

# The Relationship Between Islam and Adat in Indonesia a Comparison Between Java and Minangkabau

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## 1. Introduction

Islam has spread throughout Indonesia since the thirteenth century, initially in Aceh and then gradually to the rest of Indonesia. When Islam first came to Indonesia is still debatable. There are several pieces of concrete evidence. First, "three gravestones discovered in the Pase district of north Sumatra, dated in the first half of 15c, another at Gresik in east Java of 1419. It has been determined that these originated at Cambay in Gujarat" (Hooker, 1983 : 3). Another gravestone dated 1297 from Pase is not known to be of Cambay origin but construed to derive from India. Several Gravestones from Java dated 1102 and 1391 are also known but their derivation cannot be identified. Secondly, there is evidence from early travellers accounts : "the Great Moroccan traveller, Ibn Battuta visited Pase in 1345 and describes its people as Muslim. Marco Polo was in the area in 1292 and describes Perlak as Muslim but that 'Samara' remained heathen" (Hooker, 1983 : 4). Hooker still hesitates whether 'Samara' is Samudra or Pase or not, and at the moment there is consensus that 'Samara' is Samudra. The third body of evidence are the local histories which link with the introduction of Islam, i.e. "*the Hikayat Raja-raja Pasai and Sejarah Melayu 1612*" (Hooker, *ibid*).

However, the above evidence is still limited. It only gives names of place, the religion and dates, and "the account of

travellers to the region are not wholly reliable, either with respect to their geography or to information on the depth and spread of response to Islam" (Hooker, *ibid*). Nevertheless, the information of the traveller's accounts and the surviving epigraphy are intelligible, because the travellers just reported whatever they saw and heard, and the epigraphy only mentioned the most important messages.

Undoubtedly, the evidence still provides some evidence that Islam had spread at the time in the region. Consequently, it might have effected the particular cultural form in which the religion spread. From the available data, one can hypothesize the immediate origins of Islam in Indonesia. Three hypothesis have been put forward. These are, firstly, from the Arabs of Hadramaut, secondly from south India and finally from Bengal. Eventhough, there is no conclusion yet from the interpretation of the evidence concerning the origins, however, the second hypothesis seems to be the most acceptable because :

This hypothesis rests on the demonstration of three points. First, a significant Muslim presence in south India. This is known to have occurred at the correct time. Second the existense of trading links between south India and South-East Asia. This has also been demonstrated. Third, the existence of a prominent Muslim element in this trade, and thus a Muslim element in the South-East Asian population. (Hooker, 1983 : 5).

Other hypothesis about the early Islamization of Indonesia was advanced by A.H. Johns (Austalian Philologist). There

are two Asian routes in which Islam came along and was spread by *shufi* missionaries. The first route was overland route by caravan through central Asia; and the second route, via the Indian Ocean.

The culture communication between the fountain heads of Islam and the Indonesian port-town via overseas route had, ..., brought the idea of great mystics of Islam first to North Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula, and subsequently to Java from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries (Koentjaraningrat, 1985 : 47 - 48).

The latter hypothesis is similar to the second hypothesis of the immediate origins of Islam in Indonesia. If it is so, mystics of Islam in Indonesia might have been influenced with *tasawuf dogma*. It would seem that the route by which Islam was introduced into Indonesia affected its cultural form. It seems that the religion, since its inception, has never separated from Arab culture as a whole. "Islam law, the *shari'a*, governs man's relations with his fellow as well as his relationship with God" (Hooker, 1978 : 91).

In the diffusion context, it means that local culture would face a new doctrine.

The result is a tension between local culture or, more exactly, indigenous modes of conceptualizing the world and thinking about the eternal verities, and the literary information defining the belief in God and the practice of His commands. (Hooker, 1983 : 2).

Consequently, the acceptance of Islamic tenets in Indonesian archipelago varies from place to place, and "in its purely religious aspect Islam demonstrated an ability to come to some accommodation with other systems of belief, especially animism in its various forms" (Hooker, 1978 : 91). In Java for example, there is wide variation in the acceptance of Islamic ideas, from conservative Muslim *Santri* at one extreme to traditional mystics and animist at the other. In Minangkabau Islam coexists with the *adat* and in Aceh Islam coexists with animism etc.

On the other hand, throughout Indonesia, local and past Indianderived institutions still provide modes of behaviour as customs or *adat*. *Adat* is part of local culture, that can be defined as "legal systems, that is as normative systems which guide human behaviour" (Hooker, 1983 : 33). And it is "no more than customary than customary practice, and may incorporate Muslim practice as much as oppose it" (Ellen, 1983 : 64). In many cases both can be combined in certain institutions, in Javanese mystical syncretism for example.

Hitherto, nominally approximately 90% of the total population of Indonesia are Muslim. Presumably, the feature of the relationship between Islam and *adat* in Java and west Sumatra, seems to be different. Here I shall compare the ethnic Javanese and the Minangkabau. The ethnic Javanese represent the majority population in Indonesia. Most consider themselves Muslims, but only a few conduct the Islamic *shari'a*. On the other hand, the Minangkabau people are considered to be Pious Muslim.

## 2. The Development Of Islam In Java And Minangkabau

Although there is no exact evidence yet about when Islam spread in Java, and the conversion of Javanese to Islam, at the moment we generally assume the following:

Islam came to Java from Malacca, a newly emerging State on the west coast of the Malay peninsula. When, in the course of the fourteenth century, the power of Majapahit as a commercial empire declined, control of the western part of the trade route through the Indonesia archipelago was taken over by that state. Its port was frequently visited by Muslim merchants from Gujerat, South India and Persia (Koentjaraningrat, 1985 : 45).

In the end of the fifteenth century Islam began to spread among the Javanese merchants in Gresik, Demak and Tuban. The spread of Islam in Java be-

came gradually wider after the last Javanese Hindu-Buddhist empire was conquered by Demak and the latter became the first Muslim Kingdom in Java.

In the Demak period, in the early sixteenth century the spread of Islam was implemented by Muslim Missionaries, led by wandering religious teachers or holy saints (*wali*). "Pious Javanese of the 17th century and later believed that Islam was spread in Java by the activity of a group of nine saints (the *wali sanga*), who had their centre at the holy mosque of Demak" (Pigeaud et.al. 1976 : 6). In this respect, with the reason of not making culture shock, They adapted the Javanese's educational institution, which was called *Mandala*. Then, this institution was converted into an Islamic version and called *Pondok Pesantren*. Presumably, the curricula, which were taught to its disciples, were not only Islam tenets, but also Javanese sciences (*Ilmu Kejawen*), based on the origin of Javanese knowledge and combined with Hindu-Buddhist dogma. For example, the disciples were taught to read and conduct the *Rukun Islam or shari'a* in their holy book *Al Qur'an and Haddith*, and also the Javanese mysticism, magic etc.

During the Mataram period, the rulers probably allowed the spread of Islam in the countryside and the themselves were devotees of Islam, but they refused to wear Muslim panoply. They built large mosques near their courts. However, the rulers of the Javanese Kingdoms, such as Mataram, still grasped Hindu-Buddhist tenets by conducting several rituals such as rites of passages, rites of the Javanese calendar related to the Islamic holyday etc. In conducting the rituals, they combined Hindu-Buddhist substantiated and Islam's incantation, and these Royal rituals, by and large, are imitated by Javanese villagers until nowadays with some modification and changes. Even though most Javanese

consider themselves as Islamic, they never or rarely conduct the *shari'a*. This sort of belief fusion is usually called syncretism.

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was an Islam puritan movement, formed by the pious Muslim *haji*, who had just come from Mecca and the youth people. They tried to implement the *Rukun Islam* without being contaminated with traditional rituals. As a result, they do not implement *salmetan*, *nyekaror* grave visiting ritual, and also avoid Javanese Shadow puppet performances. The most puritanical of these movement is called *Muhammadiyah*.

According to Geertz in his "Religion of Java", there are three kinds of belief system related to Islam in Java i.e. *Islam santri*, *Islam abangan* and *Priyayi*. The structure is widely criticized by some Indonesian scholars. Correspondingly, Koentjaraningrat in his "Javanese Culture" groups the *abangan* and *priyayi* into a category called *agami Jawi*.

Meanwhile, in Minangkabau society, the development of Islam shows a different picture. Before Islam came to this region, Minangkabau society was controlled by the *adat* based on original Minangkabau culture and Hindu-Buddist notions.

The key figure in the religion of Minangkabau peasant was the shaman, for whom the Minangkabau term *pawang* generally used ... The theoretical justification for the work of 'pawang' was peasant belief in the dualism of the soul. Each individual was thought to have a real soul and a soul which could disappear; it was the latter, called *semangat*, which represented life's vital power. In this way illness could be explained as the capturing of the 'semangat' by an evil spirit, and it was the role of the 'pawang' to call on his or her familiar spirits to track down the lost *semangat* and return to the sufferer. (Dobbin, 1983 : 117).

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A new religion came to Minangkabau, which was marked by the rise in Indian traders and the Hindu-Javanese court of Adityawarman.

This new religion was associated with the former megalithic cult. Adityawarman used the stone pillars for his inscriptions, or carved additional marking on their summits, and sacred centres such as the three stone seats near *Lima Kaum* were used by the King in his own court ceremonial. But he also introduced the religion of which he was devotee, a *Tantric* form of demonic Buddhism with *Sivaite* elements (Dobbin, 1983 : 118).

This sort of belief and cult also flourished in Majapahit, but did not survive long in Minangkabau. The survival elements of the belief was ...the concept of the divinity of the ruler, who was transformed by the miracle of his accession into a divine being and became the sustainer of the cosmic order. The ruler could never afford to neglect magical ceremonies to sustain his power and in Minangkabau this sacral character of the ruler remained very marked through the centuries (Dobbin, *ibid*).

Islam came to Minangkabau at the end of the fifteenth century. The preeminent factors that caused the success were that in the earliest years of Islamic development was associated with the city. "...Islam requires the city in order to realize its social and religious ideals" (Dobbin, *ibid*). In addition, Islam in some way, could also be adapted to the Minangkabau royal family, even though they had their own sacral cult and belief.

The development of Islam in Minangkabau was also associated with the gold trade. By the mid-seventeenth century most gold merchants had been converted to Islam, and then spread their belief to other villagers. The villagers, who had no connection trade, became devotees of Islam through two ways. "First was the affiliation the new religion was able to evolve with the family and lineage system, and the second was the

relationship of Islam to the village community as a whole" (Dobbin, 1983 : 120).

The Islamic revivalism rose in the early nineteenth century under the name of the *Padri Movement*. However during its early movement the Padri was involved in the war against the Dutch Colonial Government. So it only paid a little attention to Islamic revivalism itself.

During this period the Padri movement itself underwent certain change. Its extreme puritanism simply could not be maintained for so long. Villagers in the devotedly *Padri Pandai Sikat*, for example, were observed in 1924 to be chewing *sirih* (betel leaf) and smoking tobacco (Dobbin, 1983 : 146).

The recent movement of Islam puritans which rose by the midtwentieth century, is *Muhammadiyah*. "The promoter of Muhammadiyah in Minangkabau was Haji Rasul. He asserted that Muhammadiyah's goal was to guide its members in their relationships with the three friends i.e. God, *nafsu* and man's fellow human being" (Abdullah, 1971 : 70). Muhammadiyah at its early movement reflected "both the nature of political activities among the *Kaum Muda* (youth) educated group and also the operation of dutch Islamic policies" (Abdullah, 1971 : 71). The spread of Muhammadiyah in Minangkabau, first was in the *nagari* areas rather than in the town and it was the result of its ability to influence adat authority and religious teachers as well as the trades. Thus the success of the Muhammadiyah movement was due to the controlling of the school and the adat institutions.

### 3. The Relationship Between Islam and Adat In Java and Minangkabau

As we have just discussed, there seems to be syncretism among Pre-Hinduistic, Hinduistic and Islamic element in Java and a close relationship between Islam and *adat* in Minangkabau. These

features can be generally testified in real everyday life and the following description tries to discuss the relationship between Islam and *adat* in both societies.

In the Javanese tradition every change of individual status or calendrical period, is by and large, accompanied by a *slametan* ritual. As a whole 'slametan' rituals symbolize a submissive representation of the man himself to unify with the God and also with the social group. The main 'slametan' elements consist of a set of sacrificial meals, burning incense and incantation. The main role of Islam in the 'slametan' ritual is in the incantation element, which is recited when the chant reciter bless the sacrificial meal and the host burns the incense. In such simple, 'slametan' ritual, there is a complex syncretic belief system.

And again, many of the Javanese Muslim calendrical celebrations include the 'slametan' meals described above. They are :

1) On the tenth of the month *Suro* the first month of Javanese Muslim calendar.

2) On the tenth of the third month *Mulud* is the day for celebrating the birth and death of Muhammad.

At the court of Yogyakarta Kingdom, *muludan* is celebrated by the *Garebeg Mulud* State Ceremony. During the '*Garebeg Mulud*' (a week) the sacred 'gamelan' musical instrument called the *Kyai Sekati* are moved from the palaces to the palace mosque on the square (Koentjaraningrat, 1985 : 368).

This procession is always accompanied by other rituals, which are full of religious meaning, both mystical and Islamic.

3) On the seventh of month *Rejeb*, to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's ascension to heaven, the ritual is called *Rejeban* or *Mikradan*.

4) On the fifteenth of month *Ruwah*, on the first of month of *Sawal* celebrates the end of fasting, and on the tenth of month *Besar*, the last month of the Java-

nese Muslim calendar, celebrates the day of the Prophet Ibrahim's sacrifice, and the day of the hajj in Mecca. All of the Islamic holy days, by and large, are still celebrated in both the courts and villages level by presenting sacrificial meals.

In the case of marriage, in Java there are at least two parts which are influenced by Islam, i.e. in the wedding ceremony and the divorce system. In the wedding ceremony the bride's father, as her *wali* (guardian) asks her formally whether she agrees to getting married. This ceremony must be witnessed by her family and others. "The 'wali-ship' for a Javanese bride, established according to Islamic law, is the responsibility of relatives in the patrilineal line, of which the first is her father" (Koentjaraningrat, 1985 : 129). Furthermore, before the original Javanese core ritual in the wedding ceremony is implemented, there is an official ritual from the government representation, conducted by *pengulu*, a head of religious official. This ritual is called *ijab kabul*, Islam version. In the mean time, if the marriage is not successful, the bride and groom do not fit to each other, they can get divorced and it must be officially determined and legitimated by 'pengulu' by falling the firsts *talak* a decision of getting divorced in accordance to Islamic law. If the 'talak' reaches the third level, the couple cannot remarry.

Meanwhile, in Minangkabau the role of Islam in influencing *adat*, shows different features to that of the Javanese, and in this society Islam has conspicuous influence in inheritance affairs, marriage and divorce. The acceptance of Islam in Minangkabau society is an illustration of the absorption of new elements. It should be seen as a harmonious world containing both Islam and *adat*. "This harmony is usually characterized by the *adat* aphorism (*pepatah adat*) that *adat* is based on *syarak* (religious law). *syarak* is based on *adat*" (Abdullah, 1971 : 5). It means that

the harmony of the society has to be maintained by *adat*, and symbolized with *balai*, while 'syarak' maintains the harmony of self linked to the cosmic order, and is symbolized with mosque.

In Minangkabau society, the grouping of *parui* an extended family, becomes *kampung* or clan.

The 'kampung' themselves are traditionally classified in four *suku*, the legendary four original clan of Minangkabau. They are called *Koto*, *Paliang*, *Bodi* and *Tjaniago*, and in their turn also belong together two by two. Both groups, *Koto-Paliang* and *Bodi-Tjaniago* are supposed to have their own customs or *adat*. (De Jong, 1952 : 12)

*Adat* was valid only as long as it was not conceived to have directly confronted religion. But the elusive nature of the religiously valid behaviour continued since it was also based on the applicability of the dual concept of *mungkin* (possible) and *patut* (proper)" (Abdullah, 1985 : 143).

As far as we know, most Muslim societies are based on the patrilineal pattern, where in such societies male holds the important roles in politics, economics, social activities as well as religious activities. On the other hand, Minangkabau society is matrilineal. It means that kinship descent and inheritance are counted through female line. It seems to be paradoxical between Islam and *adat*. However, Minangkabau society seems to manage to accommodate the paradoxical matters by conceptualizing the above aphorism and validating.

...the existence of two traditions of complementarity at the local level linked to gender distinctions. In the first, 'masculine' *adat* reflects the influence of the shari'a and jurisdiction of the patrilineal royal family over the entire society, while 'feminine' *adat* reflects matrilineal and local custom. The second reflects the opposition between local custom (the *adat*) and the shari'a, regarded as more 'feminine' and more 'masculine' respectively. (Ellen, 1983 : 67).

By and large, the effect of Islam on *adat* can be seen in inheritance affairs. *Harta Pusako* (heirloom asset) which be-

longs to 'parui' should be distinguished to individual property. Subsequently, they are called "*pusako tinggi* and *pusako rendah*" (Abdullah, *ibid*). 'Pusako tinggi' is administered by the head of 'parui' or the property-owning unit, and kept in the room of his oldest sister. "It, or part of it, may only be sold in very serious cases, defined by customary saying : to cover the cost of ... the pilgrimage to Mecca" (De Jong, 1952 : 56). The illustration shows the importance of the role of Islam in Minangkabau society related to *adat*.

Individual property can also be called *harta carian* or *harta dapatan* or gaining asset, personally earned by the deceased, "should be transferred in accordance with the Islamic inheritance law" (Abdullah, 1985 : 143). If it is presented "by a father to his son are justified by Muslim law, and may take the form of a *hibah* a legally recognized gift (De Jong, 1952 : 57).

Furthermore, in the matter of marriage and divorce, according to Watson, based on historical data from the end of the nineteenth century, from Kerinci West Sumatra, religious authorities play an important role, as one might have expected, since they officiated at the ceremonies for a fee. There is an institution whereby a woman can be formally separated from her husband at her own bidding, and this separation is symbolized by the *iman* splitting a piece of wood. A proper divorce, however, can only take place if the husband pronounce the 'talak' (the Islamic formula for divorce, and he is initially unwilling to do this he can usually be persuaded by the wife's relatives to pronounce the 'talak' for an agreed sum. This is known as *menjual talak* (1985 : 173).

The role of Islamic law in divorce is more or less similar to that in Java.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on some available evidence that the immediate origin of Islam in Indonesia is assumed to come from south India, it is assumed that Islam which spread in Indonesia has been mingled with *tasawuf* dogma. Even though there

is opposition to accepting Islam in each society, apparently Islam demonstrated an ability to come to some accommodation with other systems of belief, especially animism, mysticism in its various forms.

Such accommodation is not only demonstrated in term of belief, but also with *adat*. In some part of Indonesia Islam shows peaceful coexistence with *adat* and at some institutions both can best be combined. It is intelligible if the coexistence and mingling varies from place to place. This statement is exemplified by the description of the ethnic Javanese and the Minangkabau.

Islam began to spread in Java among the merchants, at the end of the fifteenth century, and gradually became widespread after the fall of *Majapahit*, the Hindu-Budhist empire. To spread the religion, the 'wali' adopted the Javanese education institution, that was converted to Islam version, in which the disciples not only taught Islamic tenets, but also *ilmu Jawi*. This led to syncretism as a religious feature in Java. The pre-Islamic situation in Minangkabau seems to be similar to that of Javanese society, but in the development of Islam, both societies show different features. In Minangkabau Islam can be easily integrated into *adat* by conceptualizing *adat* aphorism and the devotee seems to be more intense than Java.

Nevertheless, in both societies, *adat* is not superceded by the Islam culture, but both coexist side by side. In Java some *adat* has been combined with Islamic tenets and incantation, and in tra-

ditional religious devotion, there are some variations in pattern of adherence. As a whole Javanese do not identify themselves as altogether Islamic. And in Minangkabau some Islamic laws have been adopted for solving *adat* cases, and *adat* only appears supreme in matters of decent and inheritance. Altogether Minangkabau define themselves as Islamic

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