

# Islam in Indonesia

Indonesia is the country with most Muslims in the world, with a population of more than 200 million Muslims. Islam's spread in Indonesia is largely peaceful. After all, there is no evidence of any invasions of Muslim rulers from elsewhere. The thousands of Indonesian islands consisted of dozens of kingdoms. Before the 8th century CE most residents were followers of the Sanatan Dharma (Hinduism), a Vedic religion. In addition, there were also many Buddhists and animists. There was already a trading relationship for thousands of years between the Middle East, India, China and Indonesia (Island States).

Traders (from Arabia, China and Hindustan/India) were the main reasons why Islam spread to the city ports of Indonesia. Islam was seen as an enlightening religion and Muslims quickly built a reputation as honest and learned men and women. Indonesian traders and common folk converted faster to Islam than the aristocracy population. The conversion to Islam in Indonesia happened steadily. By the 16th century Islam was the prevailing religion in Indonesia. If one looks at the countries with most Muslims: Iran, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and China, we see that Arabic is not the official language in these countries. We also see that these countries and their people kept their identity and culture, something that we are not able to find in most ex-colonies of the Western (Christian) countries.

In the 17th century Indonesia (like most of Asia) was ruled/harassed by the Christians from the West. Different monarchs and rulers were annexed in a brutal divide-and-conquer campaign. Especially the Kingdom of the Netherlands was responsible for this. This began with the blocking of city ports so as to isolate and starve the Islands. As a result of this, Muslim traders sent their ships to the eastern islands of Indonesia. This also resulted in the spread of Islam in these parts of Indonesia. There were several battles between the sultanates and the Dutch. The Indonesians, rightfully so, regarded themselves as freedom fighters. The Dutch regarded them as "pirates". In the early 20th-century different groups organized protests against the colonial oppression. Islamic scholars, including women, encouraged resistance and even Jihad against the oppression of the Netherlands. Thanks to the attack by Japan on all Western powers in Asia during the second world war, Indonesians saw a real chance of finally gaining their freedom. After the capitulation of Japan in 1945 the Dutch hegemony (dominance) was broken in Indonesia. During the war, the Dutch were humiliated by the Japanese and fled from Asia and in Europe they were conquered by Nazi Germany without any opposition. All of this did not elude the Indonesians. However, after the 2nd World War, the Dutch hurried back to Indonesia to regain their rule. This was followed by 2 brutal military campaigns (in 1947 and 1948) against the population. Led by nationalists, Islamic scholars with the support from other Asian countries, Indonesia managed to get their independence in 1949. After India, Indonesia was the most valued colony for the Europeans. Without the exploitation of Indonesia, the Netherlands lost its status as a "global force". Indonesia is a secular State but has a large footprint within the Ummah (Muslim world community). Indonesia has developed itself quickly in the fields of technology, education and trade.



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**Masjid Kubah Mas. Golden dome mosque, Depok.**



**Sumatra, Pagaruyung palace 1280 CE.**



**Indonesian fashion influences the islamic world**



**Traditional Jewelry, Sumbawa.**



**Penjak Silat. Indonesian martial art.**