationalist leaders who had not been exiled were certainly moderated and their activities became more accommodating. This was evident in the enthusiasm with which many of them responded to the establishment in 1938 of a Dutch-sponsored, purely advisory semi-representative body, the Minangkaburaad, and the number of former activists, including Permi members, who attempted to gain membership in it.⁴⁴

There is also no doubt that the Dutch succeeded in crushing the Permi, which never again emerged as a political force in its own right. Activist Islamic nationalist organizations with the philosophy of the Permi never again wielded major political power in West Sumatra. Nevertheless, as they sought

42. In early 1935, one of the party's leaders, Mohammad Noer Arief, was exiled to Digul; and the following year two others, Leon Salim and Tamimi Usman, were jailed (the first for a year, and second for only 20 days). See *Mr. 510/35* (March 1935); *Mr. 212/36* (January 1936); *Mr. 967/36* (August 1936).

43. *Mr. 6/38* (November 1937).

44. Among those seeking representation to the Minangkaburaad were candidates from noncooperative parties such as Permi, PNI-Baru, and PSII, including Mohammad Sjafei and Fachroeddin H.S., and Soeleman Paris glr. Dt. Maharadjo Diradjo from Permi; Chatib Suleiman from PNI-Baru; and Hasanuddin glr. Dt. Singo Mangkuto from PSII (*Mr. 470/38* [April 1938]). See also *Persoverzicht* for August 1938 [attached to *Mr. 958*] which has an article from *Persamaan* of August 11, where Darwis Thaib (a former member of the PNI-Baru and Permi) comments on Spits' view that now the situation in West Sumatra has indeed changed through establishment of the Minangkaburaad.

ways to minimize the effects of their party's destruction, the Permi leaders did enable its youth organizations and educational institutions to survive by severing the party's ties with them. The Islamic nationalist ideas of the Permi were then kept alive in the religious schools by teachers trained particularly in the Islamic College in Padang and the newly opened (February 1935) Islamic Training College in Payakumbuh, headed again by former Cairo graduates.⁴⁵ A Malay who spent most of the 1930s as a student and teacher in these schools and colleges gave some indication of the atmosphere there and the type of education offered:

When the teachers taught history they would use Dutch books, but teach them in Indonesian and give them a different slant; for example, the first Governor-General was described as the first Dutch pirate who came to Indonesia. The teachers went to jail, perhaps for a week or two, then they came back. Someone else would take their place teaching school. Then they would be arrested. If the schools were shut down, another school would open. . . .

The curriculum was the same in all the Thawalib schools, even the books, although there was no central committee for the schools. Every one was organized separately, but you could recognize the similarities. The leaders came from the same background and all had the same ideas. The organizers were all political people. Two or three or four of the top leaders really knew about Permi and also about modern education. They would pick cadres in the kampung. Would explain to them what their stand was, and the cadre would have this in common . . . no overall organization bound them, but they understood each other and established organizations just like the others.⁴⁶

The other major haven for the Islamic nationalists was again the Muhammadiyah. As government persecution intensified, many Permi members fled to the apolitical association, and its accommodationist leadership was unable to bar their entry. Even after the Muhammadiyah's earlier "cleansing" several of its local leaders maintained their active anticolonialism, most notably S. J. St. Mangkuto who continued to hold high positions on the board despite his activism. The Muhammadiyah's Java board and its Sumatra consul, A. R. St. Mansur, still frowned on any politicization, but "not only did [St. Mansur] acknowledge the presence of leftist elements in his organization, but above all [recognized] his *impotence* to retain control over them."⁴⁷ In May 1936, the Dutch again reported that St. Mansur was aware of the dangerous influence of former Permi members on the Muhammadiyah, but when he investigated this danger, "he encounters difficulties from local leaders who will not always give information on their members."⁴⁸ In the late 1930s up to half of the officials in some of the Muhammadiyah's local branches were former Permi members.⁴⁹ This does not necessarily mean

45. These were Nazaruddin Thaha, H. Iljas Mohamad Ali, and H. Zainuddin (*Mr.* 384/35 [February 1935]; and interview with Nazaruddin Thaha, Padang, October 1976).

46. Interview with Kamaluddin Muhamed (Krismas), Petaling Jaya, December 21, 1981.

47. *Mr.* 607/35 (April 1935), emphasis in the original.

48. *Mr.* 616/36 (May 1936).

49. For example, *Mr.* 117/39 (November 1938) in noting the large number of

that the Muhammadiyah as an association thereby became more radical, for, despite Dutch suspicions, most of these new members probably viewed it mainly as a refuge from reprisal and did not use its willingness to harbor them as an opportunity to radicalize it. Nevertheless, it was never to become the purely social/educational association its parent was on Java.⁵⁰

The apparent Dutch success in defusing the "dangerous" situation in West Sumatra did not lead government authorities to soften their own attitudes towards political activity, for they now, for example, assigned the Muhammadiyah to the same radical place on the political spectrum previously occupied by the Permi. In arguing for continued vigilance, and against lifting restrictions on the local PSII, Resident Spits contended that the "extremist" nationalism of the Minangkabau still lay just below the surface, ready to reemerge as soon as the repressive measures were relaxed: "The earlier party spirit is still latent in political circles, the various occasions on which people forget themselves testify to this. Political catchwords and slogans are not yet forgotten and would quickly push the current expressions of loyalty aside [if the measures against the political parties were relaxed]."⁵¹

In this, I think, Resident Spits was correct. Notwithstanding the lack of open opposition to the Dutch authorities, the mainstream of the local nationalist movement remained noncooperative throughout the closing years of colonial rule. What did change in the wake of the intensified Dutch repression of 1933-36 was the role the political parties had previously played as the major vehicle for anticolonial nationalism. In their place there developed much more diffuse and fluid alliances, created ad hoc in response to openings offered by the Dutch. From 1937 on it is interesting to note how each clumsy step taken by the authorities, and each sensitive issue they bungled, was immediately seized on and shaped into a fulcrum for reviving political activity, with organizations that sprang up capitalizing in particular on Dutch mishandling of religious and/or traditional issues.

The first such step was the Dutch attempt to introduce a Marriage Registration Bill into West Sumatra in mid-1937. Believing that this bill conflicted with Islamic law, ulama from throughout the region, alongside former Permi members and Muhammadiyah organizations, set up protest committees.⁵² Within a month traditional (Kaum Tua) and reformist (Kaum Muda) ulama cooperated to form a "Majlis ulama" demanding withdrawal of the bill.⁵³ Less immediate though

Permi adherents who were now executive committee members of Muhammadiyah, cites one district of the Maninjau region where six former Permi members who sat on its eleven-man executive committee included the chairman, vice chairman, treasurer, and commissioners.

50. This was certainly the charge of Resident Spits: "Indeed it has repeatedly appeared that branches of Java associations assume a completely individual character here. When in 1928 the Muhammadiyah took off here in a big way, within a brief period it changed into an extremist political association. . . . And even now it still repeatedly appears that the Muhammadiyah groups are under the influence of former Communists and similar elements." MvO Spits, Mr. 504/37, p. 13.

51. Ibid., p. 45.

52. Mr. 845/37 (August 1937), p. 11.

53. Mr. 921/37 (September 1937), p. 12.

no less important was the reaction of adat groups. Two penghulu who led Muhammadiyah organizations in Batu Sangkar, Dt. Boengsoe and Dt. Simaradjo, formed a discussion committee at the end of October, and three months later were able to muster 360 penghulu to attend a meeting in Padang Panjang, where a new adat organization MTKAAM (Majelis Tinggi Kerapatan Adat Alam Minangkabau, High Consultative Council of the Adat of the Minangkabau World) was formally established. For the first time in recent history there was now a Minangkabau adat association that was not essentially conservative and cooperative. All five of its committee leaders had been members of the Muhammadiyah, with one of them having also belonged to the Permi.⁵⁴ As the organization spread and developed, the Dutch viewed it with growing suspicion, seeing its membership as largely "made up of discontented, troublesome elements among the penghulus."⁵⁵ Conservative penghulu officials in the Dutch administration, notably their long-time adviser Dt. Toemenggoeng, tried to exert a moderating influence, but they were rejected by the membership as a whole,⁵⁶ and by June 1939 "more and more people of dubious reputation" were joining the MTKAAM.⁵⁷ Despite Dutch suspicions, however, the MTKAAM acted within the political guidelines laid down by the government and did not emerge as an openly nationalistic organization until after the Japanese invasion.

In the specifically religious field, the Dutch authorities provided their opposition with a potent issue when it was reported that Law 177IS, a statute that limited Christian missionary activity in mainly Islamic areas, might be repealed.⁵⁸ Resistance to this proposal brought together a kaleidoscope of local personalities representing nationalist, political, adat, and religious ideas from across the spectrum. The two major organizations established in August 1939 to combat the proposed repeal (the Majlis Pertahanan Islam [Council for the Defense of Islam] in Padang and the Badan Permusyawaratan Islam Minangkabau [Minangkabau Islamic Discussion Body, BPIM] in Padang Panjang) included among their leaders members of Permi, PSII, Muhammadiyah, and PNI-Baru, together with educators and businessmen.⁵⁹ It was with this issue too that the former leader of the PNI-Baru, Chatib Suleiman, "moved more and more to the foreground of the corporate political life of this residency,"⁶⁰ where he was to remain throughout the Japanese occupation and revolution until killed by the Dutch in 1949. In his pamphlet entitled, "Sikap Moeslimin Indonesia: Artikel 177 IS akan ditjaboet [Attitude of Indonesian Muslims: Article 177 IS is to be repealed]" and in his speeches as vice chairman of the BPIM he revived the Permi theme of the early 1930s that Islamic and nationalist forces should combine.⁶¹

54. *Mr.* 187/38 (January 1938), pp. 14-17.

55. *Mr.* 244/39 (December 1938).

56. "C.M.T.K.A.A.M.-congres van 15-19 Maart 1939 te Fort de Kock," in *Mr.* 535/39 (March 1939).

57. *Mr.* 885/39 (June 1939).

58. *Mr.* 1230/39 (August 1939).

59. Mahmoed Joenoes was chairman of the Padang committee, with Moechtar Jahja as vice chairman; A. R. St. Mansur was chairman of the Padang Panjang committee with Chatib Suleiman as vice chairman. For the full membership of the committees, see *ibid.*

60. *Mr.* 178/40 (November 1939), p. 2.

61. *Mr.* 1406/39 (September 1939).

The son of a trader who had gone bankrupt at the end of World War I,⁶² Chatib Suleiman had been educated up to the level of junior high school (MULO), with assistance from the Padang businessman and political activist Abdullah Basa Bandaro. After first earning a living playing the viola and piano in the movie theater in Padang, he became an active youth organizer in Padang Panjang and taught at the Muhammadiyah HIS and the religious Madrasah Irsyadinnas (MIN) run by maverick ulama Adam B.B.⁶³ In 1932, together with Leon Salim, he founded and led the West Sumatra branch of the PNI-Baru, but gradually withdrew from active participation in the party as it became clear that Dutch repression was eviscerating it. He then turned his major attention to education and business. He established his own Merapi Institute in Padang Panjang in 1935, and with Leon Salim published a magazine, *Pemberi Sinar*, focusing on economic affairs. In the Padang business community, he was still close to his benefactor, Basa Bandaro, the former treasurer of Permi, and he had close ties with Anwar St. Saidi, an important merchant in Bukittinggi, who founded the "Bank Nasional" in 1930. With Anwar and other friends, he established a trading association, "Bumi Putera" and the import company, "Inkorba" (Inkoops Organisatie Batik) in 1938.⁶⁴ His economic activities and backing from Anwar's National Bank gave him a financial base from which to carry on political and educational activities.

Assuming a role similar to the one he was to play throughout the subsequent decade, Chatib Suleiman now began to introduce a strategy for bringing together previously dissenting elements into broader, more amorphous associations, based on principles to which they could all agree. The cooperation of all religious groups in opposing the proposed repeal of 177 IS was the first of these, and the Indonesia Berparlemen movement became another—one that appealed to an even broader spectrum of Minangkabau opinion, bringing together the adat and religious leaders, as well as the traditionalist and reformist ulama.⁶⁵ As keynote speaker at the first public meeting of the Indonesia Berparlemen movement on December 17, 1939, Chatib Suleiman pursued an interesting line, as recorded by a government observer:

Chatib Soeleiman chose as his theme "Indonesia demands Parliament." He asserted that the words "Indonesia Berparlemen" could leave no single Indonesian still less any "foreigner" unmoved. A full-

62. Apart from material in the Dutch mailrapporten, most of the information on Chatib Suleiman is drawn from the following sources: Rifai Abu and Abdullah Suhadi, *Chatib Suleman [sic]* (Jakarta: Departemen P & K, 1976); M. Raid Malik, et al., *Riwayat Hidup dan Perjuangan Almarhum Chatib Suleiman* (Padang Panjang: n.p., 1973); interviews with Leon Salim, Jakarta, October 1976.

63. Adam B.B. had studied and taught at Haji Rasul's school, but when the Sumatra Thawalib was established, he left to found his own school in Padang Panjang, where there could be a more direct relationship between teacher and pupil and greater authority lodged in the teacher than in the Thawalib schools. Hamka, *Ajahku*, pp. 124-25, 181, 264.

64. The other founders were Marzuki Yatim and Mr. Nasrun. See Abu and Suhadi, *Chatib Suleman*, p. 14; see also *Mr. 378/38* (March 1938), which notes that Anwar was the principal promoter.

65. About 2,000 people attended the organization's public meeting on December 17, with representatives from such political and religious organizations as the PSII, Muhammadiyah, MTKAAM, and Perti.

fledged parliament in this land would first forge a stronger tie between the Netherlands and Indonesia. Chatib Soeleiman then brought the parliamentary history of other lands into his argument. He cited the French revolution, the driving away of the emperor, and the takeover of power by the people. Here, the speaker got his first warning from the Assistant Wedana. He received his second warning when, via the Sarekat Islam, he came to the Partai Kominis Indonesia as an expression of the people's desire to take their fate into their own hands.⁶⁶

In contrast to the themes of this speech, those of the other speakers were entrenched deeply in local traditional and religious arguments. The chairman of the MTKAAM, Dt. Simarajo, claimed that the people in the Minangkabau could trace the parliamentary system back to their *balai* adat, the traditional meeting hall in the Minangkabau village, while H. Sirajuddin Abbas, who now headed the conservative religious Perti, "repeated the 38th ayat of the Qur'an as showing that a parliament is in line with Mohammedanism. Where 85 percent of Indonesians are Islamic it is only right that a full-fledged parliament should come to Indonesia."⁶⁷

It seems that in organizing the meeting, its leaders were very conscious of the dangers of alarming the Dutch over renewed political or religious radicalism in the region. Their strategy to avoid this was revealed in the proposal by Anwar St. Saidi, vice chairman of the Indonesia Berparlemen committee,⁶⁸ that these two leaders, Dt. Simarajo and H. Sirajuddin Abbas, as spokesmen of an adat and a conservative religious party, should be the Minangkabau representatives to the Indonesia Raya Congress in Batavia.⁶⁹

It was on December 28, 1939, only a week after this meeting that Muhammad Yamin, elected by the Minangkabauraad as its representative on the Volksraad, visited West Sumatra. This visit undoubtedly formed the basis for his opinion that the situation in West Sumatra "is healthy," with "Kaeoem Adat and Kaeoem Agama now able to cooperate with each other."⁷⁰

* * *

Thus by the end of the 1930s the Minangkabau nationalists appear to have absorbed the lessons from their earlier defeats at the hands of the Dutch colonial government. In so doing they had had to change many of the methods they used for working towards their ultimate goal of independence. Not all of these, however, were altered; the Muhammadiyah, for example, was still playing essentially the same role in the later 1930s as it had in the aftermath of the 1927 uprising, providing the "apolitical" haven to which religious activists could retreat; and parallel to it in the adat sphere there had now emerged a "nonpolitical" but also nonconservative adat organization, the MTKAAM,

66. Mr. 323/40 (December 1939), pp. 4-5.

67. Ibid.

68. Abdoel Rivai, a local private doctor, was its chairman. Ibid.

69. Ibid. Soeleman Paris glr. Dt. Maharadjo Diradjo, ex-Permi council member, member of the Minangkabauraad, and secretary of the MTKAAM executive board was also scheduled to attend at his own expense. (Mr. 178/40 [November 1939].)

70. Quoted in Bouman, *Enige Beschouwingen*, p. 88.

which could play the same role for those penghulu who were not in accord with Dutch colonial rule. The principal lessons that had been learned were not just that the Dutch would not permit open political party opposition to their government, but that, in order to be effective, it was necessary for the various streams in Minangkabau society, that had previously worked in opposition to one another as well as to the Dutch, now to cooperate among themselves. This they were willing to do, spurred by pragmatic leaders, particularly those who had some economic role in the society, such as Chatib Suleiman, Basa Bandaro, and Anwar St. Saidi.

In other parts of Indonesia, oppositionist and cooperative nationalists came together in such organizations as Parindra and Gerindo. But neither of these gained strength in West Sumatra. As a former Permi member wrote in the newspaper, *Persamaan*:

The Parindra and Gerindo have less chance of succeeding in this residency, because in their Indonesianism they are indifferent to or opposed to Islam. The Minangkabauers always demand a religious foundation for their political lives . . . they must be established in the spirit of the Permi "Persatoean Moeslim Indonesia" incorporating within themselves the special qualities and insights of the above named party.⁷¹

It was this spirit that was to characterize the political life of the region to some extent during the Japanese occupation and more notably after 1945, when the local Republican leaders largely succeeded in building their opposition to the Dutch return on a fusion of religion and nationalism, and at the same time were able to operate in conjunction with the adat MTKAAM.

By 1940, then, the various streams in West Sumatran society had begun to converge in preparation for carrying their struggle to a further stage. They adopted policies not of cooperation with the Dutch but of constructive obstructionism and the forging of informal ties that could subsequently be strengthened in attaining the objective of independence. What marked the closing years of colonial rule off from the early 1930s was not the goal sought but the tactics employed. No longer was open confrontation--either physical or political--a viable option, so alternative methods were tried. But although in this period, the nationalists avoided confrontation, their militancy, as Resident Spits was aware, nevertheless remained latent, just below the surface and ready to assert itself whenever conditions were propitious.

This opportunity finally came in March 1942 at the time of the Japanese invasion of Indonesia. On Java the Dutch Governor-General had surrendered on March 9, but A. I. Spits, now Governor of Sumatra, expressed his determination to continue resistance there.⁷² Opposed to the "scorched-earth" policy proclaimed by the Dutch, Chatib Suleiman and his associates began organizing demonstrations to be held throughout West Sumatra, demanding that the Dutch transfer their administration to Indonesian hands, so that Indonesians could be the ones

71. Mr. 1089/38 (September 1938); quoting *Persamaan*, September 27, 1938, with article by Darwis Thaib Dt. Marah Indo.

72. The Dutch forces on Sumatra actually lost contact with the Chief of the General Staff on Java on the evening of March 7. For the Dutch account of their actions in Central Sumatra after the fall of Java, see *Nederlands-Indië contra Japan*, vol. 6, *De Strijd op Ambon, Timor en Sumatra* (The Hague: Staatsdrukkerij, 1959), pp. 94-110.

to negotiate Sumatra's surrender with the invading forces, rather than merely being transferred as "articles in the inventory" from the Dutch to the Japanese. On March 12, the Dutch authorities in Padang Panjang arrested Chatib Suleiman, together with Leon Salim and four other leaders of the projected demonstrations, charging them with attempting to undermine the Netherlands Indies government. So concerned were the Dutch at their defiance that they took these prisoners with them when Netherlands Indies forces retreated to their final stronghold at Kota Cane on Aceh's southern borders, and the six Minangkabau nationalists only regained their freedom on March 29, 1942 when the Japanese stormed the jail where they were imprisoned.⁷³

73. A full account of these events appears in "Tawanan Kutatjane," by Leon Salim (typescript, 1953) in my possession.