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John R. Bowen

Western Studies of Southeast Asian Islam: Problem of Theory and Practice

Abstraksi: *Studi-studi Islam Asia Tenggara yang dilakukan para pengamat Barat selama ini banyak didominasi kecenderungan kerangka pendekatan yang memisahkan secara tegas antara Islam sebagai seperangkat ajaran dengan praktik keislaman yang hidup dalam masyarakat. Mereka menjadikan ajaran-ajaran Islam seperti terdapat dalam kitab-kitab sebagai patokan untuk melihat apakah masyarakat di kawasan ini Islami atau tidak.*

Pendekatan semacam itu jelas tidak akan mampu menangkap dan memahami kenyataan keislaman yang hidup dalam masyarakat seperti terungkap dalam penafsiran kreatif yang dilakukan para ulama, naib, ustadz dan intelektual lokal yang secara aktif dan imajinatif menghubungkan pemikiran dan praktik lokal mereka dengan teks-teks dan tradisi-tradsi Islam yang lebih luas. Mereka ini mengembangkan kultur Islam dengan cara berbeda. Kultur ini memperantarai "aturan-aturan" atau teori dan "praktik-praktik" keagamaan mereka sehingga kehidupan sosial mereka bermakna Islami. Karena mengabaikan peran penafsir lokal ini karya-karya terkenal tentang Islam Asia Tenggara gagal memahami hubungan antara teks-teks normatif, proses-proses penafsiran dan setiap perilaku yang membentuk realitas Islam yang dapat diamati.

Di antara karya-karya sarjana Barat seperti itu yang sudah terkenal dan berpengaruh adalah The Achehnese *karya C. Snouck Hurgonje;* The Malay: A Cultural History *karya Richard Winstedt dan* Religion of Java *karya Clifford Geertz.*

Dalam The Achehnese, *Snouck membedakan Islam sebagai seperangkat syarat-syarat ibadah dari Islam sebagai seperangkat institusi sosial, legal dan politik. Yang pertama dianggapnya sejalan dengan pengertian agama di Eropa, sedangkan yang kedua bertentangan dengan gagasan-gagasan Barat tentang masyarakat sipil dan liberal, dan merupakan ancaman atas kekuasaan kolonial. Lebih dari itu, Islam*

sebagai institusi sosial, legal, dan politik tersebut dianggap asing bagi adat yang hidup dalam masyarakat Aceh sendiri.

Atas dasar pembedaan tersebut, Snouck melihat gap antara teori dan praktik Islam dalam masyarakat Aceh. Apa yang dipraktikkan masyarakat Aceh sebenarnya merupakan penyimpangan dari Islam teori. Snouck juga berpendapat bahwa umat Islam tidak akan bisa melaksanakan ajaran-ajaran Islam, karena tidak sejalan dengan praktek sehari-hari, baik yang didasarkan atas norma-norma lokal (adat) ataupun semangat modern.

Para pengamat Islam Asia Tenggara dari Inggris dan Amerika pada dasarnya punya pandangan yang sama dengan Snouck: adat merupakan 'landasan' bagi kehidupan sosial, sedangkan Islam hanya sebagai lapisan tipis di permukaan kebudayaan Melayu. Pandangan ini nampak pada Winstedt.

Bagi Winstedt lapisan paling dasar dari kebudayaan Melayu adalah "agama Melayu", dan lapisan kedua adalah Hindu, Islam, dan Kristen. Islam dipandang sebagai bahasa baru untuk mengungkapkan praktik-praktik magis lama dalam rangka hubungan manusia dengan ilahi.

Walau agak berbeda, karya Geertz, Religion of Java, *pada dasarnya dibangun atas dasar asumsi-asumsi yang mirip dengan karya-karya Snouck dan Winstedt di atas. Sama dengan Winstedt, Geertz juga menggunakan kerangka filologis: agama Jawa sebagai kompleks budaya merupakan dasar yang di atasnya Hindu dan Islam berdiri. Islam sendiri ditempatkan Geertz di puncak bangunan kebudayaan tersebut, dan karena itu Islam pada dasarnya asing bagi kepercayaan masyarakat Jawa.*

Sama dengan Snouck, Geertz melihat Islam sebagai praktik-praktik "murni" dalam melaksanakan ibadah pokok seperti ditemukannya pada kelompok yang disebut santri. Kelompok ini dikenali lewat afiliasi mereka pada organisasi Islam (NU, Muhammadiyah dan Masyumi). Mereka yang memahami dan mempraktikkan Islam tidak seperti anggota organisasi-organisasi ini, misalnya karena banyak bermuatan mistik, tidak dipandang sebagai bagian dari komunitas Islam.

Banyak yang mengikuti persepsi Geertz mengenai hubungan Islam dan masyarakat Jawa seperti itu. Di bidang politik misalnya, Ben Anderson selalu membedakan antara Islam dan Jawa. Dikotomi ini kemudian digunakannya untuk membaca realitas politik Indonesia. Kelompok Islam dipandang selalu mendasarkan negara atas al-Qur'ân dan hadîth sehingga tidak sesuai dengan kenyataan politik Indonesia yang plural secara keagamaan. Anderson tidak mempedulikan kenyataan bahwa banyak umat Islam Indonesia dalam melihat hubungan Islam dan negara tidak selalu demikian.

الدراسات الغربية عن الإسلام في جنوب شرق آسيا في المسائل النظرية والتطبيقية:

الخلاصة: إن دراسة إسلام جنوب شرق آسيا التى قام بها المراقبون الغربيون طيلة هذه المدة كثيرا ما قد استولى عليها الميل إلى الهيكل التقريبى الفاصل بطريقة جازمة حاسمة بين الإسلام كمجموعة تعاليم أو نظرية وبين التطبيقات الإسلامية التى تعيش مع مجتمع هذه البقعة. وقد جعلوا التعاليم الإسلامية مثل ما هى موجودة فى الكتب كقاعدة للنظر هل مجتمع هذه المنطقة إسلامى أم لا. إن التلمس مثل هذا واضح لا يستطيع إدراك وفهم الظاهرة الإسلامية العائشة فى ذلك المجتمع مثلما تنكشف فى الأعمال التحليلية الخلاقة التى قام بها العلماء والأساتذة والمثقفون المحليون الذين بكل نشاط واقعى وتخيلى ربطوا أفعالهم وتطبيقاتهم المحلية مع النصوص والتقاليد الإسلامية الأكثر اتساعا. هؤلاء هم الذين –فى الحقيقة– قاموا بنشر الثقافة الإسلامية بطرق مختلفة. هذه الثقافة هى المعبرة للأنظمة والنظريات وتطبيقات دينهم حتى حياتهم الاجتماعية ذات معنى إسلامى. ولأجل عدم مبالاتهم بدور التحليل المحلى هذا، فإن الأعمال المعروفة عن إسلام جنوب شرق آسيا فشلت فى فهم العلاقات بين النصوص الطبيعية وبين التحليل لكل عمل يشكل الحقيقة الإسلامية الذى يمكن التنبه له؛ وكذلك فشلت فى إدراك نظريات عن ضرورة حياة المجتمع الإسلامى فى الحياة الاجتماعية المعاصرة.

ومن بين أعمال علماء الغرب مثل هذا والتى عرفت وذات نفوذ هى *The Achehnese* (الاتشيون) تأليف Snouck Hurgronje (سنوك هورغرنجيه)، و The *Malay: a cultural history* (الملايو: التاريخ الثقافى) تأليف Richard Winstedt (رشارد وينستيد) و *The Religion of Java* (دين جاوة) لـ Clifford Geertz (كليفورد جيرت).

فى كتاب الاتشيون المذكور، فإن سنوك قد ميز الإسلام كمجموعة شروط العبادة فى الإسلام وكمجموعة نظام اجتماعى وشرعى وسياسى. فالأول: تصوره أنه فى طريق واحد مع معنى الدين فى أوربا بينما الثانى معارض للنظريات الغربية بخصوص المجتمع المدنى والحر ويعتبر تهديدا للسلطة الاستعمارية. وأكثر من ذلك فالإسلام كنظام اجتماعى، وشرعى وسياسى كما ذكر يعتبر غريبا للعادة التى تعيش عليها المجتمع الأتشيهى.

بناء على هذا الخلاف المذكور: سنوك ينظر أن هناك فجوة بين النظرية الإسلامية وتطبيقها فى مجتمع آتشيه. ذلك الذى يطبقه المجتمع الاتشيى فى الحقيقة يعتبر انحرافا عن النظرية الإسلامية، بل وأكثر من ذلك بل أكثر بعدا

عن ذلك سنوك يرى أن الأمة الإسلامية ليس فى إمكانها تطبيق التعاليم الإسلامية بل حتى ما يعتبر أركان الإسلام الخمسة: التعاليم الإسلامية ينظر إليها بأنها لا تتمشى مع العملية التطبيقية اليومية سواء ما ينبنى على التقاليد المحلية أوالبواعث الحديثة. ويعتبره علامة على قيام حدوث الإجراءات التخريبية للإسلام كدين حى. القرآن نفسه مأخرا سيصبح لا أكبر من مطلق كتاب مجموعة أغان قدسية.

بتعريف الإسلام كأنظمة ثابتة مميزة عن التقاليد المحلية مثل ذلك، فهم هؤلاء الذين يواصلون مبدأ سنوك فى ليدين أو ديلف يبتدئون عادة دراسة الإسلام الإندونيسى. وأنهم قبل كل شئ يتقنون اللغة العربية، لأنه عن طريق هذه اللغة يمكنهم التقرب إلى الإسلام كتعاليم أساسية أو كنظرية من النصوص العربية. إن معرفة الإسلام نظرية تتصل أخيرا بقياس أو تقييم إسلامية المجتمع الإندونيسى.

ولو أن الخلفية متباينة، فإن مراقبى إسلام جنوب شرق آسيا من الإنجليز أو الأمريكان فى الأساس يملكون نظرية مشتركة مع سنوك بأن التقاليد هى القاعدة للحياة الاجتماعية بينما الإسلام ليست إلا قشرة رقيقة على سطح الثقافة الملايوية. هذه النظرة ظاهرة فى كتاب "الملايو" لوينستيد.

بالنسبة له أن هذه القشرة الأساسية الدقيقة للغاية من الثقافة الملايوية هى الديانة الملايوية، ثم بعد ذلك القشرة الثانية التالية هى الهندوكية، والإسلام والمسيحية. فالإسلام نفسه ينظر إليه كلغة جديدة لكشف التطبيقات السحرية القديمة فى إطار صلة الإنسان بما هو إلهى، بل عند دخول التجديد الإسلامى، فينظر إليه لا أكثر من مطلق ثقافة جديدة من محمد.

لو أنه مختلف، فإن عمل جيرت فى كتابه "دين جاوة" فى أساسه يقوم على أساس انتحالات قريبة من أعمال سنوك ووينستيد المذكورين أعلاه. فمثل وينستيد فجيرت كذلك يستعمل إطار الفلسفة الدينية الجاوية كمركب ثقافي يعتبر الأساس الذى فوقه تقوم الهندوكية والإسلام؛ والإسلام نفسه يضعه جيرت فى قمة البناء الثقافى المذكور؛ ولذلك فإن الإسلام على أساسه غريب لاعتقادات مجتمع جاوة.

فحين اتفاقه مع سنوك، فجيرت يعرف الإسلام بأنه تطبيقات صافية فى تنفيذ الواجبات التعبدية الأساسية مثل ما لاقاه فى المجتمع الذى يطلق عليه "santri" (طالب العلم). هذا المجتمع يعرف عن طريق انتمائه إلى المنظمة الإسلامية (نهضة العلماء ومحمدية ومشومى). والذين يفهمون الإسلام ويطبقونه وليسوا من أعضاء هذه المنظمات، والأمثلة على ذلك كثرة الشحنة السحرية إذ لا ينظر إليها كجزء من تكملة الكيان الإسلامى.

كثير منهم يتبعون نظرية جيرت بخصوص الإسلام ومجتمع جاوة مثل ذلك. فى المجال السياسى مثلا فإن Ben Anderson (فين أندرسون) دائما يميز بين الإسلام وجاوة. هذه التفرقة قد استعملها أخيرا لإعطاء صفة للواقعة السياسية الإندونيسية، حيث المجموعة الإسلامية تنظر دائما جعل القرآن والحديث فوق الدولة حتى لا تتفق وواقع السياسة الإندونيسية المجموعة الأديان. أندرسون لايبالى بالواقع وهو أن أكثرية الأمة الإسلامية الإندونيسية نظريا فى صلتها بين الإسلام والدولة لا تكون دائما مثل ذلك.

Even a cursory glance at studies of Southeast Asian Islam written by scholars from different countries reveals striking differences in the topics they discuss. Scholars living in Southeast Asia write often and well about schools, about the social and intellectual lives of leading figures, about jurisprudence, and about religious worship (*'ibâdah*). Scholars living in Europe or America, by contrast, more often examine the political or social roles of religious organizations, the local culture qualities or religious ideas, or ritual in that broader sense spanning healing spells, visits to saints' tombs, and religious worship.

This contrast in topics involves differences in what is thought of as "Islam" or "religion". If, for various political and intellectual reasons, Western scholars have been especially interested in Islam for its sociological, cultural and political content, then we still need to ask what the "Islam" of these works has been, or, to put the matter in a different way, how it is that Western scholars have dealt with Islam as a religion, and what they thought that "religion" meant.

I shall argue here that common to several quite distinct Western treatments of Islam in Southeast Asia has been a contrast of Islamic theory and practice, or, more specifically, religious rules (as found in scripture) and their everyday observance (as observed in, mainly, village settings). This "rule observance" model of Islam leaves out much of the creative interpretive work done by Islamic intermediaries: the scholars, judges, teachers, and village intellectuals who actively, and imaginatively link up local practices and ideas to the larger world of Islamic texts and traditions. It is these people who develop Islamic culture in different ways throughout the region, culture that intervenes between "rules" and "observance" to mark a good deal of social life as Islamic for those who live it. By neglecting their roles some foreign observers of Southeast Asian Islam have failed to understand the relation between normative texts, interpretive processes, and every behavior that characterizes not only the observable realities of Muslim societies (whether in Southeast Asia or in the Middle East) but also many Muslims' sense of how things ought to work in contemporary social life.

The literature is, of course, vast.[1] Rather than attempt the impossible task of reviewing Western scholarship on Islam throughout the region, I began by comparing treatments of religion in three important books: C. Snouck Hurgronje's ethnography of Aceh, Richard

Winstedt's analysis of Malay culture, and Clifford Geertz's study of religion in Java. I find more similarities in these three works than their very different theoretical frameworks might suggest. I then mention the ways that traditions of anthropological research (my own field) skew the practice of scholarship in particular ways. Finally I consider the problem of understanding the ideas and uses of "law" in these societies, and the wider issues of religion and public life that these problems indicate. (I also give most attention to Indonesia, partly because the literature is larger there, and partly because it is the area I know best).

The three scholars mentioned come to their studies with quite distinct purposes in mind. C. Snouck Hurgronje came to the Dutch East Indies as, first and foremost, an Islamicist, and used his account of religion and politics in late 19th-century Aceh to speak about the importance of *adat* ("custom") in Indonesia, and the fate of Islam worldwide. Richard Winstedt tried to describe Malay culture as a whole in the late colonial period of British rule, bringing to bear a philological model of culture. Clifford Geertz came to Java shortly after Indonesian independence to study the social and political forms taken on by different "great traditions" in Java.

Observance Observed in Aceh

The work of C. Snouck Hurgronje is rightly said (Boland; Ellen 1983) to mark the beginning of serious Western scholarship on Southeast Asian Islam, and his major contribution was his ethnographic study of Aceh made during the Dutch-Aceh war. *The Achehnese*, published in 1893-94 and translated into English in 1906, remains, along with Westermark on Morocco and Lane on Egypt, one of the main massive compendia of knowledge about modern Muslim societies.

Yet, despite Snouck's impressive knowledge of things Islamic and Arabic, his impact was to delimit and channel Islam in the Indies. Under his guidance, scholars and administrators in the Dutch East Indies began to distinguish between Islam as a set of requirements for worship, and Islam as a set of social, legal and political institutions. "Islam as worship" resembled the European notions of religion current at the time and was to be studied and encouraged as a genuine source and means of piety. "Islam as politics" was triply repellent: it contradicted European notions of what a liberal, civil society ought to be; it posed real (in Aceh) and potential dangers to colonial domination; and it was seen to be "foreign" in contrast to

the local or "native" norms of *adat* ("custom"). This distinction between two Islams, and their opposite valuations, continued in force long after the demise of colonial rule, and is not without its adherents today among Western social scientists.

Part of this "two Islams" notion was the idea that religion is, or ought to be, mainly a matter of each individual's observance of rules for ritual behavior. In *The Achehnese* (1906), Snouck underlines what he sees as a basic gulf between theory and practice among all Muslims, including those in Aceh (II:271). For the first 30 years of Islamic history, he argues, theory and practice were in harmony; thereafter doctrine troubled itself little with everyday life, but continued to hold fast to the past.

Indeed, practice had no choice but also to deviate from theory. Consider, he urges the reader, "religion in the proper sense of the word" (II: 272). Muslims could not, in any society, live up to even the five pillars of their religion, so burdensome are the requirements to worship, pay the alms and so forth. Snouck Hurgronje's method is to contrast two practices of Muslims: the one, a "central" one such as performance of *salat*; the other, one of lesser doctrinal importance such as the *terawih*, prayers performed during the fasting month (II: 304). Thus circumcision is given more importance than the theoretically central pillars. Also, while people do pay the *fitrah* tithe, they are not concerned about what is done with it, nor do they pay the much more burdensome *zakat*. On an everyday level, people use Acehnese words for "good" and "bad" more often than they use Arabic ones, "a speaking proof that the universally recognized moral standard of Islam is much less closely followed than that of everyday life" (II: 275).

One sees here the famed "reception doctrine" applied to ritual and culture. The frequency of ritual performance, the degree to which people's actual ranking of the importance of acts agrees with the theoretically correct ranking, and even the degree to which everyday speech has been Arabized or Islamized —these are all indexes of the Islamness of the people. Following this logic, a truly Islamic people would exhibit 100 per cent compliance, complete agreement between behavior and "the law books", and a widespread use of Arabic evaluative terms.

The point of these contrast is that doctrine is out of line with actual practice. Snouck then uses this incongruity to explain the gradual decline of Islam as a living religion —in the Middle East as

well as in Southeast Asia. For example, his chapter on religious doctrine begins with the five pillars, but then quickly turns to topics of spells for rain and the veneration of saint's tombs —again proof of the divorce between theory and practice. This demonstration serves to disparage religious observance in general, to note its decline as people become more modern, and to attribute any signs of piety to political or economic interests. One sentence containing all the elements is worth quoting (II: 305):

> "In the centres of Mohammaden civilization (except those which depend for their existence on religion, like the holy cities of Arabia) the practice of the Çalât is much neglected, and the more so in proportion as they are pervaded by the breadth of religious liberty, for a large measure of compulsion has at all times been indispensable to the proper maintenance of these pious exercises".

Note how Snouck fits all his major points into this single sentence. Those who do observe requirements to worship do so for economic reasons as in Mecca, or because they are forced to. As people wake up to discover the possibility of choosing religion for themselves —the individual as the final arbiter— then they stop worshipping. Eventually, he writes, Islam itself will fade away. In the modern world it becomes increasingly more difficult to observe ritual requirements. And the Qur'ân is increasingly disregarded as an outmoded book —it "has grown to be no more than a text-book of sacred music" (II; 344). Finally, and with an eye to Aceh, he decries the debilitating "doctrine of the *jihâd*" that has become more and more out of step with the modern spirit of cosmopolitanism. Colonial policy can hurry along this inevitability by encouraging assimilation of educated Indonesians to the West, and by, in the meantime, encouraging adat and the private observance of religion.

Snouck Hurgronje's language is a bit outmoded but not all that much —it reminds one of Samuel Huntington's clumsy broadsides at the threat of the "Islamic world" against the West. But what does Snouck Hurgronje not write about? One does not hear about local *imams* and their interpretations of religious texts, nor about how people might draw on religion to advise a couple on their marriage day, or counsel another couple to reconcile rather than divorce, or disburse alms for the poor. Snouck Hurgronje's Islam consists of religious rules plus their non-observance: what we might call a behavioristic definition of religion.

Much has been made of Snouck Hurgronje's revolutionary stance vis-à-vis his predecessors, his insight into the true sociological character of Islam in Indonesia, in contrast to his predecessors' (particularly van den Berg's) assumptions that Indonesians, being Muslims, practiced Islam fully (see Boland 1983: 20). But although Snouck did overturn the current understandings of Islam in the Indies, from "they basically follow Islam" to "they basically follow adat", in doing so he retained the same view of Islam held by the others, that it consisted of a fixed set of rules that people more or less observed in practice. Snouck just reversed the empirical findings. All agreed that to be Muslim meant to obey a fixed set of rules and hold a fixed set of beliefs: the earlier scholars thought that Indonesians did that; Snouck that neither they nor any other Muslims did. The rule-observance notion of Islam was preserved.

One element in the training of Dutch scholars may have contributed to their view of Islam: in both Delft and Leiden, those intending to study Indonesia began with Arabic, such that they approached Indonesian ideas and practices from the normative context of Islamic texts and theories.

The Layer Cake of Malay Culture

British and American students of the region came from quite different academic backgrounds, and yet shared a view that *adat* was "basic" to social life, and Islam "superficial". Administrators and scholars in British Malaya came to such an idea by a different intellectual route to that of the Dutch, however. Underlying British writing was a philological approach to Islam, one that students of the topic shared with most people writing in anthropology and cultural history in the 19th century. The goal of a philological study of culture, like that of language, was to construct a family tree of cultures. Usually one proceeded by comparing several neighboring cultures to find a shared, presumably older set of culture traits that could be contrasted with later, secondary ones.

Thus, R.O. Winstedt organized his studies of Malays as a description of successive layers of culture: the basic Malay layer shared with nearby peoples, and then successive, "secondary" layers of Hindu, Muslim and European beliefs. In his book *The Malays : A Cultural History* (London: 1974), Winstedt begins his chapter on Malay religion by describing a belief shared by Malays and some other Southeast Asians about "the peregrination of a giant crab go-

ing in and out of his hole and so creating the rise and fall of tides" (p. 18). Why lead off a description of these Muslim people with an account of a crab? Political motives aside, this way of opening the chapter establishes the temporal, cultural and in some sense psychological priority of those beliefs shared by Muslims and non-Muslims of the region.

Winstedt only arrives at an account of Islam after he has described "primitive" and "Hindu" beliefs, and Islam appears as a new language for older magical practices, providing Malays with new forms of amulets, incantations and a "crude pantheism" which brings the human into contact with the divine. This account is learned —al-Rânîrî speaks alongside the *bomoh* (healer)— but it is also reductive: of religious scholarship to a basic, pre-Muslim cultural stratum. Of later scholarship Winstedt gives brief mention to modernism as "a new cult of Muhammad" (p. 43) that is noteworthy for the conflict it has engendered with "sûfîs". No mention is made of how Malays engage in central ritual practices.

Quite different in content are the post-World War studies II by American and British ethnographers of particular Southeast Asian cultures. Religion figures in these studies as part of a world view, not as a distinctive normative tradition. Whether studying Theravada Buddhism in Burma, Hinduism in India, or Islam on Java, post-war United States anthropologists in particular were trying to devise ways of studying a worldwide "great tradition", in Robert Redfield's term, with due attention to the local particularities of a village or town level "little tradition".

Among the works intended to do this is Clifford Geertz's *Religion of Java* (1960), a book that, along with his study of agricultural change (*Agricultural Involution*, 1963), has been much dissected and critiqued. The main criticism of Religion was that it portrayed religious and cultural ideas as (a) on a par with each other, and (b) fixed to their distinct social bases, so that *abangan* ideas were identified with the village, *santri* ones, and Islam in general, with the market and school, and *priyayi* ones with the court. Of course, as many pointed out, one finds noble *santri* and town *abangan* —and, by the way, Geertz himself said as much— and priyayi is a social category, not a belief system. [Geertz has recently written that he wanted to call the book "Religions on Java" but his editor would not let him]. These criticisms are important ones, but I wish to make a different

point here: that the book is much more like the earlier works, Winstendt's and Snouck Hurgronje's, than its post-war cultural anthropological thrust might suggest.

Geertz shares with Winstedt a philological framework: Javanese religion, as a cultural complex, has a "substratum" of abangan ideas (p. 5) onto which were erected Hindu and then Islamic edifices. At the center of this "whole Javanese religious system" is its most substratum-like ritual, the *slametan* (p. 11). Islam then is something placed on top of a structure, not a way of reinterpreting the whole thing. Islam will therefore always have a foreign character relative to Javanist beliefs. All that is found in the *abangan* bargain basement of Java is pre-Islamic, despite the many Islamic references found in spells and village conversations.

Secondly, and here are resonances of Snouck Hurgronje, Geertz defines Islam in terms of the "pure" performance of its central ritual obligations, which he finds among a group of people who are labeled as *santri* or "students" by others and who belong to explicitly Islamic voluntary associations (pp. 5-6). In other words, one folk category of people —those who are relatively "observant" of fast and worship rules— in used to define Islam. Those who may have interpreted Islam in other ways, mystical or "Javanist" through their inspiration, if they are not *santri* are not part of the Islamic category. Their Islam does not emerge in the same social forms —regular observance, voluntary associations— and so is not registered as Islamic.

One of many virtues of Geertz's study is that it captures well the categories, tensions and schisms of this part of Java in the early 1950s. People did, indeed, link up ideological tendencies, degrees of religious observance and political memberships. But emphasizing these linkages neglected others: the diverse scholars, teachers, judges and others who were engaged at the same time in interpreting Islam in different ways to villagers, townspeople and even nobles.

A subtle difference is at work. Geertz does unpack the differences in beliefs and attitudes between adherents of Muhammadiyah and those of Nahdlatul Ulama, and refers, albeit briefly, to their different ideas of how to read Qur'ân and Hadîth (pp. 158-59). But he does not show them interpreting and studying; these actions are given a far smaller role than are such odd-sounding beliefs as that atomic power was predicated by the Prophet. Geertz captures the variation in worldview very well: the "secularist" versus "pious" strains within

modernist thought, for example (though the latter term is ill-chosen). But it is world views that are summed up here, culture, not religious scholarship and interpretation.

Put another way, we come away learning of attitudes and opinions, not knowledge and study. Despite an entire chapter on education, what we read is a very lively and useful account of the social organization of various levels of schooling, with interesting details about curriculum, styles of teaching and learning, the history of various religious schools in the town, teachers' salaries, and so forth. But the content of that schooling is summarized in single-sentences: *fiqh* means such-and-such, and so forth.

Snouck Hurgronje (and many others) took as their starting point the textual Islam, in its Arabic embodiment, and then measured local (Acehnese) behavior against it. Clifford Geertz (and many others) took as their starting point local (Javanese) ideas and practices and fit Islamic norms, to the extent they could be fit, into the boundaries of these worldviews.

The contrast emerges even in the treatment of specific religious terms. Snouck Hurgronje writes of the pan-Islamic rules for *çalât*, using a learned transcriptive convention of his time, and then discusses Acehnese deviations form those rules; Geertz writes of *solat*, using a straightforward, and usually non-italicized, transcription of the sound of the Javanese to represent popular knowledge. In neither work are other levels of knowledge discussed: local and yet scholarly ways of discussing Islam. Put differently, there are no levels of knowledge in either work, only (in *The Acehnese*) Arabic Islamic knowledge from which there are local deviations, or (in *Religion of Java*) Javanese-based local knowledge of which one stream is Islamic.

Following Geertz's lead, many United States based scholars portrayed Islam in the region through a local cultural lens. In the 1972 volume *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, for example, Benedict Anderson deploys an analytical contrast between Islamic theory (here, political theory) and Javanese political culture. Anderson argues that reformist Islamic ideas contrast sharply with traditional Javanese ones on the issue of a ruler's legitimacy. Whereas "Javanese cosmology" countenances no transcendent laws against which a ruler's acts might be judged, the "rationalist" Islamic perspective attributes value only to such laws. Thus emerges, for this author, an inevitable conflict between real-world Indonesian politics, on the one hand, and the

refusal of the Islamic community to allow compromise between Muslim and not-so-Muslim groups, on the other (pp. 61-62). A purist Islamic ideal of a state based only on Qur'ân and Hadîth is contrasted with the practical requirements of living in a pluralistic world. The contrast is not an ideal in a world where tolerance is often thrown onto the ropes, but it underplays the possibilities within Islamic practice of bringing statecraft and custom into Islamic law.

One might note here the contrast with a paper in the same 1972 volume written by an Indonesian historian, Taufik Abdullah. This paper considers how Minangkabau Muslims drew on new forms of schooling and knowledge to challenge older religious and cultural ideas. The phenomenon studied is really the same as that studied by Geertz on Java, that is, the coexistence of different religious ideas in a single, albeit differentiated, social environment. However Taufik Abdullah's focus is on the thoughts and activities of a particular scholar-activist, Datuk Sultan Maharaja. He traces this scholar's development from his early attacks on *tarekat* schools to his later invoking of *tasawuf* writings to criticize religious modernists. Here we witness an intense social and intellectual struggle fought out between individuals and groups but also within the mind of a particular individual. How far this analysis lies from the notion that every social group has its own attendant worldview!

Anthropology

Anthropology has had much to contribute to the study of Islam —notably its focus on regional variation and the transforming power of local ideas— but it has also brought some baggage along with it. I shall mention three problems for our topic associated with the main tendencies in Western anthropological research.

First is the fact that most ethnography takes place in villages, and much of it in very remote places. I once counted all the articles published in the major anthropology journals on Southeast Asia, and found that more had been published on Nusa Tenggara, Timor and Maluku, taken together, than on all of mainland Southeast Asia! This emphasis does highlight cultural and social variations, but it means that few anthropologists study towns and cities, and it is in towns and cities there most Islamic scholarship takes place.

Secondly, Western anthropologists studying Southeast Asia are rarely trained to study Islamic topics. At best we will have read a few

books on the topic, and probably whatever was written about the place to which we intend to go. Rarely has, the field researcher taken classes on Islamic civilization, much less had any encounter with Arabic. (All these remarks apply equally well to this writer).

Finally, the main that ways anthropologists organize ethnographies into broader comparative frameworks highlights just those cultural features that are not Islamic. The main comparative framework used in recent Dutch ethnography is the "field of ethnographical study", which is the similarities among societies and cultures in a particular world area. For a Sumatranist, this concept leads one to emphasize the shared features of, say, Toba Batak, Minangkabau and Kerinci societies: Islam drops out of the analysis. Similar area-based comparative projects are found in Canberra and Paris. Implicit in these research frameworks is the notion that most important and worthy of study in these cultures are their most local features: their *adat*, their indigenous cosmologies, their marriage patterns. The comparative method will ensure that Islamic elements drop out of the analysis.

Law and Civil Society

Of all the topics covered in the studies mentioned, law seems the most difficult to analyze. Out of the vast realm of issues dealt with in manuals and discussion on *fiqh* (jurisprudence), our chosen writers have little to say. For Snouck Hurgronje, whose knowledge of Islamic law was surely compendious, law is the prime example of how religion has been out of touch with the real world. Laws must be — and therefore are— bent when they conflict with practical necessity, he writes, especially with regard to government and trade (*The Acehnese*, II: 315), but "the schools of religious learning" cannot recognize this as legitimate so they continue to develop legal codes independently of practice. Throughout his writings Snouck contrasts "the law", or "the rules of fiqh" or "the theoretical law" (II: 320) with "national custom, which gradually alters to suit changing needs". *Fiqh* is for him a set of fixed rules which cannot be implemented.

Family law (on marriage, divorce and inheritance) is another matter. Here our writers acknowledge the implementation of the law, but have curiously little to say. For Snouck (II: 328), the domain of the family "in our estimation lies outside the sphere of religion". Winstedt complains (pp. 115-116) that in British Malaya the

Qâdî has been erroneously allowed to "interfere" in the practice of inheritance, thereby causing a "grave" problem by splitting land into silly fractions. Geertz devotes a chapter to "Moslem law", but this turns out to be mainly about the ministry of religion, with only a paragraph on marriage and divorce and one sentence on inheritance, even at a time when people were making ample, if unofficial, use of religious judges to handle inheritance matters (Lev 1972).

Why this near silence on legal practices? Let me suggest two reasons. First, the "rule observance" model of Islam by passes jurisprudential practice. Scholars before and after Snouck Hurgronje have misunderstood *fiqh* to be a set of pan-Islamic rules, rather than a process of deciding cases. Practices not in accord with textbooks of Islamic law were assumed to show that Islam had not been "received" locally: for example, inheritance practices in Minangkabau or Java. And yet *fiqh* allows for a wide range of interpretation of sacred texts, and also for the recognition, as religiously proper, of practices based on agreement or custom.

Take inheritance as an example. Islamic law sets out clear procedures and rules for dividing an estate. People may or may not avail themselves of those rules; they are "facilitative" in that if people agree to do something else with the estate such a decision is by no means unIslamic —indeed, the recent compilation of Islamic Law for Indonesia gives religious legal force to such decisions by consensus. Consider the analogy with United States inheritance law. There, if there is no will, the state will divided the property equally among the heirs, but if the heirs agree to do otherwise such an agreement is by no means against the law. The fact that most often heirs do divide property in other ways does not make the law "not received".[2]

Moreover, in the Middle East as well as in Southeast Asia, religious judges do take account of custom in reading decisions. Thus, law as jurisprudential practice, rather than law as scripture, already includes elements of *adat*. Thus one finds the *'ulamâ'* in West Sumatera interpreting ancestral property (*pusako tinggi*) as a pious trust (*waqf*) and thus outside the domain of inheritance law. Such an interpretation would have appeared, erroneously, in the "rule observance" model employed by Snouck Hurgronje as an example of "non-reception".

A second reason for Western avoidance of legal practice may be yet more fundamental. Underlying dominant Western social theo-

ries is an ideal of "civil society" in which the state has no part. These folk models vary —United States ideas focus on the morally transcendent character of the individual, those in Europe on the importance of social groups— but they agree on a strict division between the domain of the state and that of civil society. They also agree on the notion that religion is fundamentally a private affair.

These assumptions have shaped the ways Western scholars have seen the future of Islam. C. Snouck Hurgronje thought that Islam would come to resemble European Christianity as a private religion with little place for law. Clifford Geertz thought that the attachments to religious-based politics would have to die out for properly civic attachments to the nation-state to flourish. Rightly or wrongly, these and related assumptions probably make it difficult for many Western scholars to accept as legitimate, and as truly popularly desired, the extension of the state—through the religious court system, for example—into the domestic domain. This difficulty in acceptance may lead to a conscious or subconscious blocking out of religious law as a topic for the kind of sympathetic research that anthropologists practice.

These issues are still live ones: the issues of privatization of religion and pluralism in public life both invoke the relation of the state to religion. In the United States the issues have arisen with respect to abortion law and the propriety of Christian rhetoric in public life. In Europe they have been concerned with the appropriateness of Islamic dress worn in public schools, and the limits of press freedom when religious sensitivities are threatened. In Southeast Asian societies they have concerned the willingness of civil courts to perform marriages between persons of different religions, and the appropriateness of attending other faiths' public ceremonies. Issues of how to properly interpret religion, religious culture, and the public place of religious expression do not distinguish the West from Southeast Asia; on the contrary, their very difficulty is something we share.

Endnotes

1. An excellent Dutch perspective, limited to Indonesia, is provided by Boland (1983). Koentjaraningrat (1975) offers a contrasting Indonesian perspective. Hooker (1984) gives a comprehensive survey of studies of Islamic law throughout the region; a recent issue of *Law & Society Review* (1994) reports on a symposium on law in general in Southeast Asia. There are no, to my knowledge, comprehensive overviews of scholarship on the topic for Malaysia, Burma and the Philipines; Ellen's (1983) is a useful, and perspective, analysis of Islam and *adat*, and I rely on it here.
2. Indeed, in a footnote, Snouck Hurgronje recognizes that these divisions by agreement are allowed in Islamic law (1906, II:317), but then does not recognize the challenge this flexibility makes to the reception doctrine.

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