

REVOLUTIONARY WORLDS



INDEPENDENCE, DECOLONIZATION,
VIOLENCE AND WAR IN
INDONESIA





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REVOLUTIONARY

LOCAL PERSPECTIVES AND DYNAMICS DURING THE

WORLDS

INDONESIAN INDEPENDENCE WAR, 1945-1949

TRANSLATIONS BY TAUFIQ HANAFI

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Cover image: *Revolutionary graffiti in Yogyakarta 1948: 'Siapa toeroet N.I.C.A. pengchianat' (Who sides with NICA is a traitor) and Toedjoean Kita Merdeka' (Our goal is independence) 'Soekarno-Hatta YES, Van Mook-v.d. Plas NO'*. Source: J. Zijlstra, *Nationaal Archief, Dienst voor Legercontacten*.

Title page image: *'The guerrilla's are defining their tactics' (Gerilya Mengatur Siasat) 1964. Painting by S. Sudjono, Presidential palace, Bogor.*

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Map 1



Cartography: Erik van Oosten - NIMH

Map 2



Map 3



Map 4



Cartography: Erik van Oosten - NIMH

Map 5



Cartography: Erik van Oosten - NIMH

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I.

INTRODUCTION





FREEDOM *is the* GLORY OF ANY NATION.
INDONESIA *for* INDONESIA!

I.

Revolutionary worlds: an introduction

ROEL FRAKKING AND ABDUL WAHID¹

THE IDEA BEHIND THE BOOK

This book is firmly grounded in the belief that much of what is assumed to constitute the Indonesian Revolution (1945-1949) is actually not understood all too well. There is still much ground to explore and explain. With that in mind, this edited volume begins with the question: ‘What was the revolution like as a lived experience?’ This is a rather broad and open approach, but that was exactly the point. First and foremost, the book breaks the revolution up into separate regions, which are studied by different researchers. Eight maps at the front illustrate Indonesia’s sheer geographical complexity. This allowed them to devise their own research question along with primary and secondary research questions that, taken together, provide

Indonesian freedom slogan painted on a colonial-era office in Malang, early 1947. Similar slogans adorned many buildings in major towns and cities and were an integral part of the revolutionary landscape. Source: Cas Oorthuys, Nederlands Fotomuseum.

answers to the book's central question. This book's regional approach reflects the need to dismantle the idea that there was one revolution that looked the same everywhere and elicited similar responses from Dutch and Indonesian actors alike. Our approach reflects the multitude of vantage points and perspectives as well as – equally important – a coming together in dialogue of two historiographies that have remained separate for too long.

A cursory glance at Dutch historiography as it stands today proves this point. Most recently, scholars have homed in on the particularly violent nature of decolonization and its so-called 'extreme' properties. On the one hand, this has been occasioned by the demands put forth by survivors and their relatives that former colonial empires recognize and offer reparations for the horrible abuses committed.² On the other, this 'violent turn' was the logical endpoint of a question everyone knew the answer to but whose answer was difficult to put on paper, partially due to the staying power of veterans' narratives. This question was, quite simply: How pervasive and systematic was Dutch violence during the Indonesian War of Independence in particular and during centuries of the Dutch colonial occupation of Indonesia in general? The persistence of survivors and their relatives dovetailed with historians and cultural institutions who, in varying degrees, were finally ready to address their nation's sordid past – or at least bring it out into the open.³

The larger historical project (funded by the Dutch government) of which this book is a part is entitled *Independence, Decolonization, Violence and War in Indonesia 1945-1950*. It focused on precisely the problem of Dutch military violence during the last major colonial war the nation conducted – in Indonesia. In a series of substantial volumes totalling thousands of pages, it concluded that Dutch violence in that war had been both extreme systematic and structural. The Dutch cabinet immediately offered a 'deep apology to the people of Indonesia today (reinforcing earlier apologies including one by the king in 2020)'.⁴ Unfortunately, although this 'violent turn' in Dutch colonial studies has finally led to the Netherlands owning up to the violence, it has again resulted in a neglect of the experiences of those who stood at the receiving end of colonial violence who sought to escape or combat it on their own terms. The present volume is one of a small number within that larger project to seek engagement with Indonesian historians. How the resulting dialogue progressed – haltingly at first, but in the end in an inspiring manner – is discussed at some length below. Here, we would simply note that the participating Dutch and Indonesian historians came to the project with their own background of a dominant national interpretive tradition.