

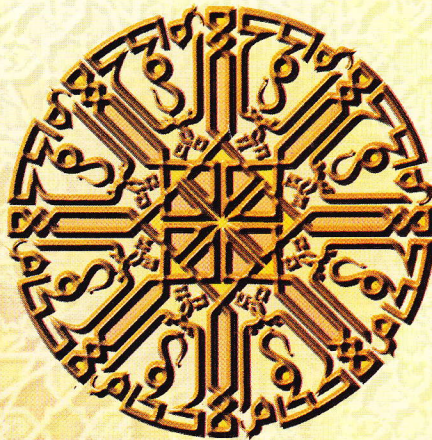
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Women, Islam, and The Family : A Brief Sketch

**Taat dan Nusyuz : Studi Komperatif Tentang
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(Mencari Akar Kesulitan Penerapan Hukum Islam Dalam
Tata Hukum Nasional dan Alternatif Pemecahannya)**

A Coexistence Model Of Islam And Javanese Culture Encounter: The Case Of Metik

By: Ismail Yahya *

Intisari : Tulisan berikut ini merupakan sebuah hasil penelitian studi kasus perjumpaan Islam dengan salah satu budaya Jawa yang masih berlangsung hingga hari ini khususnya dalam masyarakat Jawa Tengah yaitu metik. Terkadang metik juga disebut dengan wiwid yang bermakna "mulai" dalam pengertian "mulai memetik." Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan dan mengungkap model hubungan pertemuan antara Islam dan budaya Jawa dalam satu contoh kasus tradisi metik.

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dimana data primer bersumber dan digali dari observasi dan wawancara kepada responden yang masih memegang dan mempraktekkan tradisi metik. Pemilihan responden ditentukan lewat metode key person. Penelitian berlangsung di Dusun Serut Desa Ngringo Jaten Karanganyar. Sedang data-data dokumentasi berupa sumber-sumber tertulis digunakan sebagai sumber data sekunder. Kemudian data-data tersebut dianalisis dengan metode deskriptif kualitatif.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa: (1) dalam perjumpaan Islam dengan budaya setempat (metik) terbukti bahwa keduanya tidak saling meniadakan, di sini posisi Islam dan budaya Jawa sama kuatnya, atau salah satunya tidak lebih dominan, tapi lebih menunjukkan suatu keadaan saling memberikan peluang bagi keduanya tetap hidup (coexistence). Namun "penggabungan" ini bukanlah seperti yang sering disebut orang dengan istilah syncretism. Karena syncretism galibnya membentuk sebuah kepercayaan baru hasil dari "penggabungan" atau fusi dari dua atau lebih ragam kepercayaan, sesuatu yang sebenarnya sulit untuk ditemukan dalam kasus orang Jawa. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini juga meneguhkan tesis Andrew Beatty dalam karyanya Varieties of Javanese Religion; An Anthropological Account, (Cambridge University Press, UK, 1999) yang keberatan menggunakan istilah syncretism terhadap hasil dari pertemuan antara Islam dan budaya Jawa. (2) Kategori musyrik dalam hukum Islam yaitu menyembah selain Allah, juga tidak tepat dilekatkan kepada pelaku metik karena adanya danyang. Minta izin kepada danyang dalam tradisi metik lebih merupakan bentuk penghormatan terhadap "penunggu" suatu tempat, bukan dalam pengertian menyembahnya.

Kata-kata kunci: metik, abangan, santri, danyang, slametan

Introduction

Ricklefs, one of foreign observers of Islam in Indonesia as quoted by Hilmy viewed that "Javanese Islam has the reputation in some quarters of being an inferior variety of Islam, mainly because it differs from what people may consider to be "genuine Islam," or the so-called "Middle Eastern Islam."¹

Historically, Islam came to Indonesia after other religions and beliefs, say; Hindu, Buddha, and animism existed and developed for long time. Even both Hindu and Buddha left tremendous heritages like Prambanan and Borobudur temples what latter formed a part of Indonesian's culture.² In addition, Islam came to this archipelago without supplanting these existing religions purely by military conquest, but rather using peaceful penetration (penetration pacifique). Hence, Indonesian Muslims are widely known practice of syncretism.³

Syncretism (Latin: *syncretismus*, Greek: *synkretismos*) is often meant as (1) the combination of different forms of belief or practice, (2) the fusion of two or more original different inflectional forms.⁴ Connected by term "religion", thus religious syncretism is "the fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices."⁵ This fusion often forms a novel form of religion as it happened in Manichaeism (a dualistic religion founded by the 3rd-century-ad Iranian prophet Mani, who combined elements of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism), and in Sikhism (a religion founded by the 15th-16th-century Indian reformer Guru Nanak, who combined elements of Islam and Hinduism).⁶

But in case of Islam and Javanese culture encounter especially as latter will be showed through *metik*, it is not simple matter to mention this mixing as syncretism. Because in Beatty's words: "We shall see that this interrelation (Islam and Javanese culture) need not imply or lead to fusion; the Javanese case is rather more complicated than that."⁷ Now we turn to *metik's* tradition.

Metik In Javanese Tradition

There are some differences in its name and in some practical elements of the ritual from place to place, differences which are sometimes significant, as in West Java. In Central Java and Yogyakarta, the rice harvest ritual is usually called *metik* or *wiwid*. *Metik* is the term most commonly used; literally, it means to "pick" or "pluck." *Wiwid* means to "start;" both terms indicate the start of the picking. *Metik* is neither a harvest festival nor a thanksgiving festival, in that it is performed before the harvest rather than after. Rather, it is a ritual of petition. Traditionally, almost all Javanese villagers practiced *metik*, especially in Central Java and Yogyakarta, though today some ignore or reject it for various reasons. For those who practice it, the intention of *metik* is both to continue their ancestral traditions and to insure that this year's harvest succeeds.

There are a variety of reasons why some villagers have abandoned the practice of *metik*. One general reason for its abandonment is common throughout the developing world: a change of worldview due to education and an awareness of science and technology which convey disbelief in spirits. The dissemination of such information and attitudes have produced a new generation which tends to be rational and practical. Its members feel tend to embarrassed by or even ashamed of traditional practices.

A second reason why many villagers have abandoned the practice of *metik* is the shift that agriculture has undergone in Java, a shift toward understanding the rice field functionally, as an industrial zone. Agriculture has become commercialized as the growth of cities demands an increase in rice productivity. Agricultural support programs urge "scientific" approaches to rice fields in the interests of returning Indonesia to a self-sufficient state in rice production that it enjoyed until the late 1990s. Census of farmland in 2003 held by BPS (Bureau of Vital Statistics) shows that on the average 2-3 % farmland decreases per year. Generally, housing, road development, industrial building, have caused this decrease.

A third reason for the abandonment of *metik* has been the uncompromising, almost puritanical, resistance of Indonesian Islam to the practice on the grounds that the ritual is not only not historically Islamic, but also its pantheistic recognition of supernatural spirits in the fields, as well as the existence of other gods in the myth related to the practice, violate the rigid Islamic insistence on Allah as the only divine being.

In general, *Abangan* Muslims practice all Javanese traditions including *metik*. The term "abangan" refers to nominal Muslims, gray Muslims, who hold to practices indigenous and even animistic; they live as Muslims, however, they still practice old ancestral traditions. Meanwhile, not all *Santri* Muslims (the term refers to devout and "real" Muslim, the opposite of abangan) refuse the Javanese traditions; some of them still practice the traditions, though, a *santri's* understanding of these traditions is often immensely different from an abangan's.

This article draws on published sources as well as on interviews of a husband-wife pair who are inhabitants of Dusun Serut Desa Ngringo Jaten Karanganyar, eight kilometers east of the city of Solo (Surakarta), in the province of Central Java, Indonesia, and on observation of their practice of the rice harvest ritual. This part deals with origin, process and meaning, and endurance of *metik*.

1. Origin of Metik

Tracing the origin of this practice of *metik* is not a simple matter, because there is no clear evidence as to from whom this practice descended or where it commenced. Djatnika⁸⁸Rahmat Djatnika, presents the following legend as the origin of the practice. This legend corresponded to the legend I heard from my informants, though the origins

of the legend itself are unknown. The popular practice of rice harvest ritual is commonly understood to be based on the legend of the love story of Tisnawati (Bathara Guru's daughter), a heavenly woman, and Joko Sedono, a worldly man. Because he learned about his daughter's love affair, Bathara Guru, Tisnawati's father, (in Javanese mythology Bathara Guru or the Guru sometimes he was called Bathara Girinata, the King of Mountain, here is Meru mountain where it is a palace of Dewas, more or less represents the Hindu figure of Shiva, the Creator and the Destroyer)⁹ became angry and exiled her to earth. She married, then, based on her own choice, with Joko Sedono. Because of some difficulties in adjusting to life as the wife of a human being, Tisnawati, who was manifested as Dewi Sri¹⁰, the goddess of rice, changed herself into a stalk of rice. Understanding his beloved wife's fate, Joko Sedono also changed himself into the same form, in order to be close to her and share her fate. Her choice to become a stalk of rice, a choice confirmed and imitated by her husband, is understood as a gift for human beings: rice, their food staple.

In order to honor Tisnawati and Joko Sedono for their pristine love and their sacrifice of human life, some peasants hold "slametan", a ritual meal. In the case of rice harvest, slametan is not an obligation, but there is rather an option: to make a slametan or not. In general terms, the purpose of the slametan is to create *slamet*— a state of well-being, security, and freedom from hindrances both practical and spiritual.¹¹ It is the coming together of members of the community for a variety of purposes such as celebration of rites of passage, housewarming and harvest. The slametan generally involves a meal and also can include some type of rituals or speeches.

In the harvest ritual, the peasants first pick two bunches of rice, symbolizing Tisnawati and Joko Sedono, from a field and bring them together, thus "marrying" them. Their voluntary transformation of their bodies into rice is not only commemorated because of its resulting benefit to humans but also as a statement of the nature of marital love, that its creative goodness overflows beyond the couple onto the larger society. Thus the eternal manifestation of their love is remembered by peasants when they harvest.

The advent of Islam in Java, and its spread by the Walisanga or "the nine saints" changed and colored the practice of metik with Islamic teachings. In Indonesia, the term wali is used as a shortened form of Wali Allah or "friend of God." Wali here refers to the Muslim teachers who brought and introduced Islam to Indonesia, particularly to Java. Sanga is a Javanese word for the numeral nine.¹² Thus, Walisanga means nine walis or the nine saints. It is generally accepted in most sources that the Walisanga includes Sunan Ampel Denta, Sunan Giri, Sunan Bonang, Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Gunung Jati, Sunan Ku-

dus, Sunan Muria, Sunan Derajat, and Maulana Ibrahim (or Maulana Maghribi).

In converting Java to Islam, the walis historically did not force people or use violence, but rather approached them in what is termed penetration *pacifique* (peaceful penetration). They used instructional means, many still utilized today, that made it easy for the fundamental tenets of Islam to be understood and accepted by the Javanese people at that time. In this regard, walis accommodated and acculturated Islam with local culture, namely Javanese, without losing the essence or spirit of Islam. The result is the widely known Indonesian practice of syncretism. Several walis, for example Sunan Kalijaga, Sunan Giri, and Sunan Bonang, are said to have created some wayang (puppet) figures to explain Islam.

In the case of the rice harvest festival the walis did not abolish it for their converts; rather, they "Islamized" it by allowing it to continue but at the same time coloring it with Islamic features. For example, at the very beginning of the rice harvest ritual a peasant invariably says "*Bi smi al-Lah al-Rahman al-Rahim*" (read: Bismillahirrahmanirrahim) or "in the name of Allah the Most Merciful and Beneficent," a Qur'anic verse.

In this regard, I hesitate to use the word "syncretism," agreeing with Beatty "since this (i.e. syncretism) usually implies a substantial merging of types, with a loss of their separate identities, something that cannot be presumed in the Javanese case."¹³ Here I agree with Stewart and Andrew Beatty,¹⁴ who used this term (i.e. syncretism) "in a more abstract sense to refer to a systematic interrelation of elements from diverse traditions, an ordered response to pluralism and cultural difference. We shall see that this interrelation need not imply or lead to fusion; the Javanese case is rather more complicated than that. Syncretism, in this sense, refers to dynamic, recursive process, a constant factor in cultural reproduction, rather than to a settled outcome".

In the case of metik we see no Islamic penetration into the rice harvest ritual, but rather the practice is little outside, if not actually contrary to, Islam.

2. Process and Meaning

Now we turn to the process of metik and to the meanings attached to this rice harvest ritual. Metik is held one day before the harvest. As in other anthropological studies, this ritual practice has embedded within it a variety of symbols whose meanings, often multiple and cross-cutting, must be explained.

It is possible to grow three crops of rice a year in Javanese villages. Generally, however, villages utilize two growing seasons a year. The primary harvest, known in Java as *panen rendhengan*, is harvested

during the rainy season, which extends from January until April or May. The second harvest, called *panen gadhu*, which is harvested during the dry season, produces much less compared to the rainy season harvest.¹⁵

The planting and harvesting of rice are jobs usually assigned to women, while maintaining dikes and canals, plowing, and hoeing are men's jobs. Thus the work of rice farming involves both men and women. Similarly, both men and women are involved in the process of metik. A day before metik begins, the foods for the festival are prepared by the women. Then, a miniature rice barn, constructed by women, is made from young coconut leaves (Java: *janur*), thus symbolizing something durable in which harvested rice can be preserved and saved for a year. This miniature rice barn represents hopes for a rich harvest that will last the year.

On the day when metik begins, the wife brings the prepared-foods to the rice field. The husband picks thirteen pair—twenty-six stalks—of rice. The first thirteen rice stalks form the "groom," and represent Joko Sedono as in the legend mentioned above, and the second thirteen rice stalks picked also by the husband form the "bride," and represent Tisnawati or Dewi Sri (the rice goddess).

After that, the husband makes a fire to call the *danyang*, a Javanese term meaning "one who abides"—that is, the spirit of the field in which one will harvest. In the Javanese worldview all natural places have a spirit which animates and protects them. The fire is one means, in addition to other means, to call the spirit in this field so as to ask for its consent to harvest. The cultivators of the field hope that, and implore the spirit to ensure that, the rice production in this field will fulfill their needs in the coming year. The wife then takes up and throws the foods she has prepared for the spirit (Java: *bancakan* or *slametan*) into the four corners of the rice field, saying "in the name of Allah the Most Merciful and Beneficent."

At this point, the end of the ritual in the field, the two bundles of thirteen rice stalks are given to the wife, and she carries them home on her back. On the way to her home, people are not allowed to address her. She remains focused on her task. This symbolizes the quietness and seriousness of the ritual. When the couple reaches their home, they wash their feet before entering and then both bundles of rice—the bride and groom—are placed on the couples' bed. That is the end of the ritual, and the next day the people begin to harvest rice together. A portion of the harvested rice along with the bride and bridegroom made of rice stalks are then placed in the miniature rice barn.

3. The Endurance of the Metik

This rice harvest ritual is still practiced in some parts of Java to-

day. In places where it is no longer practiced today there have been some changes. The most common kinds of change eroding this ritual practice are, as mentioned above, a change of worldview, industrialization, including the industrialization of agriculture, and a militantly orthodox wave of Islamization.

Education and information have created among the Javanese people a more rational, scientific technological mindset. While there is no overt pressure from outside or from government officials to abandon traditions such as this ritual, the ritual reflects a number of historical conditions that no longer prevail, including: 1) peasants no longer understand the supernatural as largely controlling agricultural production, but increasingly look to science and research; 2) the ritual presumes small fields farmed by individual farmers, and is not adapted to co-operatives or multi-field commercial agriculture.

The metik ritual developed in conjunction with the traditional agricultural life of Javanese villagers. It acts out an account of how the land has historically been essential to them as their life source. But the modernization process has introduced industrialization in the form of textile manufacture in Java not only in urban settings, but at the village level. Small and medium textile factories throughout Java are situated among clusters of rural villages, from where they draw their laborers. Thus the villages have become also industrial zones, and the power of land as the symbol of the life source has been eroded. This is particularly true in Desa Ngringo, the place where this research was done. The use of land for factories, of course, also reduces the amount of land farmed for rice, and thus reduces the potential for performing metik, the rice harvest ritual.

Some strands of conservative Muslims interpret many Javanese traditions as contrary to Islamic teachings because those traditions treat what Islam understands as creatures of Allah (here the *danyang*) as if they were divine, which in Islam is regarded as polytheism (Arab: *shirk*). Muslims are forbidden the worship of any except Allah; to worship others is the most cardinal sin in Islam. Asking consent from the *danyang*, for example, to harvest rice is forbidden, because according to Islamic teaching it is only Allah, God, who will make their harvest successful or not, not the *danyang*.

The form of Muslim resistance and opposition to these traditional practices is generally not coercive physical pressure, but rather is done through preaching against these practices and extolling the people (Arab: *da'wah*) through Friday's sermon at the mosque and in the other moments, to leave these ancestral traditions and practice Islam in its purest form.

Conclusions

Analyzing syncretism is actually not a simple matter. People differ in their definitions and understandings of this term. From the academic point of view the fusion of parts of diverse traditions that in turn form a new religious identity is regarded as syncretistic. However, in the practical level as showed by metik's case, this fusion does not automatically form a syncretism but rather strengthen a typical kind of Javanese Islam that differs from Middle Eastern Islam.

Where the debate heats up is on how to distinguish syncretism from inadequate education. Do these villagers practice metik as a conscious affirmation of both their identity as Javanese rice farmers and their identity as Muslim believers, or do they perform metik in the mistaken belief that it is acceptable Muslim ritual? This brings up the further question of how one defines what is acceptable practice within a religion. Muslims agree that the Qur'an is the primary determinant of what is acceptable or obligatory, but whose interpretation of the Qur'an is normative is open.

Java is an area where the processes of Islamization have taken place through peaceful penetration for a long time, compared to the same process in the Middle East where it often involved conflicts between the local inhabitants and the new comers, Muslims.

Moreover, the loser accepted the original and genuine form of Islam. In contrast to Java, due to peaceful penetration, the genuine Islam merges with local cultures that in turn formed syncretism, though sometimes one of them is more dominant compared to another. What the walis did to introduce and teach Islam to Javanese people is not finished yet. The generations following them have the task of actually completing and finishing the walis' efforts. Thus in this regard something that should be understood appropriately is that the process of Islamization today actually is not converting or proselytizing non-Muslims to Islam, but rather to Islamize Muslims, like abangans who know no or know little about their religion, to perform Islam in its purest form.

Islam, said Max Weber, is a strict monotheism, that put Allah as the only God and as the central and end of life. No Muslims anywhere refuse this statement. The Qur'an mentioned some kinds of invisible creatures such as angels, *iblis*, satan, jinni. If we translate these terms into Javanese expressions we will find the terms *danyang*, *dedemit*, *hantu*, *lelembut*, *genderuwo*, and so on. In Islam, however, these creatures remain as God's creation like human beings, no more.

Thus it is possible to accept the *metik* ritual within on orthodox Islam a Javanese enculturated form, as long as the status of the *danyang* remains creatures of Allah, subordinate, and Tisnawati and Joko Sedono are human figures. To call the *danyang* initially is to respect who "abides" a place not to worship it. Thus mushrik (polytheist) is not appropriately labeled to those practice metik.

Endnotes

- * The author is a lecturer of Surakarta State College of Islamic Studies (STAIN Surakarta). In this occasion I have to mention and thank to some that made this article possible especially to Dr. Christine E. Gudorf from Florida International University (FIU), USA, who encouraged and edited a big portion of this article, to Bapak Sopawiro Sapin and Ibu Sakinem; the informants, who allowed me to see metik tradition and to take their pictures, Mas Sugiyono and his wife Mbak Ninik and Fajar Sri Handayani.
- 1 Masdar Hilmy, The Genealogy of Javanese Islam: A Preliminary Study on the Acculturation of Islam to Java, Journal *Qualita Ahsana*, IAIN Sunan Ampel, vol. 1 no. 2: October 1999 (Surabaya: the State Institute of Islamic Studies "Sunan Ampel", 1999), p. 184.
- 2 "The spread of Islam is one of the most significant processes of Indonesia history", said Ricklefs, "but also one of the most obscure. When, why and how the conversion of Indonesians began has been debated by several scholars, but no definite conclusions have been possible because the records of Islamisation that survive are so few, and often so uninformative." M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 3.
- 3 Nurcholish Madjid, Islamic Roots of Modern Pluralism, Journal *Studia Islamika* 1 (1) (April-June 1994)
- 4 Meriam-Webster.Inc Copyright © 1994
- 5 Encyclopaedia Britanica 2001 : s.v. "religious syncretism" [CD ROM] (Copyright © 1994-2001)
- 6 *Ibid*
- 7 Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion; An Anthropological Account* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 3.
- 8 Rahmat Djatnika, Pengaruh Islam Terhadap Hukum Adat di Aceh, Sumatera Barat, Jawa Timur dan Sulawesi Selatan (The Influence of Islam to the Customary Law in Aceh, West Sumatra, East Java and South Celebes), Journal *Qualita Ahsana*, IAIN Sunan Ampel, vol. 1 no. 2: October 1999 (Surabaya: the State Institute of Islamic Studies "Sunan Ampel", 1999) p. 163.
- 9 Koentjaraningrat, *Kebudayaan Jawa* (The Javanese Culture) (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka), 1994, p. 334
- 10 In Javanese mythology only Dewi Sri and Bathara Kala play important role in Javanese life and religious ceremonies. Dewi Sri, the Dewi of Fertility, deals with a number of agricultural ceremonies, while Bathara Kala, the Dewa of Time, deals with the damage, death, and *ngruwat* (to avoid one's self from misery, death and disaster), *ibid*, p. 335
- 11 Andrew Beatty, *op.cit*, p. 30
- 12 James J. Fox (ed), *Indonesian Heritage: Religion and Ritual* (Singapore: Archipelago Press, 1998), p. 18
- 13 Andre Beatty, *op.cit*, p. 3
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