



Islam and the Perception of Islam in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract: Islam in post-*reformasi* Indonesia is covered by a wide multi-disciplinary literature, in which ‘Islamization’ has gained acceptance as the predominant frame for understanding contemporary developments. Here Islamization is taken to be a move away from an Indonesian Islam that was highly localized and mystical in nature. Adopting an area studies approach, this paper reviews the literature on contemporary Islam in Indonesia and challenges this understanding of Islamization. It is argued that older cultural styles and variations within local Islam have not disappeared, and that, more generally, characterizing the development of Indonesian Islam by using a single label is misleading.

Islam in Indonesia, as elsewhere, possesses many dimensions: it is a lived reality and religious belief; a normative sociopolitical instrument; a discursive field.¹ One can look at Indonesian Islam from many angles: from within, as member of the *umma* (emic); as a non-Muslim, or as a foreign scholar (etic); or from any number of disciplinary perspectives—from religious studies, history and political science to anthropology and area studies.

It is the last of these approaches, namely that of area studies, that I have taken in this paper;² and I would like to summarize what its experts have told us about contemporary Islam in Indonesia, where over 85% of the population is Muslim. The sources for these considerations are recent publications and doctoral dissertations, which I have supervised as a principal investigator in the Berlin School of Muslim Cultures and Societies – a glimpse into the German factory of knowledge production. I also include some of the findings that have emerged from the work done

in the DORISEA (Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia) research network over the past couple of years. My paper consists of two parts: first, I engage in a discussion with the dominant scholarly discourse on contemporary Indonesian Islam; and, second, I critically analyze this dominant discourse with an eye to offering a new perspective from the vantage of area studies.

The title of my paper refers to a national scale, whereas the focus on contemporary developments implies that the discourses on Islam in Indonesia during the post-*reformasi* era have a distinct quality. Tom Pepinsky, a political scientist from Cornell University, has argued that *reformasi* stood for a reaction against the *Orde Baru* (the period of the Suharto dictatorship, 1966-98) but that, since the implementation of decentralization laws in 2001, it is something rather different that has emerged. This new quality of sociopolitical reality is labeled ‘post-*reformasi*’. The prevailing wisdom in both public commentary and more specialized scholarly

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² There is an ongoing debate on area studies and its correlation to the disciplines, on which I have written another paper (Houben 2013).

discourse is that post-*reformasi* Indonesia is undergoing a process of Islamization, in which orthodox conceptions of religion prevail over localized forms of Islamic belief.

Going back as far as the colonial era, Indonesian Islam has been represented as uniquely localized in its incorporation of pre-Islamic customs and mystical sufist ideas and practices. This pluralist and tolerant form of Islam has, however, in the past been repeatedly challenged by transregional and globalized forms of orthodoxy, coming from the Middle East, and from Saudi Arabia in particular. Prominent experts on Indonesian Islam – such as Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in colonial times, and Clifford Geertz in the 1950s and 1960s – have contributed to the prevalence of this particular view of Indonesian Islam. At its core is a purportedly foundational opposition between the moderate *abangan* and the orthodox *santri* forms of Islam—an analytical framework that has implicitly called for the state to support moderate Muslims and control their more orthodox, and so less tolerant, counterparts.³

Indeed, one may observe that so-called popular religion, which bases itself on local customs and rules (*adat*), has time and again been challenged by reformists—such as seems to be the case now.⁴ But this phenomenon is neither new nor is it specifically Indonesian. Religious reform has occurred in the Islamic world regularly, and in this regard Indonesia is no exception. This raises the question as to whether the contemporary reform movement is best understood as something new, and whether it is truly capable of transforming Indonesian Islam in an enduring manner.

In Sunni Islam reform has meant a recurring and selective return to Islamic heritage, exemplified by Qur'an and Hadith, in reaction to processes of social change. This has particularly engendered a condemnation of ideas, rituals and practices which are connected to the cult of saints and their graves, to magic and morals, which are judged un-Islamic. The

purpose of such reform is not only the restoration of an imagined Islamic heritage, but also a renovation of traditional elements. Since the twelfth century in the Islamic world such reform cycles (Arabic *tajdid*, meaning renovation by a *mujaddid*, or reformer) have occurred almost continually. In this a mixture between restoration (re-establishment) and renovation (revitalization) has occurred by purging existing beliefs and practices from 'non-allowed innovations' (Arabic *bid'ah*).⁵ Frequently cited reformists include Imam al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad Abduh, Abduh al-Wahhab (the founder of the Salafiyya movement) and others.

These cycles of reform have undergone important changes since their exposure to Western modernity. In the era of colonialism Islamic reformists clearly distanced themselves from colonial modernization programs, and headed eschatological anti-colonial movements. Later Islam was coupled successfully to the idea of the nation, and Islamized versions of nationalism emerged (Laffan 2003). Also, from the 1910s to the 1930s, Islamic reformers and colonial modernizers concurred in the production of 'modern representations' of Islam. Since the rise of modernization, Islam itself seems internally divided: 'liberal' or 'progressive' Islam does not refute change or progress, whereas a 'conservative' Islam only allows for renovation within existing patterns of thought (see Krämer 2003).

There have been several waves of Islamic reform in modern history. William Roff has shown how in the 1920s the *kaum tua* (the old established local elite of religious experts) was facing a *kaum muda*, who, in the wake of educational mobility and pilgrimage, had adopted reformist ideas and attacked local traditions for being 'un-Islamic'. During the 1950s, in a recently independent Indonesia, a number of secessionist movements emerged (in West Java, South Sulawesi, Central and North Sumatra), that wanted to establish a Darul Islam

³ Harry Benda (1958) and Clifford Geertz (1960, 1965) pointed to Snouck Hurgronje, who thought that in the end *adat* (custom) would be replaced by Dutch modernity; see also Laffan 2011.

⁴ Since its foundation Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has included the battle against *bid'ah* and the implementation of *dakwah* in its statutes and also strives to turn *abangan* into 'good' Muslims. Despite this the NU is criticized by Muhammadiyah, Persis and other organizations for apparent *bid'ah* practices (Feillard 1999).

⁵ In Islamic law there are various forms of *bid'ah*; Wahhabi understandings from Saudi Arabia are very strict, but there are also more open-ended formats, such as *bid'ah hasanah* (i.e., 'good' innovation).

(‘the Abode of Islam’) in the areas under their control (Van Dijk 1981, Juhannis 2006). And now, more recently, following the demise of the Suharto regime, radical Islamic groups have attacked Christians, Westerners and other Muslims. It is said that a group calling itself Jemaah Islamiyah is striving for a large *sharia*-state spanning from South Thailand to the southern Philippines, and that it is cooperating with Al-Qaeda (Barton 2004, Temby 2010).

Nowadays the major question in Indonesian studies is whether a ‘tolerant’ and ‘inclusivist’ Islam is able to maintain itself in a context that is both globalized and democratic, or, alternatively, whether Indonesia’s historically moderate form of Islam is now in the process of dissolving. One talks in terms of an Arabization of Indonesian Islam and the shrewd exploitation of post-Suharto civil liberties on the part of Islamists, through which a ‘conservative’ and highly politicized Islam is gaining the upper hand.⁶ Evidence for the latter is seen in local *sharia*-regulations (*peraturan daerah* or *perda shari’ah*), which have been promulgated in several districts and in Aceh, a stronger moral policing of public spaces (increasing veiling by women, bans on alcohol), as well as the increasingly pious life-style of the growing Indonesian middle class.⁷ Whereas since the 1999 parliamentary elections the political arena has not favored the new Islamic reform parties, public discourse and the public sphere as a whole seem to have become increasingly Islamized (Assyaukani 2009, Otto 2010). The notion of ‘Islam Nusantara’, promulgated by Nahdlatul Ulama in 2015, is hotly contested by the proponents of Arabization.

The Islamization argument has been promulgated with particular enthusiasm by political scientists in publications on radical Islamic movements in contemporary Indonesia (Barton 2004, Bubalo & Fealy 2005, Kolig 2005, Sidel 2006, Noorhaidi 2006). The basic, exogenous explanation is that the type of political regime ultimately determines the Islamic strategy pursued in the country—radical, militant or moderate. So, for instance, the democratic opening up of Indonesia in 1998

has led to the participation of radical Islamic forces in party politics and the rise of radical Islamic groups in society. Felix Heiduk (2012) argues that the case of Indonesia shows that political liberalization has enabled Islamists to participate in politics but has not led to their mitigation. In addition, the link between state and political Islam has become highly ambiguous. Oligarchs and bureaucrats, who were powerful during the Suharto years, saw their former vertical privileges endangered and therefore entered into horizontal alliances, amongst others with Islamist forces (the so-called oligarchic continuum). In this manner political Islam has gained a higher profile, whereas on the other hand moderate Islamic leaders, who had contributed to the fall of Suharto, have been marginalized.

In this new constellation, as Heiduk argues, radical transnational *jihadis* have, by means of terror attacks, tried to establish an Islamic state, but are now weakened having been effectively persecuted. In contrast, violent local Islamic militias can still operate unchallenged. Moderate Islamism in party format can be found in the PKS (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*, or Prosperous Justice Party), which has promoted an image of being ‘clean’ (i.e., free from corruption) in the hope of gaining votes from the middle class. But, as a result of their own corruption scandals, the PKS has meanwhile lost much of its popularity. At the same time other Islamic and even non-Islamic parties, such as Golkar and PDIP (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*), have taken up the Islamization agenda. Therefore, taken as a whole, political Islam cannot be said to have been weakened.⁸

Shortly after the Suharto dictatorship came to an end and parliamentary democracy had been reintroduced, there was a sense of optimism among experts on Indonesian Islam. A classic example in this respect is Robert Hefner’s study, entitled *Civil Islam* (2000). In contrast to culturalist political theorists, such as Huntington, Lipset and Gellner, who in the 1990s postulated the incompatibility between Islam and democracy, Hefner pursued a ‘social-anthropological’ approach and tried to develop

⁶ Already during the *Orde Baru*, Liddle (1996) had warned of an ‘Islamic turn’.

⁷ Both Bush (2008) and Buehler (2008a & 2008b) see the *perda shari’ah* primarily as a political instrument.

⁸ Already since the late 1980s Golkar has adopted an Islamic agenda (see Liddle 1996 and van Bruinessen 1996).

a ‘Muslim perspective on Indonesian democratization’ in order to explain the rise of a democratic and ecumenical Islamic movement in Indonesia during the 1980s and 1990s (Hefner 2000: xvii-xix). The proponents of civil Islam have, as Hefner argues in his conclusion, contributed substantially to the spread of a tolerant and civil Islamic culture in Indonesia, with public religion showing the middle road between liberal privatization and a tyrannical Islamic state. In this manner, a reformist Islam which engaged with society had become part of a creative response to modernity (Hefner 2000: 218-219). At the moment of writing Hefner was, however, not sure whether this civil Islam in Indonesia would prevail (Hefner 2000: xviii).

Meanwhile leading experts on Indonesian Islam no longer seek to contradict the Islamization thesis from the vantage of political science, but have rather tried to explain it endogenously, through recourse to socio-religious or historical-cultural factors. In his collective volume, entitled *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the Conservative Turn* (2013), Martin van Bruinessen pointed out that both the violent communal religious conflicts after 1998, and the high-profile terrorist attacks, have now lost their significance. This, he has argued, is because in most regions a new power division has emerged. At the same time, however, transnational Islamic movements have established themselves, in the format of PKS and its client groups, Indonesian offshoots of the Muslim brotherhood such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (HTI) and Tablighi Jama’at. These are taken to be an indication of a ‘conservative’ turn in Indonesian Islam, in relation to which both the older modernist as well as liberal approaches of Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have lost ground.⁹

Instead of explaining the conservative turn as a breakdown in the Indonesian democratic transition, in which a conservative elite had regained the upper hand, or as a result of the impact of fundamentalist educational institutions financed by Saudi Arabia, van Bruinessen’s collective volume on the conservative turn highlights other factors. These include the role of the MUI (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) and its *fatwa*, the shift in power

favoring those of a more puritanical bent within Muhammadiyah in 2005, and both *sharia*-politics in South Sulawesi and the *dakwah*-oriented *pesantren* in Solo. My inclination is thus to interpret the book as favoring an endogenous explanation for recent changes in Indonesian Islam and Indonesian society. Interestingly, van Bruinessen now also sees potential for a trend in the opposite direction: the anti-liberal movement is running out of steam and could even be reversed.

Merle Ricklefs, in the final volume of his trilogy on Islam in Java, also characterizes Javanese Islam since 1998 as ‘Islamicizing’, as a result of which older cultural styles have been put on the defensive. In comparison with the period between the 1930s and 1960s, in Java today Islam is more highly visible—from politics, administration and culture to social practice, literature and academic life (Ricklefs 2012: 274). Government officials see the promotion of Islamic piety as a legitimate task. The current debate on women’s rights, and specifically polygamy, is considered an intra-Islamic affair that does not question whether Islam as such should be the normative anchor in assessing gender-related issues (Ricklefs 2012: 292-93; see also Nurmila 2009 and Van Wichelen 2009). Islamization activists have been successful in making religiosity trendy amongst young people (see Smith-Hefner 2005).

Ricklefs does not see Islamization on the contemporary scene as a post-*reformasi* phenomenon, but rather as part of a longer historical development of reform. The point of departure has been a ‘mystic synthesis’ (the title of his first volume), which characterized Javanese Islam from the 14th until the early 19th century. The first wave of reform began in the middle of the 19th century, and led to a ‘polarization of Javanese society’ (the title of his second volume) between *putihan* and *abangan*, terms referring to the ‘white’ purists and ‘red’ syncretists respectively. In the contemporary situation Islamizers are again confronted with local variants of Islam. But now they get the support of large organizations and institutions, including those of the state (Ricklefs 2012: 318). Modernist and traditionalist organizations are therefore put on the defensive.

⁹ NU and Muhammadiyah are still very influential on Java, and vehemently oppose radical Islam. In themselves they are pluriform organizations.

Despite the fact that Ricklefs supports the Islamization thesis, he nevertheless describes many phenomena that point in the opposite direction and that, implicitly at least, support van Bruinessen's remark on the potential for a reverse development. Reformist Islam is far from united, there are strong internal disputes, for instance on the problem of 'deviation'—including such issues as the Ahmadiyya, the role of the LDII (*Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia*, the Indonesian Islamic Missionary Institute) or the Wahidiyah, a spiritual movement in Kediri. In addition, so-called Muslim feminism is a highly contested issue,¹⁰ as too are the actions of the JIL (*Jaringan Islam Liberal*, the Liberal Islamic Network), which have led to high-profile controversy. The Indonesian Shi'as in their contestation of Sunni ideas also add to the debate on Indonesian Islam (Zulkifi 2013).

All of this notwithstanding, older cultural styles – associated with *abangan*, *kebatinan* etc. – are being maintained and have not at all disappeared. *Kebatinan* is on the defensive, to be sure, and has therefore chosen to become 'invisible' in a world in which recognized world religions seem to have become the only legitimate players. *Kebatinan* is consciously directed towards the village community and has therefore become insulated against forces from the outside (Ricklefs 2012: 387-88). Sultan Hamengkubuwana X of Yogyakarta identifies himself strongly with being Muslim but at the same time accepts local spiritual phenomena (Ricklefs 2012: 372). Court rituals in Imogiri and at the South coast of Java are being maintained. As Ricklefs notes, 'Below the level of the *kraton* – or local government-supported rituals, village observances carry on, in many cases with little influence from any reformed version of Islam' (2012: 381). In Kediri (East-Java) local traditions such as *jaranan* are being continued and even new rituals, which focus on the Brantas river and the Kelud volcano, are 'invented' in order to promote both tourism and local identity. Sufism at the moment experiences a renaissance (Ricklefs 2012: 296).¹¹

The view of van Bruinessen and Ricklefs, namely that the moderate character of Indonesian Islam has been put on the defensive, has been relativized by the prominent liberal Indonesian Islam-expert Azyumardi Azra (2004). He does not perceive the danger of political and 'formal' Islam as strongly as others do, as there are a number of factors in Indonesian society working against it. Among these are an increasingly complex rivalry inside reformist Islamic circles. Despite the increased visibility of Hizb al-Tahrir (HTI), its call for the establishment of a Caliphate does not find much approval among Indonesian Muslims. The liberalization of Indonesian politics under president Habibie led to an increase in the number of Islamic parties. But one needs to distinguish, as Greg Fealy did, between 'formalistic' Islamic parties (which postulate Qur'an and Sunna as their exclusive basis and which have not been successful during elections) and 'pluralist' ones (which accept both *Pancasila* and Islam as their ideological basis).¹² The growing prominence of Islam in public life is more closely connected to cultural than to political Islam, whereas the promotion of Islamic formalism only reflects competition between Muslim politicians.

What then can an area studies-based approach offer beyond the perspectives we have already considered? The so-called 'new' area studies approach has put the emphasis squarely on the 'area' in question. Area is no longer thought of as a container, but as a specific and consciously chosen time-space constellation, which is open to several spatial scales. With regard to contemporary Islam in Indonesia this implies that the correlation between local, national, transregional and global dimensions is addressed more explicitly than hitherto, and that these dimensions are put in a specific conjuncture. The contours of an alternative area studies perspective on Indonesian Islam then become visible when one addresses transregional and local scales more explicitly than is done in the existing literature, which generally focuses exclusively on the post-*reformasi*

¹⁰ On Muslim feminism, see Virginia Hooker 2004, van Doorn Harder 2007, Mulia 2007, Blackburn 2008 and van Wichelen 2010.

¹¹ One should distinguish between mysticism in local rituals and Sufism, as personal commitment to God.

¹² *Pancasila* was introduced by Sukarno in 1945 and adopted as the official ideological basis for the Republic. It consists of five principles: belief in God, nationalism, humanitarianism, social justice and democracy.

Indonesian nation-state. The scope of this short essay only permits a most rudimentary outline of what such an alternative might look like.

The reason a majority of Indonesians have become increasingly interested in Islamic matters cannot be traced solely to domestic political and religious developments. A sociological explanation would address modernization, exemplified by the rise of an urban middle class, who are looking for a purpose in life, expressing their Islamic identity through consumption. During former President Suharto's *Orde Baru*, or 'New Order' regime, a high degree of social control was effected by means of state-sponsored cultural politics. But nowadays only religion is seen as capable of combatting the purported moral decline of Indonesian society. Modern media also play a substantial role in the spreading of conservative worldviews. There is in addition the 'fourth power', particularly the Ministry of Religion (*Kementerian Agama*) and the local bureaucracies, which actively support this current trend.

Increasing piety is, however, also connected to transregional religious mobility of people and ideas. Normative ideals that circulate within global Islam are highly attractive to these groups, in which Islam does not differ fundamentally from reform-oriented Christianity elsewhere. Michael Feener (2009) has argued in favor of a transregional view of the Islamic world, Islamization and social transformation, which questions national or regional stereotypes. On this Feener wrote, 'Indeed, the long and complex histories of Islamization (in both South and Southeast Asia) present a rich heritage of layered changes along an array of often intersecting vectors' (2009: xvi). This is, so I argue, true not only for the history of the expansion of Islam but also for current dynamics in the Islamic world, of which Indonesia is a part. Feener's volume of 2009 contains interesting views on the Islamic nexus between South and Southeast Asia, with contributions on *shariah*-thought, the

promulgation from India through the Southeast Asian Tablighis, and the emergence of a Sufi identity across the Indian Ocean.

Besides pointing towards the transregional dimension of orthodox-conservative Islam, the appearance of Indonesian 'liberal' reformists is connected to a global movement within Islam. Despite their internal heterogeneity, they share a number of basic convictions—not least that understanding the *Qur'an*, *hadith* and *sharia* requires source criticism, and that all interpretations are to be judged as subjective, and with reference to their respective temporal settings. In addition, it is taken that a rational interpretation (*ijtihad*) of these texts is necessary in order to give Islam a proper place in modernity. This globalized, liberal Islam has gotten much less attention than the orthodox reform movement.¹³

When one goes beyond the transregional and global scale and addresses local 'lived' Islam in an anthropological manner, one gets the impression that pluralistic Islam has not lost much of its substance. Andrew Beatty (1999), in his village study on Banyuwangi in the early 1990s, has criticized Geertz for his failure to recognize there being a middle way between *santri* and *abangan*. As Beatty has argued, local Islamic practices in a religiously plural community are situational and marked by variability. The predominant orientation can either be ritualistic or more dogmatic. Here Javanism (the 'wet book' of the human body that is capable of performing rituals) pairs itself with Islam (the 'dry book' of the *Qur'an*, offering dogma). Ultimately what matters is not the distinction between groups of people but the relationship of individuals to spiritual practices (Headly 2000, Newland 2010).¹⁴ In a later study, during the second half of the 1990s, Beatty (2009) observed how puritan Islam had gained a higher profile in his village. But in a more recent publication (2012) he revised this negative judgment once again.

¹³ Among the publications on liberal Indonesian Islam are Hooker 2004 and Ahmad Ali Nurdin 2005.

¹⁴ Newland has carried out anthropological fieldwork in a village in West Java. She showed how a traditionally NU-oriented community had to face negative assessments of their traditionalist lifestyle, and how the village became split between a Persis- and an NU-faction.

My doctoral candidate, Claudia Seise, is currently writing a monograph on *pesantren* in three localities in Indonesia, developing the concept of ‘religoscape’ as an instrument of comparison. Yogyakarta, with its mysticism, syncretism and pluralism, thereby emerges as fundamentally ‘different’ in comparison to an area near Palembang. There, in a *transmigrasi* environment,¹⁵ at least according to the self-understanding of the local preacher, the ‘true’ version (*benar*, as opposed to *bathil*) of Reform Islam (*reformis*) is practiced. It is marked by a return to *asholah* (the true version of religiosity) as well as *kemurnian* (purity, immaculacy) and maintains educational links with Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Yemen. Her third case-study is focused on the city of Palembang, which situates itself between Yogyakarta and the *transmigrasi* area. Central Palembang represents an earlier reform movement, on the one hand not so much syncretic and pluralistic as Yogyakarta, but on the other not as rigid as the *transmigrasi pesantren*. Besides the multiple individual orientations of people (such as stressed by Beatty) like before there exists considerable variability within Indonesian Islam, dependent on location in the religious landscape and the nature of the networks maintained with the outer world (on the national but also on the trans-regional scale).

What conclusions can be drawn on the basis of my digressions? Islam is manifold, and Indonesia is no exception. The labels liberal, progressive, conservative, fundamentalist and Islamist are quite problematic in themselves and must, when used, always be reflected upon and defined within their respective Islamic discourses (Feener 2010). Barry Hooker, in a study on *fatāwā*, has argued that the existing labels in Islamic thought over the last hundred years have been internalized in Indonesia, but in fact do not fit and make only sense to those who want to make such classifications. They produce stereotypes, which cannot be maintained upon closer inspection (Hooker 2003: 231).

How Indonesian Islam ‘is’ and how its development is viewed in contemporary Indonesia does not seem to be congruent. Political scientists and Islam-experts seem to agree that there exists an increasing Islamization

in post-*reformasi* Indonesia. Dogmatic ideas about Islam, its practices and discourses are on the rise and have increasingly ousted typical Indonesian pluralistic Islam. This one-dimensional viewpoint needs, however, to be qualified, or even revised, and in doing this the variables of the perspective and the scale taken (a matter that is highlighted in the new area studies) have to be recognized much more strongly.

I have pointed out that reform in Islam is neither new nor a typically Indonesian phenomenon. Political scientists explain current Islamization as political capital in an open democratic arena coupled to a still largely oligarchical state. The sociological view sees Islamization as the product of an expanding urban middle class, which searches for orientation in a rapidly modernizing society. Islam experts have recognized the potential of the emergence of a democratic civil Islam. But this option appears to have been obliterated, at least for the time being, by a conservative turn in Indonesian Islam. Although reformist Islam is embedded in a long historical trajectory, the current institutional support has given it an entirely new quality.

In the second part of my paper I have tried to develop a counter-argument against this one-sided discourse on Islamization. In the past Indonesian Islam has repeatedly gone through conjunctural cycles, with a different stress on local, transregional or global aspects. The increased visibility of reformist Islam in the public sphere hides the fact that just like before in other spaces, private as well as rural, mystical, syncretic forms of *abangan* and *kebatinan* continue to exist or have even gained new vitality. A dichotomous view, in which a politicized, formalistic and dogmatic globalized Islam is facing a culturalist, pluralist and ritualist Indonesian Islam should be avoided. Two factors play a prominent role in this more differentiated approach: transregional ‘vectors’ beyond those from the Middle East as well as religioscape-dependent local flexibilities, which enable the coexistence of different spiritual practices. For these reasons, so I argue, post-*reformasi* Indonesia is not on the road towards

¹⁵ *Transmigrasi* is the official government program for moving poor rural people from the overpopulated island of Java to other, less densely populated islands. Between 1969 and 2000 more than one million families were moved, and many more affected.

orthodox Islam. Rather, a majority within a non-secularized Indonesian modernity will continue to practice plurality as before. With this I position myself against a majority of contemporary experts in the hope to start a debate on the nature of Indonesian Islam both in the present and the past.

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