

Javanese religion, Islam or syncretism: comparing Woodward's *Islam in Java* and Beatty's *Varieties of Javanese Religion*

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Abstract

It has been proven that the different findings in examining Javanese religious life are led by the differences in terms of academic approaches. It includes the ways some key terms are perceived and elaborated. The term 'Islam' is defined in its wide sense by one and its narrow sense by the other. The popular rite of *Slametan* is also elaborated its different aspects by different authors, one leading to Islam and the other leading to animism. The notion of mysticism and mystical practices are also employed to refer to something different, one referring to Sufi tradition, and the other referring to authentic Javanese mystical practices.

In addition, authors' perspectives matter. Particular understanding of some notions applied from the beginning of the observation has been guided the attention to particular aspects of religious life. Certain understanding about Islam has made one author emphasize more on the aspects of Islam, rather than different religious tradition. On the other hand, an empty-assumption-like autor to conduct observation on religious life of Javanese has been easily fallen to the dominant view of previous examination on the field. Those factors may lead to using different sort of data. If a single religious tradition like Islam is considered, the useful

resources are textual, since they tell much about the general development of the tradition. However, while no single religious tradition is considered more important than others, one may find that ethnographical account is the best way to see what kind of religious traditions exist and how the traditions are perceived and practiced. Lastly, as the leading notion and the subsequent sort of data used are different, the aspects of a religious tradition are emphasized differently, one the great and the other the little tradition. Therefore, the awareness -that 'there is subjective involvement in the process of knowing' is confirmed in this thesis. It has been proven by the fact that different findings of the same field research are caused by the ways researchers approach the problem. In fact, they have different approaches.

Telah terbukti bahwa perbedaan temuan dilapangan dalam penelitian tentang keberagaman masyarakat Jawa dipicu adanya perbedaan pendekatan penelitian. Perbedaan tersebut diantaranya adalah perbedaan cara memaknai beberapa kata kunci. Kata 'Islam' oleh satu peneliti didefinisikan secara luas, sementara oleh peneliti yang lain didefinisikan secara sempit. Pembahasan tentang Slametan juga ditekankan pada aspek-aspek yang berbeda oleh masing-masing penulis. Hasilnya, sementara yang satu menunjukkan bahwa upacara tersebut Islamik, yang lainnya cenderung animistik. Wacana tentang paham dan praktek mistik juga dikembangkan mengarah pada klaim yang berbeda, yang satu tradisi Sufi, yang lainnya paham kebatinan asli Jawa.

Selanjutnya, beberapa point penting terkait dengan perspektif yang dikembangkan oleh peneliti. Istilah kunci yang dipegang sejak awal menuntun si peneliti untuk menekankan pada beberapa aspek kehidupan keberagaman. Islam yang menjadi faktor penentu mengarahkan si peneliti untuk lebih banyak menekankan data dan penafsirannya pada Islam, daripada tradisi keagamaan lain. Disisi lain, karya yang nampak diawalnya tanpa pretensi apapun tentang tradisi keagamaan tertentu, bahkan mudah jatuh pada tuntunan karya-karya sebelumnya. Faktor-faktor tersebut mengarahkan para peneliti untuk memakai perangkat data yang berbeda. Jika yang banyak diperhitungkan sejak awal adalah suatu tradisi keagamaan tertentu, misalkan Islam, sumber yang lebih berguna adalah text, untuk melihat perkembangan umum dalam beberapa tingkat tradisi. Namun jika tidak ada prioritas satu tradisi tertentu, si peneliti menganggap bahwa catatan ethnography akan lebih banyak berguna. Taerakhir, adanya perbedaan-

perbedaan yang telah disebutkan tadi akan mengarahkan pada penekanan pada aspek-aspek tradisi yang berbeda.

Dengan demikian, keyakinan bahwa 'ada pengaruh subjective dalam proses mengetahui' sebagaimana yang dikembangkan oleh sosiologi pengetahuan telah terbukti dalam. Faktanya adalah perbedaan temuan lapangan dipengaruhi oleh secara apa masalah penelitian tersebut didekati. Nyatanya, perangkat penelitian yang mereka gunakan memang berbeda.

Keywords: *Islam; Syncretism; Subjective involvement; Slametan*

Introduction

In the introductory chapter of his thesis, *Islam Pesisir*,¹ Nur Syam begins with mapping out works dealing with Islam in Java. There are two types of views regarding Islam in Java; *Syncretism* and *Acculturation*.² The first position maintains that Islam in Java has been mixed with local beliefs that have already existed before Islam. Mixing between those two to some extent results in the fact that Islam components only work in the surface, while in the deeper structure of belief, it is still the local-ancient. Clifford Geertz is one prominent figure having such a view. The other scholars such as Andrew M. Beatty, Neils Mulder, Suripan Hadi Hutomo, Noerid Haloei Radam, and Erni Budiwati are said to be in line with Geertz in maintaining that Islam in Java has been mixed with other religious elements.

One of Geertz's important points drawn from his work is a conclusion that Javanese practice syncretism. Even though they are Moslems, They practice Islam mixed by other religious elements inherited

¹ Syam, *Islam Pesisir*, Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2005. This work primarily deals with Islam in a pesisir regency. However, his insight in the scholarship discourse of Islam in Java is very useful to be taken as a starting point.

² While syncretism is simply used to refer to a mix of more than a religious teaching or tradition, Acculturation happens if two communities having different cultural systems contact each other intensively, then making one or both cultural patterns change. See: Syam, *Islam Pesisir*. 2005, 12.

from their ancestors. Even though they belong to the Santri group, many of them practice Syncretism Islam.³ This implies that Islam practiced in Java has been mixed by local pre-Islam religious elements. This view then becomes so popular and controversial in the discourse on Islam Java.

Geertz's study was somehow influenced by colonial discourse about Javanese⁴. Geertz and his colleagues had formerly spent four months in Netherlands to study Javanese people and interview some scholars about Indonesia. Those scholars have certain influences on Geertz's understanding. Geertz's analysis about Slametan is noticed as in line with Mayer's and Moll's⁵. His Three-Variant's *Abangan-Santri-Priyayi* has also been popularized by some missionary scholars before. What Geertz understands about Islam reflects what has been understood by Snouck Hurgronje⁶. His view on Islam is Fiqh-minded, narrowing the definition of Islam and of being Muslims as only Fiqh and 'should have' practiced Fiqh. Such an understanding is neglecting other factors such as how Islam interacts with local cultures that have become main theme in studying Islam almost elsewhere.

On the other hand, the notion of syncretism is justified to have its truth to explain the complexity of Javanese Islam. Syncretism is seen as *'blending and combination resulted from cultural encounter and interaction'*. The idea behind this concept is about how foreign beliefs are localized. When outside beliefs influenced, they are absorbed, adapted and incorporated by local initiatives. In this process, *'the foreign ele-*

³ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960, 153-5.

⁴ Marx R. Woodward, *Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought*, Arizona: Arizona State University, 1996, 29-31.

⁵ It is stated that the similarity between Mayer, Moll and Geertz in terms of explaining *Slametan* is to the extent that they include detail cost one should spend to perform a Slametan. See: Woodward, *Toward a New Paradigm...*, 30.

ments need to find out the root or the original form of the local culture in which the foreign elements can be cultivated'. Because of such interation, the foreign elements could have more than their peripheral position⁷. Consequently, stating the Religion of Java as (pure) Islam is anthropologically misleading", as it will only such confusing terms as "populr religion and statistic Muslim.

There is also a view that somewhat in between, seeing that Islam in Java is a dynamical process⁸. Regarding Geertz's thre variants, in reality it is difficult to classify people into a single category. Instead, there are various social and cultural categories owned by a single person. Here, Abangan-Santri notion in dividing Muslims into animistic and pious category is inadequate. Even though Abangan people do not conduct five daily prayers -a parameter Geertz used to classify one as a santri- they still have monotheistic belief. The rise of Geertz's theory is, thus, placed in its own hitorical context⁹. His main argument is that the religion is not *statues of being*¹⁰. It is rather *statues of becoming*¹¹. Hence, there is an ongoing process within "the Religion of Java" that is -based on the pieces of evidence he got- the process of *Islamizing* in which many Muslims become more Muslim throughout the time.

⁶ Woodward, *Toward a New Paradigm...*, 26-7. Hurgronje is a colonial scholar concerning his intellectual attention on Indonesian Muslims, particularly among Acehness.

⁷ Neils Mulder, *Agama, Hidup Sehari-hari dan Perubahan Budaya*, Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1999, 3-5.

⁸ Bambang Pranowo, "Creating Islamic Tradition in Rural Java", Unpublished Thesis, Monash: Department of Anthropology and Sociology of Monash University, 1991.

⁹ For instance, his view that many *Abangan* attitudes excluding themselves from being Muslims are caused by political factors in which there was a heating relation between the members of Communist Party (mainly *Abangan*) with the members of *Nahdatul Ulama* (NU, the Conservative Muslim Organization) at the time Geertz conducted his field research.

¹⁰ The underlying assumption from this notion is that everything has static identity remaining stable throughout the course of history.

¹¹ Opposed to the notion of the statues of being, the status has an assumption that everything is changing. Factors determining the changes come from anywhere.

Hence, there are two opposite propositions related to the religion of Java, Islam and Syncretism. Each theory has developed its own foundation and held its own argument. In addition, there is a view considering that the religion is on-going process of Islamizing, so there is no way to simply be said that Javanese people practice Islam or practice syncretism. However, it is argued here that there is also another way to look at this problem. By examining subjective involvements of the authors of each theory, it is maintained that there are also somethings to do with authors' perspectives. In what follows, two among important reseraches on the religion of Javanese people will be examined, Woodward's and Beatty's. Before that, let first consider Mannheim's involvement on *Subjective involvement*. It will be found the relation between knowledge and existence and the notion of *perspective* to be the perspective of this essay.

Mannheim's knowledge theory: a framework of inquiry

Mannheim's approach is concerning on relating knowledge to exisence. This particular approach is firstly introduced by Scheler, then developed further by Mannheim. It 'seeks to analyze the relationship between knowledge and existence'.¹² It is stated that the knowing process in general is not only determined by kinds of 'immanent law', such as by 'the nature of thing' or by 'pure logical possibilities'. Such a process is also influenced by existential or extra-theoretical factors of the knowing subject. Such a subjective involvement can be seen from the beginning of the process of knowing, as stated by Mannheim that:

... (a) every formulation of a problem is made possible only by a previous actual human experiences which involve such a problem;

¹² Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: an Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Harcourt, 1936, 264.

(b) in selection from the multiplicity of data there is involved an act of will on the part of the knower; and (c) forces arising out of living experience are significant in the direction which the treatment of the problem follows...¹³

Such an involvement does not –in addition- merely come from the subject as an individual, but also from certain social group in which he participates. In this regard, 'social group' means not only concretely defined groups, such as organization in its widest concept, but any kind of groupings in which an individual shares certain similarities with other members, such as 'collective existence' based on hobbies or intellectual types. Different groups possibly have different 'principles of selection' and possibly make different choices in organizing and polarizing 'theories and point of view prevailing in a given society at a given moment'.¹⁴

However, it is questionable whether such subjective factors is merely as 'conditioning' factors on the development of ideas or whether the factors 'penetrate' into the 'perspectives' so that they influence quite significantly in the development of ideas. In this case, Mannheim maintains that particularly for the cultural sciences, 'every epoch has its fundamentally new approach and its characteristic point of view, and consequently sees the same object from a new perspective'¹⁵. Therefore, subjective factors indeed penetrate into the perspectives that influence significantly in the development of ideas.

Here, the term 'perspective' becomes the determinant factor. It signifies the ways one recognizes an object and understands it in his mind. Mannheim further explains 'perspective':

¹³ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia...*, 268.

¹⁴ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia...*, 270.

¹⁵ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia...*, 271.

It refers also to qualitative elements in the structure of thought, elements which must necessarily be overlooked by a purely formal logic. It is precisely these factors which are responsible for the fact that two persons, even if they apply the same formal logical rules ... in an identical manner, may judge the same object very differently.¹⁶

This particular approach is interesting to be taken into consideration and useful to stimulate the current discussion. As argued here, the differences on the discourse of Islam Java are partly caused by the differences in terms of perspective. However, it will not be the central attention in regard to the theoretical framework here. Mannheim's awareness is an example of how scientific truths are questioned in regard to their objective status. Every scientific inquiry assumes to gain certain understanding about reality. Many aspects of the reality are hidden. It is the task of sciences to uncover it. Nonetheless, truths about the reality resulted from scientific inquiries are not the objective one. They are open to be reexamined and criticized. When the new discoveries come, the old ones no longer become the scientific truths anymore. The old ones are already replaced by the new ones¹⁷.

The current attempt is based on an assumption that every effort to uncover the reality or the nature of what so-called the religion of Java does not contain any objective truth. It does not mean that the efforts, no matter how easily it is, could not gain an understanding about the reality of the religion of Java. Circumstances limit every act of knowing, scientifically or not. So, it is very possible to see the same problem results different scientific conclusions when dealt with different scientific approaches in different circumstances. It is not because such

¹⁶ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia...*, 272.

¹⁷ A good work is done by Thomas Kuhn explaining that scientific truths are changing as the paradigm in which the foundation of the truths lays is shifting.

efforts fail to carry their task out, but because the nature of each research is dependent on and is limited by each approach and each surrounding circumstance.

A brief review on Woodward's and Beatty's works

Two works being discussed here is Woodward's work *Islam in Java*¹⁸ and Beatty's work *The Varieties of Javanese Religion*¹⁹ Woodward main thesis is that instead of syncretism, the religion of Java is Islam. Treating Islam as a tradition, he finds that what is considered by Geertz as the influences of animism, Hindu and Buddhism actually have Islamic origin. There are indeed influences from animism, Hindu and Buddhism, as those faiths ever existed before Islam. The influences – nonetheless- only at the exoteric level, while in the esoteric level are Islamic.

Woodward's work is characterized by its great length explanation about the 'great tradition' of Islam. It is very important for Woodward to see what sorts of tradition influence Islam in Java. He then traces how the great tradition has been influencing Javanese people. In this regards, the hagiography of some figures in the time of *Mataram* and how the kingdom was Islamized is his concern. Furthermore, the hagiography and biography of some people in the latter periods has also been important. The aim is to conclude what the feature of Islam in Java is.

It then reveals that throughout centuries of development, there is no single tradition within the religion. The foundation of Islam, Qur'an, is the same. Nevertheless, Islam practiced by people in a place is

¹⁸ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, Arizona: the University of Arizona Press, 1989.

¹⁹ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion: an Anthropological Account*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

different from another place. Thus, there are Islam in Arabia; Islam in North Africa; Islam in Persia; Islam in India and so on²⁰. The differences are influenced by sort of interaction between textual Islam and local tradition, a tradition that existed before the coming of the religion. In this case, Java was not an exception.

Basically, there are two -sometimes conflictual- modes of religiosities resulted from two types of traditions; Sufi or mystical tradition and shariah-centric tradition. Apart from the discussion about the win of Mataram over the coastal states, in general, Shariah-centric is considered as the orthodoxy within Islam²¹. In this regard, orthodoxy questions the legitimacy of Sufi tradition as a part of Islamic tradition. It is particularly related to the historical roots of Sufi tradition and to the departing degree of Sufi from doctrines and rites held by the orthodoxy. Such a criticism is undoubtedly based on an assumption that there is –as Woodward put it- ‘the existence of a pure, original formulation of the tradition that can be used as a standard for evaluating the orthodoxy of any set of doctrines and rites’²².

Both modes of religiosity, normative piety and mysticism, colors the life of traditional Santri. When Qur’an and Hadith are interpreted, the flavor of Sufi concept is seen. The way Santri view how to be an ideal Muslim also reflects the influence of Sufi tradition as well as the influence of Sharia. However, the influence of Sufi tradition has changed from time to time. While in the old days Santri treated both modes

²⁰ This view is commonly held by Muslim scholars in Indonesia, to see that no single Islam in the world.

²¹ Islam has long history of such conflict. It is always so that Shariah centric Muslims claim their teaching as the pure one. Muhammad Abduh, for instance, pretended in his movement to purify the Islamic teaching that was corrupted by certain practices, particularly related to mysticism. Here, the term orthodoxy is used as opposed to heterodoxy, the pure one as opposed to the deviant one.

²² Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, 60.

equally, the more recent development shows that the influence of Sufism within Santri circle has declined. Mysticism is still practiced but only in small portion and by small number of Santri. The remaining portion has merely become religious discourses among them.

Sufi teachings also appear in the royal and village tradition.²³ Woodward begins his discussion on this matter by citing Hamzah Fansuri's text explaining that the law is the outer part of the religion in which the mystical path is the inner. The mode of religiosity found within the royal and village communities apply such notion. Religious practices emphasized in this mode include 'mystical practices and experience, ritual, and the veneration of saints'. Attentions to normative piety in both communities are less paid. For them, normative piety is for *Santri* who establish the vessel for their mystical practices. It applies such as in the case of life-crisis and calendrical ritual in which the role of *Santri* to officiate is essential²⁴.

In addition, among the noble family and villagers, *Sultan* as the king is said to be the ultimate mystic, able to attain union with Allah at will. While the court is the mystical content in which the Sultan is in the highest rank, the populace is the vessel. While the content deals with mystical practices, the vessel is supposed to observe the normative piety. It is done merely within Santri community. People outside Santri circle are –however- fond of adopting the religious practices of the court, mysticism. They are more familiar with such concepts as *wahyu* and, *kasekten*, and are fonder of visiting keramatan rather than conduct Islamic obligated rituals. Nonetheless, they need Santri to officiate life cycle ritual such as circumcision and funeral ceremony. The rituals

²³ Here, Woodward refers to communities outside *Santri* that consist of court or royal family and non Santri villagers. Interestingly, the former group outside santri equals to Geertz's *priyayi* and the latter is associated with Geertz's *abangan*.

²⁴ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 149-50.

symbolize the beginning and the end of mystical adventure. It reflects that the mystical practices embodied within the ritual need normative piety as a vessel that can only be fulfilled by Santri.

The practice of mysticism in the popular religion is questionable in terms of whether it is Islamic or not. Here the issue is centered in the concept of *Shirk*. Activities such as veneration to tombs and attaining magical power particularly by the helps of spirits is said to lead to *Shirk*. However, Woodward is convinced that it is only from the perspective of some radical Muslim. From Sufi point of view, as far as it does not 'distract attentions from the quest from union with Allah' is not *shirk*.

In general, Woodward sees the Religion of Java as a part of Islamic tradition. Everything is then interpreted in terms of Islam. If there is any influence from other religious tradition, it is only at the surface. The influence of animism and Hindu-Buddhism is not avoidable, since the tradition also existed long before the coming of Islam. Nonetheless, such an influence does not distract from the core tradition, Sufism. Even an animistic ritual is understood using Islamic theological and cosmological understanding by the participants²⁵.

The second work, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* is written by Andrew M. Beatty who conducted Anthropological accounts at a part of Banyuwangi²⁶ regency. Though not intended to deal primarily with syncretism notion, he uses the notion extensively and to be bases of his inquiry. The case is also true for the three variants of Geertz. Though not precisely similar in adopting the notion, Beatty seems to be heavily influenced by Geertz insight. What is more, his work is filled with richer

²⁵ See his views on visiting the graves of wali or ulama. While sometimes such activities contain worship-like ritual, some mystics view those as the replacement of the activities of hajj. See Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 137-8.

²⁶ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion: an Anthropological Account*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

evidence to support his thesis compared to Geertz's. In this regard, it is useful to consider Beatty's work as one of those going to be analyzed here.

The main aim of his work is not to deal with syncretism, but rather to find out how people deal with such religious diversity. Syncretism is assumed as the nature of the religion that is no need to be questioned. He undoubtedly uses the concept syncretism, and applies it to understand the Javanese religion. Like Geertz, he finds animism, Hindu and Buddhist elements among Javanese religious practices, moreover among pious Muslim religious practices.²⁷

Beatty's main concern is about the common ritual, Slametan. He presents the ritual as a popular ritual perceived by most people. There is no elaborated question related to its nature, whether animistic or Islamic. Its function seems to serve as a means for social interaction for people from different religious backgrounds. The ritual itself is a resemblance of animistic and Islamic elements. Its animistic influence is shown in the use of white and red porridge, stating elder and younger siblings, burning incense to feed the presented spirits, and so on. The influences from Islam is apparent from the use of various Arabic words, such as opening *salam*, certain Quranic verses, Islamic names, such as Allah, Muhammad and so on.

However, the ritual is interpreted differently by different participants showing their different religious orientation, whether it is animistic, Islamic, or Javanese mystic. It is noted that slametan can be meant differently by different participants. An animistic participant may emphasize on the importance of offering to certain spiritual beings. Mean-

²⁷ See, for example, the way he uses the concepts of pantheistic mysticism, spirit cults, and normative piety; and the way to describe village People with the concepts. See Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*,1.

while, a mystic may interpret certain symbols found in the ritual philosophically, such as relating it to human existence. What underlies such a different interpretation is the multivocality of symbols.

The existence of *Slametan* is further elaborated to see its animistic nature. Here, he focuses on the use of *Slametan* in two shrines. As it is shown, the ritual is used as a means to request something to the spirit rested there. Led by the caretaker, it is done in a way of conversation between the spirit and the sponsor mediated by the caretaker. There seems no Islamic influence, except for the use of some Arabic words mixed with prayer. Such a use is thought to be only as the vessel of Javanese content. The more important point in the ritual is the main intention of the people holding the ritual. They intend to request something by giving the spirit certain offerings. Another shrine has more striking animistic ritual as worshipping the spirit. It is like a cult that has its own religious teaching. It is interpreted that the spirit functions as their deity.

Islam practiced in the field is viewed by Beatty as having emphasis on ritual rather than dogma. He also finds that among the most reformist Muslims, the idea of puritan Islam reminds kept in the mind. In the level of practice, they still allow themselves to conduct rituals with animistic and polytheistic flavor. As a result, in the plural social setting, even the most pious still practices certain rituals regardless Islamic or not. Even though it is different from the way Geertz explained Islam, to some extent Beatty finds what Geertz found among traditional Islam, that is their fondness of conducting 'non-Islamic' rituals. The difference lays in the reason; while Beatty sees that plural social setting is the determinant factor, Geertz simply concluded that it is the nature of their religiosity.²⁸

²⁸ See Geertz's explanation on Abangan believe system in Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java...*, 5-6 in this writing.

Beatty's discussion about Javanism equal to Geertz's about priyayi. They both emphasize on mysticism as 'the heart' of the religion. In this regard, the main feature of Javanism for Beatty lays in the use of practical philosophy, focusing on the thought of metaphysics and ethics. The discussion reveals their understanding about the existence of God and how man should think and act. However, Geertz put mystical practice as the dominant one in which it reveals the understanding of good and evil (ethics) and how to attain spiritual development.

In general, Beatty, like Geertz, sees that the religion of Java is syncretism. Islam is only an element of it. Likewise, Islam refers to sharia-minded school that emphasizes only on formal doctrines. Outside the school, such as Sufi tradition is not considered. Beatty does talk about Sufism and its influence on the religion of Java. However, like Geertz, he also misses to identify to what extent the influence is.

Comparison of some key concepts

In the following passages, it will comparatively be explained about how both authors define some important concepts that contribute to the development of each notion. As will be seen, they have their own definitions different from each other. They had also have different kinds of matters that had been emphasized. These had than contributed to different types of explanaton related to Islam or religion of Javanese people. Those key concepts include; Islam, popular ritual, syncretism, and mystical tradition.

To begin with, Woodward used *Islam* to start his discussion²⁹. Seeing from 'the perspective of the Muslim tradition as a whole', Islam is not merely *Sharia-centric* school, but also including Sufi tradition. Hence, Woodward began to study the religion of Java with such a definition

²⁹ See Woodward's comment on Hodgson's in Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 2-3.

and intended to prove that Javanese religion had been penetrated by the values of the tradition.³⁰

In contrast, Beatty did not share the similar understanding.³¹ He - instead- developed the concept of *syncretism*.³² This referred to a situation in which many traditions live co-existence and are interrelated each other. It does not necessarily mean that there would be '*substantial merging types, with their loss of separate identities*'. The traditions are interrelated each other in a way that there are combinations of ritual and religious discourse in the public sphere. In this view, Beatty put the relevance of syncretism as 'historically situated' changed by the process of re-evaluation and reconfiguration due to socio-political tension.³³ However, Beatty was actually more interested to consider the belief systems *before* Islam. His attempt was to find out 'the original belief systems' before Islam, whatever it was. As a result, while Woodward began with *Islam* as the determinant factor and dedicated his research to investigate how deep Islam penetrates into the live of Javanese people, Beatty questioned how the old systems still exist and maintain their purity in the face of the imported religion; Islam. This is the first main contrasting point here.

Related to Islam, Beatty avoided making explicit definition. He instead observed how ordinary Muslims are. At the first instance, it was

³⁰ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 60-6.

³¹ The term 'Islam' appears in his introductory chapter only to explain how the religion was spread but then failed due to the powerful constrain from the kingdom of *Blambangan*. Then, the later successful Islam in the region is told through trade and conquest of *Sultan Agung* reign. It was then supported by Dutch government in Batavia to counter the influence of Hindu Bali. Dutch's support is also to encounter Shiva which was very resistant of Dutch conquest. See Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 13-4.

³² The use of the term is rooted from the context of the Javanese society which is plural having complex and diverse traditions. In such a circumstance, it is apparent that to live in harmony, Javanese people tend to allow any other traditions than their own to exist.

³³ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 3.

found that praying activities are a factor Beatty classifies one as a Muslim. He illustrates that the character of this Muslim is rarely missing daily prayers or Friday worship and conducting other Islamic ritual, such as pilgrim to Mecca. Another character is the fondness to chant the verses of the Qur'an without any comprehension on it. *Slametan* is not originated from Islam and said to be 'Javanist', it is ancestral. In addition, a Muslim should have a belief in the existence of afterlife, and the observance of ritual and other religious obligation is to gain reward and to avoid punishment from God in the Day of Judgment. Such a character is typified as 'God-fearing'. Earthly blessing as a reward is for Beatty not Islamic.³⁴

The character of Muslims recognized further by Beatty is their fondness to conduct *ritual* regardless Islamic or not. In Beatty's conception, the function of the ritual is greater than bothering from where it originates. He, thus, presents the practice of *Slametan* as a common ritual³⁵. Its symbols are interpreted variously by various participants. The ritual could be practiced by most people from any religious orientations.³⁶ Nonetheless, the role of this ritual is apparently more significant as a means to worship spirit beings.³⁷

In the case of the two shrines, Beatty is fond of showing in a great detail how the animistic nature of the ritual surrounding the shrines is³⁸.

³⁴ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*,117-21.

³⁵ Beatty sees it as the main and most common ritual in Javanese religion which has influences from Islam as well as non-Islam. It is unlike Geertz maintaining that the ritual is merely animistic in nature. See: Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 36-44.

³⁶ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 49.

³⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java...*, 24-6. Also see the explanation of Slametan within the explanation about two shrines in Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 85-104.

³⁸ The existence of one of the shrine and activities surrounding it is important. People go there to request something to be fulfilled by the means of Slametan. In addition, the significant role of the guardian spirit is maintained through circulated stories within the community. There is

His account includes the story of the *Barong* show. The cleaning relics' ceremony is described in a way to make reader know how each attendance perceive the meaning of every session of the ritual. *Slametan* performed in the shrines are animistic ritual as it is oriented to the spirits of the shrines as the center attention. Furthermore, *Slametan* ritual conducted in one of the sanctuaries is even more animistic shown from its procession that does not contain any Islamic elements, such as Arabic greeting and praying, or any referring to Islamic deity. It instead only contains the referring to *Eyang*, or -in Beatty's interpretation- animistic deity.³⁹

Woodward, on the other hand, quite shortly presents Slametan and other popular rites as parts of Islamic tradition. Then, he gives reasons why it is a part of the tradition. Firstly, he finds that the ritual is also found in other places where Islam exists, for instance in Kerala that is conducted also by Muslims.⁴⁰ Secondly, the ritual that is conducted by non-Santri villagers is officiated by Santri, showing that it is done in Islamic ways.⁴¹ Thirdly, such rituals serve as the container of non-Santri religiosity in which its content is embedded in mystical practices such as Kasekten, Wayu and Keramat⁴². Keramat is owned by holy

a popular story about the guardian that gives particular appearance to particular person. It is a sign that certain event will happen. Such a narration is maintained through the popular story of *Barong* performed by a drama group. Beside as a means of entertaining people, it shows how the power of the guardian spirit through the phenomenon of possession. Another shrine has more significant role serving as a cult. The role of the spirit is as a teacher in a sense that he teaches through symbols. As a cult, it has stuffs which are used by the followers to worship. The main activities are still the same: *Slametan*. Nonetheless, the ritual procession conducted is more serious. The preparation of the foods and other offerings is also strict to maintain the purity of the offerings from any bad thing. See: Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 54, 56, 67-70, 93-4.

³⁹ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 96.

⁴⁰ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 57.

⁴¹ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 159.

⁴² Wayu and Keramat are related to persons having special religious capacity. One is chosen by Allah, for example to be a king, through receiving Wahyu or the divine will. After death, his

persons after their death. In Sufi tradition, it is usually owned by Sufi or the leaders of religious sects. In Java it belongs to Wali -or Javanese saints- and kings. There are also many others whose sanctuaries become keramat places.⁴³ As it is common in Sufi tradition to visit the tombs of holy persons, pilgrim activities to shrines are considered as a part of Islamic tradition.⁴⁴

Woodward argues that Islam has also have mystical tradition. Islam refers to the tradition that the core is Quran. The tradition has been developed for very long time, beginning with the prophet. In the time, Islam is enriched by Arab tradition. The tradition that came to Indonesia, particularly Java is not the same as that of the time of Muhammad. Its development has been advanced by its interaction with many other cultures for centuries. As a result, there is more than a type of Islam. Woodward in this case elucidates two main streams found within the tradition. The first type is characterized by its extensive use of Islamic law or *Fiqh*, while the second is characterized by its emphasis on spirituality or mysticism.⁴⁵

On the other hand, the recognition of mystical tradition in Islam is absent from Beatty's work. His explanation on 'practical Islam' does not include the discussion of mystical activities or mystical experiences of Muslims. He, in this regard, is more concerned with ritual aspects of those people he calls *Santri*⁴⁶. Whether those people practice mysti-

shrine will become a Keramat place where people come to seek blessing. See: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 170-1

⁴³ See the explanation about kingship and sainthood in Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 172-7.

⁴⁴ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*,108-9, 137-8, 174-5.

⁴⁵ The first type influencing Islam in Java is from *Kerala*, west India. The second type is from Sufi tradition. See: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 60-6.

⁴⁶ See Beatty's explanation on Practical Islam in Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 115-57.

cism or not remain unanswered. Mysticism and mystical practices in Beatty's are associated not with Islam, but with *Javanism*⁴⁷. In this case, he does not relate the mystical activities and mystical understanding to Islam. If any, it is only to compare between those of Javanism and Islamic teaching. In so doing, he sees Islamic teaching as consisting only formal ritual and doctrine which is typically *Sharia* minded.⁴⁸

The absence of certain concepts used by Woodward in Beatty's work, such as Sufism or mystical Islam, is caused by his first intention to explain Javanese religion in terms of Syncretism, or more precisely in terms of Java in which more than a religious element meeting together. With this concept in mind, he assumes that within Javanese people there are elements of religions that co-exist. If his anthropological work is to explain how the elements work together in a single social setting, he need explain first what the characters of each element are. Here, it is assumed that every element has its own 'pure' form of religiosity. Therefore, he finds Islam identified with its ritual and Javanism identified with its mysticism.

Woodward, instead, is more fascinated with mystical tradition within Islam. Intending to examine the influence of Sufi tradition, his explanation on mystical practices puts Islamic mysticism as the determinant factor. However, he still considers the influence of other mystical systems. In this regard, he encounters the argument of Hindu-Buddhist mystical systems' influences by presenting the nature of Sufi teaching.⁴⁹ As he argues, while there are some elements of Hindu-Buddhist

⁴⁷ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*,158-60.

⁴⁸ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*,134-44.

⁴⁹ See Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 70-6 for the comparison about the concept of microcosm-macrocosm between Hinduism and Islam, and pp. 216-40 for the discussion concerning Polytheism or Shirk.

tradition practiced in Sufi tradition, such as the use of rosary and the practices of breath control and attainment of magical power, those do not violate the fundamental principles of Islam.⁵⁰ The recognition of other mystical systems is therefore not totally absent from his presentation. However, he argues that Islamic mysticism influences on Javanese society outweigh other mystical systems' influences.

Further elaborated by Woodward, The influences of the tradition among Javanese people vary depending on how they perceive Islam. In general, there are two types of groups understanding and practicing mystical teaching differently, the group of *Santri* and non-*Santri* (noble, *Kejawen* mystics).⁵¹ Different from Geertz's, Woodward extends the definition of *Santri* to include those who are familiar with mystical practices. Geertz, as it has been shown, classified this kind of *Santri* as syncretism *Santri*. However, Woodward does not see any influence from other religions as mysticism is a part of Islamic tradition. To support his argument, Woodward presents some hagiographical and historical figures of such *Santri*. His aim is to portrait how Javanese Muslims view their ideal *Santri*, while at the same time to examine how mystical tradition is historically developed⁵². Religious practices of this sort of *Santri* are a combination of normative piety and mysticism⁵³. The main issue in Islamic mysticism is how God and its existence are treated. The foundation of Islam is the belief in the unity of God, or

⁵⁰ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 215.

⁵¹ For the account of *Santri* mystical thought & practices see Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*,125-39; for the account of *Kejawen* mystics and how it relates to Sufism see also pp. 184-98 of the book.

⁵² Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*,96-115.

⁵³ The sources of normative piety are Qur'an, Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence. Meanwhile, the sources of mysticism are from the teachings of some Sufi from inside and outside Indonesia, such as Ibn al-Arabi, al-Ghozali, al-Hallaj, Hamzah Fansyuri. There are also some hagiographical figures of *Santri* who practiced mysticism; Sunan Kalijaga, Seh Mutammakin and Mas Rahmat. Some of the figures are introduced and their teachings are widely studied in *Pesantren*.

monotheism. However, in the mystical tradition the interpretation of monotheism varies⁵⁴.

On the other hand, Beatty is not familiar with mystical *Santri* and its recognition is absent from his account. He only emphasizes on what he observes in the field. He found nothing about such practices and focused on other things that appear in the field. Instead of discussing Islam comprehensively, he only focuses on how ordinary people perceive and practice Islam. This lack of explanation is however intended, as he aims at providing the information in which other fail to explain. In this regard, his criticism is addressed to those who only observe urban and modernist Muslims, and fail to see how Islam is practiced by commoners.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, such an approach at least misses a thing that is considerably important. As he decides to choose which group of people is going to be observed, he leaves to observe other group that also has a role in the whole society. It can lead the readers to assume that the group that he left does not exist.

Beatty's discussion on mysticism focuses on a group of people having relation with a sect called *Sangkan Paran*. He entitles this group 'Javanism' to refer to *Kejawen* that has been widely used elsewhere. Here, he makes no relation between the religiosity of this group and mystical Islam. If there is any, it is only to confront each other. The teaching of Javanism is philosophical. The main topic is related to the existence of God and Its all creation. God is described as impersonal and immanent with the creation. The process of creation happens implicitly through reproduction process. God is not therefore under-

⁵⁴ A controversial version of the interpretation is from radical Sufi. They assume that all being is God being. Other being, such as mankind, is merely the reflection of Him. Reality is the reflection of Him. This view is held by Sufi such as Ibn al-Arabi and is interpreted by Hamzah Fansyuri. See: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 126-7.

⁵⁵ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 115-7.

stood as it is in monotheism Islam, but as monism.⁵⁶

Another teaching found in this group is about mystical practices. It is encouraged for one who searches for enlightenment to look inward seeking illumination, by means of meditation.⁵⁷ Here he contrasts such a teaching with that of Islam. Islam sees God as a transcendental being. One needs to look outward worshipping idolatrously to anything symbolizing God, for instance *Ka'bah*. Unfortunately, it leads to polytheism. These *Sangkan Paran* people avoid making idolatrously, but prefer meditate trying to attain inward enlightenment.⁵⁸

In examining how Sufi tradition influence Javanese people beyond the *Santri* group, Woodward focuses his observation on the noble family. The familiarity of this family with Islamic mysticism has been developed for long time beginning at the early *Mataram* period⁵⁹. The general feature found within the noble family is their fondness of practicing mysticism. However, they think not obligated to practice normative piety. In this case, it is understood that noble family, culminated at the figure of *Sultan*, is mystical content whose vessel is the state and the whole populace. As the content, it is not obligated to perform the container which is normative piety, as it is the obligation of the whole populace, particularly the *Santri* group. They are instead only con-

⁵⁶ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion*,... 163-5.

⁵⁷ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion*,... 192-3.

⁵⁸ Mystics whose teaching is presented by Woodward have similar features to those explained by Beatty, including the understanding of God's existence, the mystical path, and the view that normative piety is subordinated to Mysticism. See Woodward's discussion particularly of two mystical views about mysticism in his *Islam in Java...*, 177-198.

⁵⁹ The founding of this kingdom was even influenced by the Islamic mystical tradition in a way both to legitimate its political existence religiously and to help spreading the religion by means of political power. It is done by means of conquest offer coastal kingdoms, such as *Demak*. Demak is known as an *Ulama* centric state in which Ulama had excessive role dominating the power of the king. Sultan Agung, a king of Mataram began to establish his religious legitimacy over the Ulama. See: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 59-60.

cerned with mysticism⁶⁰. Woodward links *Kejawen* mystics's understanding with that of Ibn al-Arabi.⁶¹ The goal of mystical path is to realize the unity of being between man and God. It is required to have morality and tranquility. Among the mystics, the figure of Sultan is said to have the highest capability to attain the state of union⁶².

In order to know the teaching of Javanese mysticism, Woodward interviews two mystical teachers.⁶³ His concern is related to the relationship between humanity and divinity and how the unity can be realized. An understanding sees that human soul is divine. The soul is therefore an aspect of Allah. The mystical path is understood not as a journey to Allah, but as the development of conscious to attain its highest realization. Another understanding views that soul is only a tool of Allah to manifest his will in the world. The soul is therefore not divine. The mystical path here includes a search for harmony and tranquility in social life. Man as a microcosm is a reflection of Allah. By overcoming his passion, man allows the divine soul to control his thought, feeling and action.⁶⁴

To compare, the way Woodward presents how mysticism practiced by Javanese is different from that of Beatty's. While Beatty focuses on those having relation with *Sangkan Paran* sect, Woodward intends to extend informants to include as broad as possible of mystical schools

⁶⁰ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 149-50.

⁶¹ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 185.

⁶² When there is *gerebeg* ceremony in a part of which Sultan attains the state of union at will, prior to the distribution of *gunungan*. The foods that are distributed to the crowd are said to have been blessed. The role of Sultan here is described not merely as the representative of God, that is a source of blessing, but as God itself. Woodward links such a phenomenon to the Sufi doctrine of *qutb* or axis developed by Schimmel and Nicholson. Sultan is the *qutb* who serves as spiritual guide, controlling source of power and blessing and defending the integrity of the law. See: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 179-80

⁶³ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 184.

⁶⁴ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 186.

that possibly have relation with Islam in any sense.⁶⁵ However, it is apparent that both authors have quite contrast pre-assumption about mysticism. Beatty, on one hand, sees that mysticism is not Islamic in nature. He often contrasts the mystical teaching with Islamic teaching.⁶⁶ He even interprets statements having relation with Islam, such as Adam and Muhammad, as having certain symbolic meaning that is not necessarily related to Islam. His reason is that such an interpretation is what people of *Sangkan Paran* perceive. On the other hand, Woodward argues for the Islamic nature of mysticism. His discussion with some mystics is formatted under the intention to see various applications of Sufi doctrines. It is done by means of relating certain concepts found in interview to certain interpretation of Sufi concepts, such as those done by Nicholson and Schimmel. If there is any influence from other traditions, it is said to be interpreted in terms of Islamic principles. It is also proven that the influential figure is Ibn al-Arabi whose teaching shares much similarity with those practices among noble family and Javanese mystics. At last, it is not surprising that both find that the mystics they interview have same attitude that Islam observed through Syari'ah practices is subordinated to mystical practices.

Comparison of two perspectives

It is getting apparent now that the differences they get from researching the Javanese religion is rooted from their perspectives. These matters are to some extent actually already counted especially by Beatty in his work being discussed⁶⁷ and by Woodward in his another

⁶⁵ It is -in this case- including interviewing Javanist mystics who claim to be able to attain union with Allah, just like Sultan or other saints. See Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 179.

⁶⁶ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 158.

⁶⁷ See Beatty's discussion on his approach to study varieties of Javanese religion in the introductory chapter in Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 4-5.

work.⁶⁸ However, the following discussion is an attempt to elaborate them in more detail ways focusing exclusively on their two works.

First thing to be distinguished is the concepts they use as the determinant factors of their studies. In addition, the understanding of tradition is taken into account. In this regard, one argues that it is the structure determining the action of people within the tradition. On the other hand, the other author maintains the vice versa, action determining the structure. See each author's statement concerning their approach below. Beatty says that he tries:

... to steer a middle course between an individuals-in-action perspective and a reductive sociocentric framework. Rather than focusing on events and the interpretative paradigms in which they are cast, or on inexorable structures of power, I look at how people think their traditions, how they conceives the ideas ...⁶⁹

Woodward, on the other hand, introduces that:

... all forms of human behavior are based on imperfectly articulated conceptual structures, and that very abstract principles are used to guide, interpret & monitor behavior...⁷⁰

Such an understanding is proven when they decide what sources to be counted in their studies. Woodward is more familiar with the use of texts as the primary source. He therefore traces the tradition to the past distance trying to find out the original version of the tradition. Beatty, on the other hand, is more concerned with the people belonging to the tradition. He means to present how actually people think and perceive reality and how those people act on behalf of themselves. He

⁶⁸ See Marx R. Woodward, *Talking across Paradigms: Indonesia, Islam, and Orientalism in Toward a New Paradigm: Recent Developments in Indonesian Islamic Thought* (Arizona: Arizona State University, 1996) especially his critique on Geertz's understanding of the Religion of Java. This has also been discussed in the introductory part of his paper.

⁶⁹ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 5.

⁷⁰ He calls those principles as 'axioms' see Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 26-7.

therefore is in his attempt to elaborate the present dynamics of the tradition. Consequently, theirs are differed in terms of viewing whether general development or local variation of the tradition is important.

As already noticed, Woodward is more concerned with *Islam* and on how this tradition influences Javanese religiosity⁷¹. So what about other elements? As he put away his collection on Indology which includes the study of pre-Islamic religion in Java, he already limits his research on particular area only to cover the tradition of Islam⁷². Thus, when he finds particular animistic ritual, he will see whether it is still Islamic or not. When he finds particular mystical practices, he will examine to what extent it departs from Islam. In short, for Woodward Islam is the most important factor to be taken into account.⁷³

As a result, his next attention is to define Islam. Islam in his view is defined in its widest sense, as a tradition. There are two main core teachings within the tradition, normative piety and Sufism. The development of this tradition is influenced by other mystical traditions, such as Hindu, Buddhism and so on. Thus, it is not surprising if one finds any similarity of some aspects of Sufism with some elements of other mystical tradition. Such influences from other mystical traditions are allowed as far as it is not against the fundamental principles of Islam, particularly the doctrine of monotheism. Any religious tradition could be

⁷¹ His decision to take Islam, and not other things, is a result of his beginning field research especially on Javanese rituals and mystical system. The question that is primarily important in this case is what kind of element that has greater influences on those rituals and mysticism. He finds that the element is Islam as he fails to see any influence from Hindu-Buddhist religious systems. Further influenced by opinions of some Muslims as well as western scholars, he deliberately decides to focus on Islam. see: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 3.

⁷² He actually discusses such matters as the influences of animism, Hindu and Buddhism in Javanese society, but the discussion is limited only in terms of Islam.

⁷³ An obvious example is his notes on Slametan, which is serving as container of Islamic mystical practices. See Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 159-63.

involved as far as it is not against the principle of monotheism⁷⁴. This includes radical Sufi tradition which ultimate goal is to attain the union with Allah. Here, the doctrine of monotheism is not interpreted that God is transcendent. He is, in fact, immanent with his creatures. It is – nevertheless- still Islamic for the doctrine is derived from Islam.⁷⁵

On the other hand, Beatty does not focus on Islam. As he starts at the field different from that observed by Woodward, he traces first the regional history and finds that Islam is not as dominant as that in central part of Java. He also finds that in the region, there was the last Hindu kingdom existed with the constrain attitude against Islam. Such a different phase of Islamization (in any sense of understanding) leads him to assume that people still preserve the old belief systems; animism, Hindu and Buddhism.⁷⁶ As a result, his study is oriented to explain not only Islam, but also all belief systems that possibly still exist in the region. Therefore, there is no elaborated explanation about any religious element. He simply begins with the field.⁷⁷

While Woodward at the first wonders what influence the religious tradition of Javanese people, Beatty does not take such an issue into his account. He instead questions whether such diversity is dealt by Javanese. The diversity itself is not mattered, as it simply exists in the field. Therefore, his primary factor is not such elements as animism, Hindu, Buddhism, and Islam and so on in particular. It is instead the field itself; *Java*. Even though his special emphases are on non-Islamic

⁷⁴ See his discussion on the universal principles or axioms of Islam and how they are applied in the context of Java. See Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 70.

⁷⁵ These Sufi see that no being other than Allah. Reality is only the reflection of Him. If one attains the union, he actually makes reunion with Him. See: Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 177.

⁷⁶ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 1.

⁷⁷ Not-surprisingly, such an assumption—though not explicitly stated—is influenced by Geertz's typology on animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

elements, what he tries to grasp is how all religious elements meet and mix each other perceived and taken by Javanese people⁷⁸.

Beatty's primary focus is to investigate what underlying religious orientations of Javanese people are. These could be seen from their religious practices and religious discourse circulated among them. It should be noted that while he wants to pay his attention to practices and discourses of the people in the field, he already has particular presumption about what kinds of people he would find. The role of the previous studies here serves as the important guide for him to make particular grouping of people in the field. Would he not have such a guide, he would find certain difficulties to determine what kinds of practices or topics to discourses in the field served as the centers of his analyses.⁷⁹

What seems to be his important guide is Geertz's notion on *Abangan, Santri and Priyayi*. Although Beatty does not use the terms, he is apparently influenced by the explanation of each variance⁸⁰. In addition, there are many other works taking parts on the development of the Religion of Java. Some are supportive for and other oppose against Geertz's. These help Beatty identify his position to the existing development of the concept.⁸¹ He obviously oppose Woodward's notion

⁷⁸ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 1.

⁷⁹ His similarity to Geertz's is seen for example from his assumption that even though 'orthodox Muslim' are majority, other components still exist characterizing Java from 'the early years of the century.' See Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 1.

⁸⁰ For instance, *Abangan* people are identified as having a main ritual, *Slametan*, both in its common form and in its special form, as a means of worshipping guardian spirits. Beatty, following Geertz, applies such identification and even elaborates the special form of it as a means to show the use of the ritual in animistic ways. It is also true in the case of mysticism and mystical practices. Geertz relates mysticism with a class group of *Priyayi*. Beatty –even though- does not go with such social determination, he uses the notion of mysticism to determine social grouping of people.

⁸¹ Here, Beatty is using as well as critical of Geertz's concept. For example, his analyses that Slametan is a ritual not exclusively belonging to animism. See Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 26.

used by Woodward, particularly in the use of mysticism. Mysticism is recognized by Woodward as having more than one grouping. Woodward even sees that, except among reformist Muslims, Mysticism is practiced among Javanese people in various means. Beatty, on the other hand, tends to view that mysticism is exclusively belong to a particular variance. He calls the variance as Javanism.⁸²

Here it is shown that he sees Islam as only an element. From his explanation, Islam is referred to those having understanding on heavenly obligation from a transcendental God. Unlike Woodward that argues for the mystical aspects of Islam, Beatty simply differentiates between Islam and mysticism. He is aware enough that he uses strict definition Islam as only normative piety, but so do the people in the field. What matters for Beatty is not what kind of definition is used, but how people define themselves. Thus, it is not certain preconception about Islam determining his field study to classify whether particular people belong to Islam and which part of Islam. The preconception is instead about Java in which there are various religious elements that should be distinguished each other. Islam should be only an element of them.

One other difference distinguished Woodward's from Beatty's is the key notion they use to depart their research. As explained above, Woodward has *Islam* and Beatty *Java*. This difference leads them to use particular sources of data differently. The first task of Woodward is to define what Islam is, or more precisely: what the limit of Islam is. Noticing that some previous studies have very strict definition of Islam only as normative piety, Woodward tends to investigate what Islam is

⁸² For the explanation about Javanism see Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 158-210.

outside the *Syari'ah* centric piety. He then needs to look at the historical development elsewhere, particularly before its coming to Java.⁸³

The underlying assumption he maintains here is that the religious tradition practiced by Javanese people is a part of the great tradition in a greater area, whether it is Southeast Asia or the whole world of Islam.⁸⁴ Thus, to understand the local tradition in Java, it is necessary to grasp how the development of the tradition in general is. His particular focus is on the development of the tradition in Arabia, North Africa, Persia and India. While the two former are thought to be the origin of Islam, the two latter are considered as the sources in which Javanese Islam come from. From the survey it is found that normative piety and Sufi tradition was already developed before Islam went to Java.⁸⁵

When Islam came to Java, it already happened to have two modes of religiosity, normative piety and mysticism. Woodward's interest is to trace how those two modes of religiosity influence Javanese people. Again, he needs to look at the historical development of the tradition since its coming to Java. In addition to the historical account, there is hagiography, stories about mythical figures. An account on such stories is also important not to present the historical development, but to see how people think of and perceive their ideal figures of Muslims.⁸⁶ Investigating until recent time, Woodward finds that Javanese people apply two modes, normative piety and mysticism variously.

Woodward's historical and hagiographical account on the development of Islamic tradition aims to construct the reality of Islam in Java. As stated in the previous part, the two modes of religiosity within the

⁸³ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 54-60.

⁸⁴ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 53.

⁸⁵ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 58-9.

⁸⁶ See his account on 'Prophecy in Historical Texts', 'Myth and History', and 'Historiography as Symbolization' in Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 37-49.

tradition of Islam are applied variously by Javanese people from various backgrounds. Besides a group of reformist *Santri*, there are three various groupings apply Islam differently. Firstly, *Santri* practice a combination of normative piety and mysticism. Secondly, nobility apply the mysticism adopting the interpretation of Islam from some radical Sufis. Thirdly, non-*Santri* villagers adopt the religiosity of noble family.

Conceptually, Woodward is intended to investigate Islam in Java by the comparison of the texts about Javanese and ethnographic data.⁸⁷ However, the use of the texts that include historical-hagiographical texts and oral mythological tradition is primarily important to investigate how the relationship between mysticism and normative piety is applied by Javanese. The collection of the texts is then interpreted to construct the reality of Islam in Java. The ethnographic data is therefore only to confirm what is already constructed from the text analysis.⁸⁸

Woodward's style to elaborate Islam historically, however, makes his field observation and interview seem to serve as complementary data to prove the notions already generated. His main concerns are therefore not in the practical events, such as rituals and not in the social identities, whether certain persons think that they are Muslim or *Abangan* or any other social identity. He instead emphasizes on how deep the tradition has influences on particular group of people. Thus, if there is one thinking that he is not a real Muslim, Woodward would not use such self-identity, but instead would trace to the religiosity of this person. If then from his understanding about some religious matter his is not against the principles of Islam, such as practiced by *Santri* as well as non-*Santri*, he is still a (non-syncretism) Muslim. Group identity or self identity is really not a question Woodward is concerned.

⁸⁷ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 31.

⁸⁸ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 49-51.

Beatty, on the other hand, deals with the term 'Java'. Unlike Woodward who should investigate the definition of Islam, Beatty does not need to do so. He –instead- only needs to look at the previous studies on the religion of Java to consider the belief system and religious practices. Thus, it is from the beginning that he is aware of various religious groupings such as Islamic piety, Mysticism, Hinduism and folk tradition exist in Java. Unlike Woodward that begins with a particular religious tradition, Beatty comes with the assumption that there is more than one tradition having similar influences on Javanese people.⁸⁹

To deal with such an assumption, there is no need for Beatty to elaborate historical development of any particular religious tradition. His primary attention is to investigate how people from each religious element think of and practice their religion. Unlike Woodward that puts ethnographic data as secondary important, Beatty relies primarily on his ethnographic data. Besides informed by previous ethnographic accounts on the religion of Java, Beatty is informed from the field about what to be taken into account. Here his focus is on the rituals, other religious practices and mystical discourses. Unlike Woodward that constructs the reality from interpreting a collection of texts, Beatty constructs reality from grasping the context in the field.⁹⁰

The uses of historical texts by Woodward and of ethnographic data by Beatty actually have anything to do with their understanding about religious tradition. They both use the term 'tradition' to mention practices and belief systems of particular religions. Woodward, for instance, uses the term to refer to the historical development of Islam, Islam that is practiced by people. Beatty also uses it to refer to religious systems he finds in the field, such as folk tradition. However, while both

⁸⁹ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 1-3.

⁹⁰ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 3-6.

Woodward and Beatty use the term, they have different understanding about what elements having determinant contribution to the development of a tradition.

Woodward's understanding of tradition is embedded in the concept of axiomatic structure.⁹¹ It is assumed that there is a set of axioms in a tradition that could be used to view various local practices within a single tradition. Islam, for instance, has a set of basic principles in which it has a place in a larger Muslim tradition as well as in the tradition of Islam in Java. In more general way, what is concerned by Woodward here is the importance of certain structure within a tradition. Have Islam diverse local religious practices, the set of structure remain similar with the larger context or with another local context. A local expression is then understood as a particular interpretation of the set of axioms.⁹²

Beatty, on the other hand, concentrates not on the deep structure of religious tradition. He instead focuses on the surface activities of a tradition. He, for example, investigates how people conduct certain rituals and how they interpret the function of the rituals.⁹³ It does not mean that he is not aware of the existence of such kind of structure. His primary attention on investigating such surface structure embedded on rituals and discourses is to find out local variation of particular religious tradition. Unlike Woodward that tends to focus on how general structure works on particular context, Beatty centers his attention on how local variation of particular religious tradition contributes to the development of the tradition in general.

⁹¹ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 22-30.

⁹² Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 69-70.

⁹³ For example of the meaning of Slametan as perceived differently by different people see Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 27-30.

Such different emphases on the tradition have several implications in which –as stated before- one of them is the way they choose particular set of data, Woodward with his historical account and Beatty with his ethnographical data. It also implies that they have different historical orientation. It appears that both authors are writing about present time. They –nevertheless- have different emphases about what time determining the development of a tradition. Woodward happens to see that a tradition is developed over centuries. As it has a set of structure that remains stable, the important thing to be taken into account is to trace to the past distance to see the original form of the tradition and how the tradition is developed throughout centuries. On the other hand, Beatty puts the importance of present dynamics of a tradition. Unlike Woodward that is interested in discovering the stable structure, Beatty is concerned with the dynamic process of actions.⁹⁴

Further implication is on the ways they see the scope of a tradition. As Woodward tends to see the larger context of the tradition of Muslims, he assumes that there exists the universal form of tradition. The tradition of Islam, in this case, is found in many places all around the world. The tradition in a particular location –even though different to some extent from the same tradition in another location- is a part of its universal form⁹⁵. Beatty, on the other hand, tends to localize the scope of a tradition. He is concerned in the local dynamics of a tradition. Although he relates such local dynamics with a larger context, he is apparent to emphasize on the uniqueness of the local expression.

To sum up, parts of the differences found from comparing the works of Woodward and Beatty lie in the fact that they use different understanding about Islam. In addition, popular rites and sanctuary

⁹⁴ Andrew M. Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion...*, 4-6.

⁹⁵ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 53.

cults are interpreted differently in terms of religious orientation of the events and the ways people perceived the events. Those two points lead to question about the ways Woodward and Beatty approach Islam in Java in their research. These reveal at least three important points. First, they differ in taking kind of determinant factor in which their studies began. Woodward took Islam as a triumphed religion against any other belief systems. It is evident from his appreciation of Hodgson's notion about Islam in Indonesia⁹⁶. On the other hand, Beatty remains at Geertz's position, maintaining that there is no single religion dominant. It means that there is no need to take any single religion to be considered as the primary factor. It is therefore important to take Java as having multi belief systems. Secondly, those standpoints have some consequences. One of them is the types of data they consider as the most important one. Woodward certainly takes historical text to develop a set of arguments about how the religiosity of Javanese people should be Islamic. Any field data he has gotten is to confirm and support the main argument he has developed. Beatty, on the other hand, is fond of applying ethnographical data to set the argument. It is true that he has applied some previous scholars' theory, notably Geertz, but it is only as a starting point. The rest is about the data of ethnography. Thirdly, the notion of religious tradition is defined differently. The difference is more precisely about the emphases of the tradition. Woodward stresses the importance of the development of the great tradition of Islam. On the other hand, Beatty pays more attention on the local dynamic of a religious tradition.

⁹⁶ Marx R. Woodward, *Islam in Java...*, 3. See also Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World of Civilization*, Arizona: the University of Arizona Press, 1974.

Conclusion

The studies on the Religion of Java could mainly be divided into two opposed groups based on their understanding of syncretism. The first group sees that the religion of Java is syncretism with its various elements. The second group maintains that the religion of Java –instead of syncretism- is Islam with its local variation.

Woodward's work *Islam in Java* representing the second group argues that the religiosity of Javanese people is Islam. Islam here is understood as a tradition having two modes of religiosity, normative piety and Sufi tradition. Those two modes are applied variously by Javanese people. As a result, there are four types of practicing the tradition based on those two modes. Firstly, a group of reformist *Santri* observes normative piety exclusively. Secondly, some other *Santri* practice a combination of normative piety and mysticism. Thirdly, nobility adapts mystical concepts of radical Sufis who discard normative piety. Finally, non-*Santri* villagers adopt the religiosity of noble family.

On the other hand, Beatty's work *Varieties of Javanese Religion* representing the first group sees that the religion of Java is syncretism with its diverse forms. He finds various elements in the fields. The first is folk tradition centered in two shrines places in which people come and request *Blessing* to the guardian spirits. The second is Islam practiced by the common people, in which despite their fondness in observing Islamic ritual obligation they are not familiar with Islamic doctrines, such as heavenly reward, and the notion of *Ummah*. The third is Javanism. The main feature lays in the use of practical philosophy, focusing on the thought of metaphysics and ethics. In addition to the elements, there is a common ritual practiced by all of Javanese people that is *Slametan*. This ritual that has animistic as well as Islamic elements serves as social unifying event in which its symbols could be interpreted

variously depending on the religious backgrounds. Thus, people from various religious backgrounds could attend.

There are various issues to be examined. Firstly, there are certain concepts they use differently. The concept of Islam is one of contrasting points. In contrast to Beatty, for Woodward Islam refers to the tradition having not only Sharia aspect, but also mystical tradition. It leads them to explain how the tradition is practiced by Javanese people. In addition, their understanding on the practices of popular rites such as *Slametan* and the existence of shrines which serve as popular religious visitation are also different. In this case, Beatty relates such practices with animism. Woodward, on the other hand, argues for its Islamic influences. However, Woodward does not explain as much as Beatty does in this matter. Furthermore, the concept of mysticism and how it is practiced is another contrasting point. Still related to the understanding of Islam, Woodward includes mysticism within the wider tradition of Islam. On the contrary, Beatty sees its contrasting nature with Islam, Islam that is understood as Sharia centric piety.

Secondly, there are differences in terms of perspectives they use. In this case, what to be examined is related their departure points, particular data to be selected and their understanding of tradition. Woodward's departure point is *Islam*. It is different from Beatty that begins with the field, *Java*. The consequence is that they take different path of research. Woodward, as he needs to define Islam, investigates the tradition of Islam historically. He applies historical account to see how the tradition is developed in the larger context and in Javanese context. On the other hand, Beatty does not need to deal with such matter as faced by Woodward. He therefore simply takes knowledge of previous studies on the religion of Java. He happens to find various religious elements in the field. To deal with such a problem, ethno-

graphical study is primarily important for Beatty.

Another consequence is related to their understanding of the term 'tradition'. Woodward sees the determination of structure within a tradition. The tradition of Islam, for instance, is assumed to have a set of axiomatic structure. It is relatively stable from time to time and from one location to another location. Any difference found in particular locations is therefore only a matter of interpretation of the set of axioms. It further leads to the way he chooses particular set of data that is historical embedded in texts. His concern is on the past distance as he seeks to explain the original form of the tradition and how it is developed. In terms of scope, Woodward is found to general development as to see its general structure.

On the other hand, instead of taking the structure of a tradition into account, Beatty focuses on the surface dynamics of people. His aim is to grasp local variations of the tradition and how it contributes to the general development of the tradition. Consequently, he is familiar with ethnographical data as he deals with the present dynamics in the field. In this regard, Beatty puts more emphases on elaborating the uniqueness of local expression.

The difference between Woodward's and Beatty's works is therefore not merely the difference of any set of field data as they conduct research in different location and in different time. It is also caused by the different perspectives. Therefore, the awareness -that 'there is subjective involvement in the process of knowing' is confirmed in this paper. It is proven by the fact that different findings of the same field research are caused by the ways researchers approach the problem. In fact, they have different approaches.

To suggest, this is a comparison study of the two anthropological works of Islam in Java. The main aim is to explain how those two

works are different. It is argued here that those two works are assumed to represent many works in the field of study⁹⁷. The assumption used here is that the two works are well representing two groups of theories on Islam in Java in terms of syncretism. Besides, the study would be more intensive if only including few works. However, many would argue against such a decision. Theoretically, the more works are studied; the more representative analyses are resulted. In this regard I recommend the future study to make another path; that is to focus more on the issue rather than to focus on the works. It means that there is no dominant works to be studied, but to treat all works equally based on the issue being discussed. Then, the result will be found in which the present study is confirmed or rejected.

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