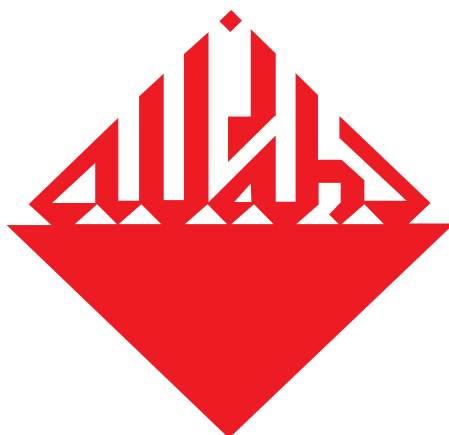


STUDIA ISLAMIKA

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Babak Baru Ketegangan Islam dan Kristen di Indonesia

M.C. Ricklefs

Rediscovering Islam in Javanese History

Abstract: *Developments in our understanding of Javanese history have displaced a previously influential paradigm about the role of Islam in Javanese society. The view that Islam was marginal was exemplified in Van Leur's description of Islam as 'a thin, easily flaking glaze' or Geertz's observation that 'It is very hard ... for a Javanese to be a "real Moslem"'. This paradigm implicitly posited an authentic Javanese culture which was essentially pre-Islamic in origin which limited Islamization. Stereotypes of Javanese culture and of Islam underlay this paradigm. The previous paradigm was mainly formed during the period of abangan prominence. Subsequent developments in Javanese society and new historical research have led to a rediscovery of the important role of Islam in Javanese history, showing the older paradigm to be false and the stereotypes to be unsustainable.*

Keywords: Islam, Java, *abangan*, *santri*, *priyayi*.

Abstrak: *Pengertian baru mengenai sejarah masyarakat Jawa sudah menggantikan sebuah kerangka berpikir lama mengenai peranan agama Islam dalam masyarakat itu. Dulu Islam sering dianggap pinggiran, seperti terlihat dalam komentar Van Leur bahwa Islam hanya merupakan 'glasir porselin yang tipis dan mudah pecah' atau kata-kata Geertz bahwa 'sulit sekali bagi seorang Jawa untuk menjadi seorang "Muslim sejati"'. Kerangka berpikir itu secara samar berdasarkan konsep budaya Jawa 'asli' yang berasal dari zaman pra-Islam yang terus menghalangi proses Islamisasi. Prasangka-prasangka mengenai Islam maupun budaya Jawa mendasari kerangka berpikir tersebut. Kerangka berpikir lama itu pada umumnya muncul pada masa kaum abangan dominan dalam masyarakat Jawa. Perkembangan sosial sejak zaman itu bersama dengan penelitian sejarah yang baru sudah memungkinkan pengertian baru yang menggarisbawahi pentingnya Islam dalam sejarah masyarakat Jawa. Dibuktikan bahwa kerangka berpikir lama itu salah dan prasangka-prasangka lama mendasar itu tidak bisa diterima lagi.*

Kata kunci: Islam, Jawa, abangan, santri, priyayi.

الخلاصة: لقد حل الفهم الجديد لتاريخ المجتمع الجاوي محل النموذج الفكري القديم حول دور الإسلام في هذا المجتمع. وكان الإسلام غالباً ما يعتبر هامشياً، كما يتضح ذلك مما وصفه فان لور Van Leur بأن الإسلام ما هو إلا «طبقة رقيقة من الخبز تنكسر بسهولة» أو ما قاله غيرتر Geertz بأنه من الصعوبة بمكان أن يكون الإنسان الجاوي «مسلماً حقيقياً». وهذا النموذج الفكري يعتمد ضمناً على مفهوم الثقافة الجاوية الأصيلة التي تعود إلى عصر ما قبل الإسلام، والتي كانت تعيق عملية الأسلمة، كما يعتمد على الأحكام المسبقة حول الإسلام والثقافة الجاوية. وظهر ذلك بشكل عام في فترة هيمنة طائفة من المجتمع الجاوي تعرف بأبانجان abangan. وقد أدت التطورات الاجتماعية التي حدثت منذ ذلك الحين والبحوث التاريخية الجديدة إلى ظهور فهم جديد يؤكد أهمية الإسلام في تاريخ المجتمع الجاوي. فقد ثبت أن النموذج الفكري القديم غير صحيح، كما أن الأحكام المسبقة القديمة لم تعد مقبولة.

الكلمات الاسترشادية: الإسلام، جاوة، أبانجان، سانري، بريايي.

The conference celebrating 20 years of *Studia Islamika* focussed on the theme ‘Southeast Asian Islam: Legacy and New Interpretation’. The study of Javanese history offers significant examples of both legacies and new interpretations which have transformed how we see the past and present circumstances of the Javanese and, consequently, how we might imagine their future. Not so very long ago, Islam tended to be viewed as marginal to ‘mainstream’ Javanese culture: that was the legacy. Now we see it as a topic of major significance in the history of the Javanese: that is the new interpretation. In this paper, we will look at both the legacy and the new understanding, to see how we have been led to new views of Javanese history, society and culture and to a clearer understanding of how Islam is understood and lived in the real world.

This examination of both the legacy and the new interpretations of Javanese history provides us with a fine example of how our views of the past are often shaped by our experience of the present. It also reminds us how beguiling, misleading and analytically dangerous stereotypes can be and how important it is actually to do research to test such ideas. These are hardly new observations, of course, but it is rather remarkable how hard it has been to arrive at them in the case of the history of the Javanese.

The Legacy

In some older literature we find the idea that there were two quite distinct cultural realms which could be distinguished from each other. One was the Islamic realm, defined by essentializing stereotypes of which we will see examples below. The depiction of Islam’s social practices was perhaps influenced by images of the Wahhabi Islam of Saudi Arabia, while that of its theology tended to be dominated by the views of educated, intellectual Modernists. If most Javanese did not fit those images, it seems, they were not proper Muslims.

For their part, the Javanese were also frequently seen through essentializing lenses. The lifestyle of nominally Muslim *abangan* was seen as authentically Javanese, as the norm. There was a saying that an *abangan* only observed the obligations of Islam four times in her or his life: at birth, at circumcision, at marriage and at death, and on the first and last of these someone else had to do it for them. The style of the *kratons* was taken as a defining paradigm of this authentic but only nominally Islamic culture and society. The *priyayi* represented the sophisticated upper class of this authentically Javanese style.

We must take care not to exaggerate in our discussion of these legacy views. There was some very fine scholarship done in the past to which we are all indebted. But there was also a fairly dominant overarching paradigm which is evident in much of that scholarship. It is that which is now challenged by both new research and changing contemporary circumstances.

A prominent example of the legacy stereotypes was in a famous essay on ‘The world of Southeast Asia: 1500-1650’ written by J.C. van Leur. He was a fine young Dutch scholar who was interested in history and much influenced by Max Weber’s sociology. His career was cut tragically short when he was killed in the battle of the Java Sea in February 1942, at the age of just 34. This essay was written before the war and only published in full in 1947, with an English translation appearing in 1955.

It is important to note that Van Leur’s views were formed in the 1930s, in the midst of a period of social, cultural, religious and political polarization in Java (Ricklefs 2007), which presumably influenced his historical views. In his essay is found a statement that now seems quite remarkable but which, at the time, was regarded as definitive:

‘The expansion of the new religion [by which he meant Islam] did not result in any revolutions or any newly arrived foreign colonists coming to power – the Indonesian regime did not undergo a single change due to it.... Nor is there any question of a deeper influence of a cultural sort. Islam did not bring a single innovation of a ‘higher level of development’ to Indonesia, socially or economically, either in state polity or in trade. Both these religions [i.e. Hinduism and Islam] were only a thin, easily flaking glaze on the massive body of indigenous civilization (van Leur 1955: 168-9).

In 1953-4, an American anthropological research team from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology spent several months in the town of Pare, near Kediri in East Java, which they dubbed ‘Modjokuto’. The most famous person in this team was Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), whose book *The religion of Java* was published in 1960. There were Indonesian and Dutch critics of the book from the beginning (e.g. Koentjaraningrat 1963) and it was burdened with an embarrassing Javanese blunder in its dedication,¹ but it nevertheless came to be widely regarded as an authoritative account of Javanese religious life. Its influence in Indonesia was also profound, so much so that the collective terms more commonly used for pious Muslims and religious officials among Javanese – *Muslimin*,

putihan, *kaum* etc. – were replaced in general usage by the term *santri* which Geertz used but which had usually applied more specifically to students at religious schools (*pesantren*).²

The timing of the MIT study was important, for Geertz and his team were present in East Java in a period of seriously escalating political, religious and social tension. The violent events of the Revolutionary period and the politicized environment of the 1950s stimulated increasing polarization in Java. Eventually those tensions gave rise to the mass violence of the mid-1960s (Ricklefs 2012: ch.4).

In Geertz's *Religion of Java* we encounter his well-known trichotomy of *santri* devout Muslims, *abangan* nominal Muslims and *priyayi* elite. The first he associated with the world of small traders, the second with the peasantry and the third with the bureaucracy, which Koentjaraningrat called 'oversimplified' (Koentjaraningrat 1963:188). This trichotomy became a common way to depict the divisions within Javanese society, despite its evident confusion of religious variants (*santri* vs. *abangan*) with social classes (*priyayi* vs. commoners, the *wong cilik*, who were missing from Geertz's scheme).

Here again we find a statement that seems utterly extraordinary today:

It is very hard, given his tradition and his social structure, for a Javanese to be a 'real Moslem'. ... The otherness, awfulness and majesty of God, the intense moralism, the rigorous concern with doctrine, and the intolerant exclusivism which are so much a part of Islam are very foreign to the traditional outlook of the Javanese (Geertz 1960: 160).

Note the stereotypes here. There was (a) the Javanese 'tradition' – the inheritance from the past – (b) the 'social structure' – that is *santri*, *abangan* and *priyayi* – and (c) the 'traditional outlook' which was little influenced by Islam, all of which combine to make it 'very hard ... for a Javanese to be a "real Moslem"'. And then there was Islam, which was (contrary to the ascribed traditions, social structure and outlook of the Javanese) rigorously focussed on doctrine, intolerant and exclusive. Looking back at the history of the 1950s, one might be forgiven for thinking that this depicts the Catholic Church more accurately than it does the many faces of Islam around the world. Certainly no serious observer would make such a claim today. But it must be remembered that Geertz was observing and writing at a time of profound polarization, when the boundaries between *santri* and

abangan were hardening dangerously. The publications of the MIT team remain invaluable for their depiction of this polarization. Robert Jay, another member of the team, wrote of ‘a religious schism that cuts straight through local society’ (Jay 1969: 4-5) and observed how that schism hardened over the months of his research in Pare.

Jay published a monograph with a notable title, *Religion and politics in rural Central Java* – notable because his research was done in East, not Central, Java – in which he attempted to project the *abangan-santri* tensions far back into Javanese history, with unpersuasive results. He evidently saw this history as a contest between Islam – a new, invading force – and the pre-Islamic and implicitly more authentic traditional culture of the Javanese. On the 17th century, he wrote, ‘The coastal rulers in their struggle with Mataram invoked a religiously pure Islam as a rallying standard, especially against Sultan Agung (1613-1646) and his successors’ (Jay 1963: 10).’ There is a particular irony here for, as we will see below, the reign of Sultan Agung was a major time of *kraton*-led Islamization. More broadly, Jay set out a stereotypical historical scenario from the 14th or 15th centuries onward:

Beginning some five if not six centuries ago, an expanding Islam, equipped with a unitary and exclusivist philosophy and capable of imbuing its adherents with a strong sense of community, engaged the intellectually sophisticated philosophy of Javanese society, one grounded in ancient beliefs and social relationships and commanding wide loyalty. ... While the more formal religious elements of the traditional position, including the major ritual forms of worship to the old Hindu-Javanese gods, were lost, the ideological integrity of the traditional Javanese way was maintained. The more extreme orthodox Moslems, on the other hand, successfully resisted much of the remaining traditional forms, especially in esthetics and theology. Between these two extremes, however, a broad middle ground of accommodation did develop, though not without some friction (Jay 1963: 101).

We may note here again the essentializing stereotypes. Islam had a ‘unitary and exclusivist philosophy’ and included ‘more extreme orthodox’ types. The Javanese, by contrast, had an ‘intellectually sophisticated philosophy’ with ‘traditional forms’. In his introduction to the monograph, the historian Harry Benda expressed criticism which must have been uncomfortable for the still-junior Dr Jay to read: ‘Valuable and indispensable as Dr. Jay’s study is ... his projection of the schism onto earlier Javanese history may be subject to some questions’

and his account of the 1930s 'is, I believe, erroneous and misleading' (Jay 1963: iv). Today we may endorse Benda's criticism, for we now have more substantial research to support it than he did at the time.

A dichotomy between what was Islamic and what was authentically Javanese was not found only in sociological and anthropological publications. The work of G.W.J. Drewes (1899-1992) also reflected such views. He was in Indonesia from 1925 to 1938 and again in 1946-7, so again this was someone whose personal impressions came from pre-Second World War and Revolution-era Indonesia. After the Second World War he held professorial positions at Leiden University in Javanese, Malay, Islamic Studies and Arabic. One would think him thus well qualified to bridge conventional cultural boundaries. In 1954 he published a new edition of a Javanese *primbon* (handbook or notebook) of Islamic teachings which was clearly of 16th-century origin. That had previously been edited in 1921 by B.J.O. Schrieke (1890-1945), who saw evidence there of Islam being adapted to a Javanese setting. Drewes would have none of that: 'The result of this research was disappointing in so far as there appeared to be no evidence of that "adaptation to the Javanese surroundings" of which Schrieke thought he had found indications in this text' (Drewes 1954: 3). Furthermore, 'The teacher in whose lessons all of these various issues arise is undoubtedly an adherent of orthodox mysticism' Drewes wrote (1954: 4), evidently implying that 'adaptation to Javanese surroundings' would be tantamount to heterodoxy.

Drewes' conclusion in this regard was remarkable in light of the terminology found in the *primbon* text. There we find *Allah* used in stock Arabic phrases, but otherwise the term for God is the Javanese *Pangeran* (lord, which was used in Javanese both for temporal and supernatural lords). For heaven we find *swarga* or *syarga*, for soul *suksma* and for asceticism *tapa*. These are all Javanese words with roots in Old Javanese and/or Sanskrit and which were thus freighted with pre-Islamic connotations. The most remarkable case is the use of Javanese *sembah* or *sembahyang* for prayer. The *sembah* is a gesture of respect or devotion formed by placing the palms of the hands together before the nose. In the case of *sembahyang*, this is *sembah* to the *hyang*, the gods. Drewes, however, translated *sembah* or *sembahyang* not with a Dutch word for prayer but rather with the Arabic term *ṣalāt* (Drewes 1954: 54-5), thereby reinforcing in his translation the impression of Islamic orthodoxy without 'adaptation to Javanese surroundings'.

In some circumstances there was indeed conflict between Islamic and Javanese senses of identity, cultural styles and belief systems. This can be seen in another Javanese text also edited by Drewes (1978), which is clearly from an early stage of Islamization some place in Java. His dating of the text to the 16th or 17th century is entirely speculative; it could have come from, say, Blambangan as late as the late 18th century. In any case, it clearly reflects early Islamization in a transitional society. One passage distinguishes *agama Selam lawan gama Jawa*, that is, the Islamic religion vs. the Javanese religion, while another denounces the wearing of 'infidel clothes' (*wong kapidir panganggone*) (Drewes 1978: 36-7).

So we may conclude that there were indeed circumstances in which adherents of Islam and adherents of pre-Islamic religious life regarded themselves as occupying separate realms. But there was also compromise, accommodation and synthesis. It was, in other words, a complex and dynamic time of social change, but Drewes appears to have been blind to that complexity.

Another example of this paradigmatic legacy may be discerned in the general history of Indonesia by B. H. M. Vlekke (1899-1970). Whereas the scholars discussed above held views of Indonesia that were influenced by their personal experiences there before World War II, Vlekke never set foot in Indonesia. He was trained as a European historian and eventually became Professor of International Political Relations in Leiden. During the war he was in the United States. There he wrote his book, primarily to inform Americans about Indonesia, which had become a significant policy issue because of its occupation by the Japanese. The first edition appeared in 1943. Despite his lack of personal background, Vlekke's history was remarkably good and served for many years as the standard reference for English-readers. Nevertheless, we see reflections there of the stereotypical distinction between what was authentically Javanese and what was authentically Islamic. For example, he wrote that for most Javanese lords in the 16th century, 'the acceptance of Islam was only a means to an end, and for a long time, many of them remained reluctant to recognize Islam in the way it ought to be recognized, that is, as being exclusive of all other beliefs' (Vlekke 1965: 97) Here again we see true Islam as being exclusivist and the Javanese version as being some sort of opportunistic avoidance of that proper exclusivity.

In works such as those discussed above, we see an implicit paradigm that posited an authentic, 'traditional' Javanese culture that differed from correct understandings of Islam. That Javanese culture was essentially pre-Islamic in style, its classical age being the kingdom of Majapahit at its apogee in the 14th century. This culture carried forward from the past (to quote Jay) its 'intellectually sophisticated philosophy'. Into this authentically Javanese culture came Islam – a foreign, invading force brought by traders or Sufis rather than warriors. This led to conflict with authentic Javanese culture, which resisted change. The result was, in this paradigm, a slow and very limited advance of Islam over Javanese culture. Islam thus was, repeating Van Leur's observation, 'a thin, easily flaking glaze'. In Geertz's terminology, the *abangan* and *priyayi* were seen as the surviving representatives of an authentic Javanese culture. The *santri* represented Islam's new, invading and limited Islamic faith, culture and identity.

We may note that there were scholars who dissented from the paradigm described above. Vlekke may not have been free of stereotypical ideas, but he also saw complexities. He wrote, 'Whatever the motives of Sultan Agung, his solemn affirmation of his Islamic convictions undoubtedly *resulted* [italics in original] in a closer adherence to the rules of that religion in his kingdom' (Vlekke 1965: 150). So Vlekke (unlike Jay) had an idea of the role of Sultan Agung in reconciling Javanese and Islamic traditions, although in his time there had not yet been any significant research on Agung's reign.

The most distinguished historian of Java in those days was undoubtedly H. J. de Graaf (1899-1984). When he completed his Doctorate in 1935, he was the first scholar who was both trained as a historian – he was a student of the famous Johan Huizinga at Leiden – and knew the Javanese language. He spent many years in Java, including incarceration in a Japanese prison camp during the Second World War. He was much influenced by the great scholar of Javanese, Poerbatjaraka. De Graaf's *Geschiedenis van Indonesia* (1949) was authoritative in ways that Vlekke's work could never be. In it he wrote of a process of cultural accommodation between Islam and the surrounding society. 'Islam could only triumph by meeting to some extent the wishes of the Javanese. Important parts of Hinduism and what preceded it were saved. The tradition defends these concessions', he wrote (de Graaf 1949: 84). During 1935-42 De Graaf taught at

a Gereformeerd Dutch-Chinese and Dutch-Native teacher-training school in Surakarta. He told me how he took his history classes on tours of Javanese historical sites, which were often associated with Islam, such as Demak and Kudus. This got him into trouble with the ultra-orthodox Christian authorities of the school, but he persisted. In 1958 de Graaf published his monograph on the reigns of Sultan Agung and his predecessor Panembahan Seda ing Krapyak. He wrote of Agung's evident reliance upon a respected Muslim spiritual adviser, his regular mosque attendance, in which his dignitaries were obliged to follow him, the forced conversion of European prisoners of war to Islam and the tradition that Agung died as a holy man (de Graaf 1958: 103-4). I do not think that De Graaf – himself a devout, conservative Calvinist – ever entertained the idea that being Javanese and at the same time Muslim was (as Geertz claimed) 'very hard'.

De Graaf joined with his friend Th. G. Th. Pigeaud (1899-1988) to write a history of the earliest Islamic states in Java in the 15th and 16th centuries. They worked with difficult and elusive sources to make sense as best they could of the history of that period. The result is inevitably speculative in places. On the idea of a gulf between what was Javanese and what Islamic, they had this to say: 'One of the most important objections against the view of Javanese history that has been current until recently is about the idea that there was a deep chasm between the so-called Hindu-Javanese, 'heathen' period and the Islamic' (de Graaf and Pigeaud 1974: 3). Their speculation in this matter, however, sometimes went beyond what the patchy evidence could support. An example is their comment that 'In this period Javanese home-life and society outside the realm of the court were influenced by Islam with its egalitarian inclinations, which in this respect stood in contrast to the sacral and aristocratic class-ridden society of pre-Islamic Java' (de Graaf and Pigeaud 1974: 6). The surviving sources cannot support such analysis of class differences.

Thus, the idea that Javanese identity and Muslim identity were in large measure irreconcilable was not accepted by all scholars. It was but one interpretation, but it was a remarkably influential one. Its influence extended across political, social, cultural, historical and religious studies. And it is a paradigm that is now rapidly dying, if not already dead. So we may now consider how this transformation came about.

The New Interpretation

In my view, there have been two main reasons for the abandonment of the former paradigm and the acceptance of a new one, moving from the idea that Islam was marginal to mainstream Javanese history to the idea that it is among its major aspects. The first reason is that the role of Islam within Javanese society changed dramatically from about the mid-1960s onward. The second is that new research was done.

The social change was significant as, from the mid-1960s, Islam came to be a more prominent feature of Javanese life. The call to prayer began to be heard regularly and, as electrification spread, increasingly with the benefit of public address systems. *Abangan* life-styles diminished under greater Islamic influence. It was crucial in this regard that the principle institutions which supported and reinforced *abangan* identities disappeared or were dramatically weakened under Soeharto's New Order regime. *Abangan* villagers in any case were not generally sympathetic to hierarchical authority structures and institutions. The principal institutionalized expressions of *abangan* identity were political parties, particularly the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI). PKI was wiped out in the killings of 1965-6. PNI was dramatically weakened and then disappeared through 'fusion' into the Indonesian Democracy Party (PDI) in 1973. The political parties on the *santri* side were also emasculated, but *santris* had many other institutions supporting and reinforcing pious lifestyles and aspirations, notably mosques; religious schools; major organisations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama and Persis; wide networks of social welfare institutions and major national leaders. There was nothing comparable on the *abangan* side of society.

The New Order regime also had its own Islamizing agenda. This was expressed through compulsory religious instruction in schools, proselytization projects such as PTDI (Islamic Proselytism Higher Education) and P2A (Religious Mentality Promotion Project), development of the IAIN (State Institutes for Islamic Studies) system, mosque-building, compulsory collection of alms from public servants and the establishment of MUI (Indonesian Islamic Scholars' Council). The regime would tolerate no political competition from religious organizations. Rather, it wanted to control and direct Islam for its own principal purposes of social control and the destruction of Communism. One of the fruits of this approach was nevertheless deeper Islamization,

consistent with the aspirations of Islamic activists. As Javanese society became more visibly Islamic in style, scholars began to realize that it was not, after all, ‘very hard ... for a Javanese to be a “real Moslem”’, as Geertz had thought.

With regard to the new research that led to different understandings of the role of Islam in Javanese history, I can best recount my own experience. I was curious about the *santri-abangan* dichotomy from an early stage of my career. I set out as a young historian in the 1960s expecting to find *abangan* in 17th- and 18th-century Java and curious to see what role they played. But the *abangan* never appeared, either in Dutch or in Javanese sources. Questions therefore began to arise in my mind about when and how this social distinction had arisen. When I first lived in Central Java in 1969, the dichotomy was clearly evident to me, but over the years thereafter it seemed to diminish significantly. My historical curiosity was piqued.

In the 1990s I was doing research towards what became *The seen and unseen worlds in Java* (Ricklefs 1998), concerning the reign of Pakubuwana II (1726-49). The Javanese primary sources surviving from that period were less than from later periods, mainly because the *kraton* was sacked twice in 1742, first by the Chinese rebels and their Javanese allies and second by the Madurese. So I felt that I could set myself the task of examining every surviving original document from that reign that was accessible in MSS collections in Indonesia and Europe. Historians of Java, in prioritizing primary sources to be consulted, generally incline towards *babads* (chronicles), contracts, letters and such-like rather than *belles-lettres*. This may have contributed to an underestimation of the importance of religious matters, for there seems to have been a literary convention that *babads* should tell of courtly intrigues, conspiracies, battles and love affairs, but give only limited attention to religion. I was now reading everything available, including works that would be categorized as *belles-lettres* and Islamic mysticism. And I thereby found myself – quite unexpectedly – in the midst of one of the main episodes of *kraton*-led Islamization in Javanese history.

I read fascinating romances based on figures from Islamic history, filled with religious lessons. *Carita Sultan Iskandar* was a highly elaborated version of the story of Alexander the Great, the *Dhu’l Qarnayn* found in the *Qur’an* (18: 82-98). *Serat Yusuf* was based on the story of Joseph in Egypt as found in *sura* 12 of the *Qur’an*. Unlike

Carita Sultan Iskandar, *Yusuf* also became a popular story in a version related to but shorter than the *kraton* version from Pakubuwana II's time (Ricklefs 1998: 60-1). In the Javanese versions, the Qur'anic story of Joseph became a lengthy tale of piety and beauty. The most remarkable of these works was *Kitab Usulbiyah*. The title may have been meant to echo the Arabic tales of the prophets found in the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*, but the encounter between Jesus and Muhammad which takes place on earth – a central feature of *Usulbiyah* – has (so far as I am aware) no parallel in the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*. We may presume, however, that the author of *Usulbiyah* knew of the stories of the Prophet's ascension to heaven (*mi'rāj*), during which he meets Abraham, Moses and Jesus in Jerusalem. These major literary works were all clearly set in a Javanese context. They are alike also in that they were all written in 1729, early in the reign of Pakubuwana II, at the behest of his formidable grandmother and pious Sufi Ratu Pakubuwana (b. c. 1657, d. 1732). All of these works are described as having supernatural powers, which Ratu Pakubuwana was mobilizing to perfect the reign of her grandson Pakubuwana II, who had acceded to the throne at the age of 16 and was showing few signs of competence, to say the least. She succeeded in her aim at least to the extent that, in 1741, the king presented himself as the model Sufi leader in Holy War when he successfully attacked the VOC garrison at the court itself.

There were also shorter texts of interest found with the works mentioned above, notably *Suluk Garwa Kancana*; this depicts the ideal king as a pious Sufi warrior and may represent a vision of Javanese kingship that goes back to Sultan Agung (on which, more below). Ascribed to this reign is also a work of moral and religious instruction said to have been composed by Pakubuwana II himself, the *Wulang-dalem Pakubuwana II*. *Serat Cabolek* is only known in later MSS, but tells of a religious controversy in the court c. 1731, in the course of which one of the protagonists memorably exemplifies the synthesis at work in Javanese Islam by proclaiming 'the sense of the *kawi* [Old Javanese] books *Bima Suci* and *Arjunawiwaha* ... just like the *kawi Rāmāyana*, these are (works of) Islamic mysticism (*tesawup*, Ar. *taṣawwuf*)' (Ricklefs 1998: 149).

These works of pious Sufism composed in court circles confirmed in my mind that Islam was central to understanding the dramatic – ultimately disastrous – reign of Pakubuwana II. They also led me to look again at the reign of Sultan Agung (r. 1613-46), for Ratu Pakubuwana's supernaturally

powerful *Carita Sultan Iskandar*, *Serat Yusuf* and *Kitab Usulbiyah* all evidently represented new versions of works originally composed in Agung's time. Given that her *Suluk Garwa Kencana* says it is a work 'from Susunan Ratu' (one of the titles used by Agung in the 1630s before he adopted the Sultan title), that work, too, may also be based on a precedent from Agung's time. It became clear to me that Sultan Agung's reign represented a major *kraton*-led pulse of Islamization, too, which Ratu Pakubuwana and her followers sought to recreate in a second such pulse a century later. There was clearly much that still needed to be understood about the role of Islam in Javanese society across the centuries.

And that led me to the decision to attempt a history of the entire process of Islamization among the Javanese, from the first evidence in the 14th century to the present. The outcome was the three books published in 2006, 2007 and 2012. Those books argue against the legacy paradigm described in the first part of this paper and propose instead a new understanding, one that recognizes the central importance of Islam in the history of the Javanese.

The first of those books, *Mystic synthesis in Java: A history of Islamisation from the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries* (Ricklefs 2006) tries to make sense of voluminous but patchy evidence that often fails to answer just those questions that are foremost in our minds. From the 14th century the evidence suggests a time of contested identities and faiths, as one would expect. There is evidence both of accommodation between Javanese and Muslim identities and of conflict in those early times. Sultan Agung appears as the great reconciler of these two traditions and identities in the early 17th century. Thereafter again there was a time of contest, challenge and warfare, as opponents of the Mataram dynasty raised the banner of Islam against the court which, for much of the time after the 1670s, was in alliance with the *kafirs* of the VOC. The more the court lost legitimacy the more it needed the VOC's military support and thereby the more it inflamed the Islamic sensibilities of its enemies. The fighting came to an end in the 1720s with dynastic victory. That set the scene for the reign of Pakubuwana II and the second reconciliation of Javanese and Muslim identities under the influence of Ratu Pakubuwana.

The outcome was, by the late 18th-early 19th centuries, what I labeled a Javanese 'mystic synthesis' resting upon three specific characteristics within the capacious boundaries of Sufism. The first was a strong sense

of identity, that to be Javanese was to be Muslim. As one of the central characters in *Serat Centhini* says, 'already embracing this holy religion / is every blade of grass in the land of Java, / following the Prophet who was chosen' (Ricklefs 2006: 202).

The second characteristic of the mystic synthesis was widespread observance of the five pillars of Islam: the confession of faith, daily ritual prayer, giving of alms, fasting during Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Mecca for those able to undertake it. The evidence for religious practices at lower levels of Javanese society is frustratingly limited, so an element of caution is always required. But such evidence as we have points to widespread observance. In 1822 Cornets de Groot reported from Gresik in East Java that the 'main points of the Islamic faith' – by which he meant specifically those five pillars – 'are carried out by many. ... The *puasa* [fast] is carried out by most Javanese of all classes' (Cornets de Groot, A.B., 1852:271-2; Ricklefs 2006: 204-5). Raffles thought that Islam 'seems only to have penetrated the surface' in Java, but observed nevertheless that 'all consider it a point of honour to support and respect its doctrines'. 'Pilgrimages to Mecca are common', he wrote, and 'every village has its priest, and ... in every village of importance there is a mosque or building set apart adapted to religious worship.' Raffles regarded the Javanese, however, as 'very imperfect Mohamedans' because they failed to hate Europeans (Raffles 1830: II, 3-5; Ricklefs 2006: 215-16). John Crawfurd, by contrast, fiercely dismissed the Javanese, whom he judged to be 'semi-barbarians' with little understanding of Islam; this may tell us more about Crawfurd's Scottish Presbyterian ideas about how religions should be lived than about the Javanese (Ricklefs 2006: 216).

The third characteristic of the mystic synthesis was an acceptance of local spiritual forces. Ratu Kidul; Sunan Lawu; village spirits; the supernatural denizens of caves, mountains and forests; the beings that stole children in the night or turned themselves into tigers; the other unseen powers that thickly populated the Javanese mental landscape and moved in *wayang* shadow plays and other forms of performance – these were accepted as real. If modern sensibilities think this inconsistent with the preceding two characteristics, we should recognize that such combinations of ideas were found widely in the Islamic world before the reform movements which began in the 18th and 19th centuries as, indeed, such compromises can be found in other world faiths.

This mystic synthesis seems to have been the dominant mode of Islamic religiosity among Javanese by the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It is best documented among the literate elite but seems (as far as we can know from the patchy evidence) also to have been observed widely across Javanese society. In the course of the 19th and early 20th centuries, every one of the three characteristics of the mystic synthesis would come under challenge.

The next book in the series on Javanese Islamization (Ricklefs 2007) covered the period c. 1830-1930 and was, as the title says, about *Polarising Javanese society: Islamic and other visions*. After the definitive Dutch conquest of Java in 1830, which plunged Javanese society into a truly colonial experience, from about mid-century Islamic reform movements spread. These were led and supported by a nascent middle class which was mainly based in Java's towns and cities and often had business links with Arab traders. They adopted more pious Muslim lifestyles and, as their wealth grew, increasing numbers undertook the *haji*, thereby forging links with Islam's holiest center and Middle Eastern reform movements. There was also a dramatic growth in the number of religious schools (*pesantren*) in Java. These pious Javanese called themselves the *putihan* (the white ones), distinguishing themselves from their less pious, less educated, less sophisticated and poorer fellows. From the *putihan* reformers came challenges to that belief in local Javanese spiritual forces which was part of the mystic synthesis.

There were, however, negative reactions to this more pious and orthodox version of Islam. Among ordinary villagers, many seem to have rejected the demands of reformers. If this was what Islam was, they seemed to say, then it was not for them. The *putihan* disparaged them as *abangan* – the brown or red ones, a term which in due course they adopted themselves, shorn of its negative connotations. The term *abangan* has not been found in sources from before the mid-19th century, nor has any other conceptualisation of non-pious, nominal Muslims as a separate social category been found. Both the sense of the *abangan* as a distinct social group and the term that was used to describe them were thus evidently new in the mid-19th century. As the century passed, the term and the conceptualisation of the *abangan* as a separate social category spread across the Javanese heartland, a process which we can only see dimly because of the inadequacy of evidence. There can be no doubt that *abangan* were the majority among Javanese.

It appears that they withdrew from the first two characteristics of the older mystic synthesis, with diminishing strength of commitment to Islamic identity and diminishing observance of Islam's five pillars. Although the evidence for lower levels of society is better in the 19th century than before, we must still recognize that it has its limits. But it does seem that Carel Poensen – a missionary-scholar who spent three decades in Kediri – was correct when he observed that ‘among the great majority there flows another current which ... causes the previous – in many ways naïve – religion more and more to be lost to the people. Basically, people are beginning to become less religious and pious’.³

It is important to emphasize here that, judging from the evidence available to us, the *abangan* were not the embodiment of a surviving and authentic Javanese culture which resisted Islamization from its inception. Rather, they were a new social phenomenon of the 19th century, a reaction against Islamic reform movements. In the early 20th century political parties appeared in Java and the distinction between *putihan* and *abangan* became politicized and institutionalized. Thus was born what came to be known as Indonesia's *aliran* (channel) politics, where social and religious allegiances were more important than social class. In the later 19th century we even find Javanese who rejected Islam altogether as a civilizational mistake. Also, for the first time, a small Javanese Christian community appeared.

Social class was important in Javanese society and in its upper levels another challenge to deeper Islamization emerged. The bureaucratic elite, the *priyayi*, were attracted by the modernity brought by Dutch colonialism, with its scientific advances, links to world events and suspicion of Islamic ‘fanaticism’. European-style social events, reading clubs, interior furnishings and dress styles also attracted the *priyayi*. They thereby became more distanced from their own society, particularly from the pious *putihan*.

Thus it was that by c. 1930 Javanese society was dangerously polarized along lines of religious identity, social group and politics. Location mattered, too, with significant distinctions between rural and urban dwellers and even some relocation of villagers within rural society along *aliran* lines. It became clear to me that this was not a ‘primordial’ situation with roots deep in the past, as Jay had imagined and others evidently assumed. Rather, it was a historically contingent phenomenon of no great temporal depth. In 1930 it was a good deal less than a century old anywhere in Java and in many places no more than a generation or two old.

The final book in the series (Ricklefs 2012) seeks (as the title says) to capture the story of *Islamisation and its opponents in Java* from c. 1930 to the present through ‘a political, social, cultural and religious history’. During this period the politicized polarization of Javanese society escalated into violence during the Indonesian Revolution – notably at Madiun in 1948. It fed the political and social turmoil of the 1950s and early 1960s and culminated in the horrific slaughters of 1965-6. As already noted above, PKI was destroyed in these killings. PNI was weakened and subsequently further undermined by its ‘fusion’ into PDI in 1973. All parties were prohibited by the ‘floating mass’ policy from having any organizational structure below *Kabupaten* (regency) level except during election campaigns. Thereby the principal institutions which expressed and reinforced *abangan* identity – the opponents to Islamization mentioned in the title – were now rendered impotent. The *santri* side of Javanese society, by contrast, had many remaining institutions and grew from strength to strength in the society, even though it was prevented from having an effective political expression.

As Islamization advanced from the later 1960s, the *abangan* thus became politically impotent and socially less obviously a majority. Although the statistical evidence on such subtle matters is generally not very robust, it is possible that the percentage of the Javanese population that would be considered *abangan* was a minority before the end of the New Order period in 1998. My own attempt to assess the balance between *santri* and *abangan* in the early 1950s on the basis of imperfect evidence suggested that something between 10 and 40 per cent of Javanese were pious, observant *santris* in the mid-1950s and about 60-90 per cent were *abangan* (Ricklefs 2012: 81-5). Boland cites surveys that showed low levels of observance of Islam’s five pillars in the 1960s. In that period, in Central Javanese villages between 0 and 15 per cent of respondents carried out ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) and in 1967 only 14 per cent of the people of Yogyakarta paid *zakat* (alms) while only 2 per cent observed the fast (Boland 1971: 186). Such figures are consistent with the idea that the *abangan* were the majority in that time. A contrasting picture emerges from social surveys conducted over the period 2006-10. Then, some 90% of Javanese respondents claimed that they prayed and observed the fast always, routinely or ‘often enough’. This does not necessarily demonstrate that people behave this way in practice, but it does tell us what has become a socially acceptable response. The

heavy demand among Javanese to undertake the *hajj* – with years-long waiting lists to gain a place – also reflects the dominance of an Islamized identity and discourse in contemporary Javanese society. (Ricklefs 2012: 268-72)

Concluding Comments

It is crucial for our understanding of the historical paradigm which began our discussion – the idea of a deep gulf between what was Javanese and what Islamic – to note again the timing of that paradigm's birth. It emerged in scholarly discussions in a period of advancing, dangerously polarized distinctions in Javanese society, from the early 20th century through the 1950s. What Geertz and his colleagues observed were indeed serious and growing *santri-abangan* animosities. Place may have been as important as timing, for it is noteworthy that Geertz *et al.* worked at Pare, in the Kediri area. Historical evidence (evidently unknown to the MIT team) suggests that from the later 19th century this was an area of particularly strong social, cultural and religious polarization. Anti-Islamic books which ridiculed Islam and depicted the Islamization of the Javanese as a civilisational mistake were written there in the 1870s: *Babad Kedhiri*, *Suluk Gatholoco* and *Serat Dermagandhul* (Ricklefs 2007: 181-211). The Communist Party (PKI) was strong there before 1965. So Geertz and his colleagues were not wrong in their observations, but they were wrong in assuming that the situation was as it had long been. Hence they embraced, endorsed and promoted that paradigm, which we can now say was demonstrably wrong as a view of Javanese history. What they observed was not the contemporary manifestation of a conflict going back to the beginnings of Islam's progress in Java. Rather they were seeing a historically contingent circumstance, a hiatus or interruption of something like a century's duration in the long history of the Islamization of Javanese society and culture. They wrongly assumed – as Jay proposed in his monograph – that *santri-abangan* tension and animosity had long been present. No one had yet done historical research to demonstrate that the idea was wrong.

The overthrowing of a previously influential paradigm is important not only for our understanding of the past. It also gives us a better understanding of the contemporary process of religious change in Indonesia and may even help us to think more clearly about possible futures.

It is pleasing to be able to say that much of the research for our new perspectives has been done by Indonesian scholars. It has long been my view that the international leadership for the study of Indonesian Islam must come from within Indonesia itself. In my own research I have relied on the work of both established and younger Indonesian scholars.⁴ Four institutions seem to me to be particularly valuable for their promotion and distribution of Indonesian scholarship. The first – in no particular order – are the Dutch programs centered on Leiden, particularly the Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) which operated for several years. The second is the anthropology program at the Australian National University. The third is the MA program in religious and cross-cultural studies at Universitas Gadjah Mada. The fourth is, of course, *Studia Islamika*, whose 20 years of success were celebrated at the UIN conference in August 2014. I expect *Studia Islamika* to continue to play a major role in publishing new and important work on Islam, most particularly Islam in its Indonesian context. All scholars are fortunate to have this major journal available, and those who created and continue to lead and manage it – in the first place Prof. Azyumardi Azra – are to be congratulated upon its success.

Endnotes

1. The book is dedicated to 'the Wedono, the Modin, and my *abangan* Landlord: *Nuwun Pangestunipun Sedaya Kalepatan Kula*', which asks these persons to bless all of Geertz's mistakes. What he meant to say was *nuwun pangapunten*: please forgive.
2. The use of the term *santri* for a wider social group was not entirely unprecedented. See Ota 2006: 183 n. 47; Ricklefs 2007: 49, 248.
3. A fuller discussion and translation of Poensen's observations from the 1880s is to be found in Ricklefs 2007: 96-102.
4. Readers will find works by the following Indonesian authors (among others) cited in my 3 books on Islamization in Java: Azyumardi Azra, Jamhari Makruf, Sartono Kartodirdjo, Djoko Suryo, Kuntowijoyo, Onghokham, Hermawan Sulistyono, Najib Burhani, Muhamad Hisyam, Irwan Abdullah, Arbi Saniti, Zamakhsyari Dhofier, Bachtiar Effendy, Fauzan Saleh, Amelia Fauzia, Noorhaidi Hasan, Masdar Hilmy, Luthfi Assyaukanie, Fajar Riza Ul Haq, Ihsan Ali-Fauzi, Himawan Soetanto, Muhaimin, Abdul Munir Mul Khan, Raharjo Suwandi and Soegijanto Padmo.

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Guidelines

Submission of Articles

S*tudia Islamika*, published three times a year since 1994, is a bilingual (English and Arabic), peer-reviewed journal, and specializes in Indonesian Islamic studies in particular and Southeast Asian Islamic studies in general. The aim is to provide readers with a better understanding of Indonesia and Southeast Asia's Muslim history and present developments through the publication of articles, research reports, and book reviews.

The journal invites scholars and experts working in all disciplines in the humanities and social sciences pertaining to Islam or Muslim societies. Articles should be original, research-based, unpublished and not under review for possible publication in other journals. All submitted papers are subject to review of the editors, editorial board, and blind reviewers. Submissions that violate our guidelines on formatting or length will be rejected without review.

Articles should be written in American English between approximately 10,000-15,000 words including text, all tables and figures, notes, references, and appendices intended for publication. All submission must include 150 words abstract and 5 keywords. Quotations, passages, and words in local or foreign languages should

be translated into English. *Studia Islamika* accepts only electronic submissions. All manuscripts should be sent in word to: studia.islamika@uinjkt.ac.id.

All notes must appear in the text as citations. A citation usually requires only the last name of the author(s), year of publication, and (sometimes) page numbers. For example: (Hefner, 2009a: 45; Geertz, 1966: 114). Explanatory footnotes may be included but should not be used for simple citations. All works cited must appear in the reference list at the end of the article. In matter of bibliographical style, *Studia Islamika* follows the American political science association (APSA) manual style, such as below:

1. Hefner, Robert, 2009a. "Introduction: The Political Cultures of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia," in *Making Modern Muslims: The Politics of Islamic Education in Southeast Asia*, ed. Robert Hefner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
2. Booth, Anne. 1988. "Living Standards and the Distribution of Income in Colonial Indonesia: A Review of the Evidence." *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 19(2): 310–34.
3. Feener, Michael R., and Mark E. Cammack, eds. 2007. *Islamic Law in Contemporary Indonesia: Ideas and Institutions*. Cambridge: Islamic Legal Studies Program.
4. Wahid, Din, 2014. *Nurturing Salafi Manhaj: A Study of Salafi Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia*. PhD dissertation. Utrecht University.
5. Utriza, Ayang, 2008. "Mencari Model Kerukunan Antaragama." *Kompas*. March 19: 59.
6. Ms. *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, L.Or.5598, Leiden University.
7. Interview with K.H. Sahal Mahfudz, Kajen, Pati, June 11th, 2007.

Arabic romanization should be written as follows:

Letters: ' b, t, th, j, ḥ, kh, d, dh, r, z, s, sh, ṣ, ḍ, ṭ, ḏ, ḡ, f, q, l, m, n, h, w, y. Short vowels: a, i, u. long vowels: ā, ī, ū. Diphthongs: aw, ay. *Tā marbūṭā*: t. Article: al-. For detail information on Arabic Romanization, please refer the transliteration system of the Library of Congress (LC) Guidelines.

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الملة الملاءية وءكوين الإسلام الإنءونيسي:

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