

Leaders, leadership and politics in South Sulawesi:
Qahhar Mudzakkar and his legacy

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Abstract

The Darul Islam rebellion against the central Indonesian government in the immediate post-independence period was mostly dependent on charismatic leaders who came to prominence during the nationalist struggle against the Dutch. The charismatic leader of this rebellion in South Sulawesi was Qahhar Mudzakkar (also spelt 'Kahar Muzakkar'), whose conflict with the central Indonesian government began in 1950 when he was overlooked as commander of a special Sulawesi brigade and many of the Sulawesi guerrilla fighters who had fought against the Dutch were discarded by the Indonesian Army as it restructured. Qahhar led the men into the jungle and began a rebellion against the Indonesian government that would last for fifteen years. In 1953, he proclaimed an Islamic state, thus joining the Darul Islam movement. Important factors in the rebellion's genesis and momentum were bitterness at the perceived injustice and rejection of Qahhar and the Sulawesi guerrillas by the Indonesian government and increasing Javanese hegemony in the region. Other factors that have been debated include Islam, political ideas and several South Sulawesi cultural concepts, such as *siriq* and *pešsé*. What seems clear is that Qahhar had developed ideas that were seemingly incompatible with 'traditional' notions of South Sulawesi culture and after joining the Darul Islam movement preached a form of 'Islamic socialism' and aimed to implement strict *shari'a* law, eradicate aristocratic titles, pre-Islamic rituals, and Sufi orders. Forty-eight years after his death, Qahhar Mudzakkar continues to divide opinion and inspire new generations.

The talk focuses on three main aspects of Qahhar Mudzakkar and his legacy. The first examines traditional leadership in South Sulawesi, including the cultural characteristics expected of leaders, and draws comparisons between Qahhar and the seventeenth century Bugis leader Arung Palakka. The second examines memories and perceptions of Qahhar and the rebellion, related by people who lived through or participated in the rebellion. The third looks at how Qahhar is perceived and the role he plays in modern day South Sulawesi, particularly in local politics as many see KPPSI (Preparatory Committee for the Application of Islamic Laws) as a continuation of Qahhar's struggle. The head of KPPSI is Abdul Aziz Qahhar Mudzakkar, one of Qahhar Mudzakkar's son.

Brief biodata

Stephen Druce obtained his PhD in Southeast Asian history from the Centre for South-East Asian Studies at Hull University. His current research interests include the development of complex society in Island Southeast Asia (particularly Sulawesi and Borneo) and the transformation of early Austronesian societies, the interaction between the oral and written registers in the transmission of historical traditions, local Indonesian politics from a cultural and historical perspective, and Southeast Asian ways of diplomacy through history. He has published two books and numerous academic articles on Sulawesi history, archaeology and literature and various other articles and book chapters on a range of topics from early Borneo to contemporary Southeast Asian conflict management. Stephen teaches Brunei and Southeast Asian history at Universiti

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