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REFORMIST MUSLIMS IN A YOGYAKARTA VILLAGE:
The Islamic Transformation of Contemporary Socio-Religious Life

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The Australian National University

February 1996
Except as cited in the text, this work is the result of research carried out by the author

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis was made possible by a Korean Government Overseas Scholarship. I am grateful to the Korean Government for the scholarship which enabled me to undertake a PhD program at the Australian National University and field research in Indonesia. I am also thankful to Bu-wung Lee in the Korean Consulate in Sydney for his assistance.

The debt that I owe to my main supervisor, Dr. J.J. Fox may not be easily described. It was he who transformed me from one who did not know exactly where Java is located to one who can say at least something about people in Java. Without his continuous support, encouragement and constructive criticism, it may have been impossible for me to complete this thesis. I would like to express my thanks to him.

I am also indebted to my supervisors, Dr. S. Supomo and Dr. P. Guinness, who willingly sacrificed their valuable time to read my drafts and gave me invaluable and stimulating advice. Dr. Supomo provided me with an insight into looking at and interpreting things Javanese correctly. Dr. Guinness critically appraised my earlier writings, which brought me countless headaches, but, nonetheless, was vital to the completion of this work. I also thank my former supervisor, Dr. P. Graham, for her support and advice during my pre-fieldwork period.

I am truly thankful to Dr. B. Holloway who willingly carried out the most tedious work of correcting the language of this thesis and of proof-reading. Without her careful reading of earlier drafts, this thesis might have been still unreadable to English readers.

A large number of scholars and members of the Department of Anthropology and of the Australian National University have helped me to complete this work. Among them, I would like especially to mention Dr. W. Keeler, Dr. S. Ryang, G. Craswell and D. Porter who read parts of my thesis and gave me their brilliant ideas
and suggestions. I am also grateful to P. Taylor, Yunita Winarto, Bambang Hudayana, Jamhari Makruf and Endang Turmudi for their support, inspiration and friendship. My thanks also go to my fellow Korean students who contributed in many ways to clarifying my ideas and to making me feel at home in Canberra. Among them are Charles Shin, Duksan Lee and Hyunhee Moon.

I also thank the administrative staff in the Department of Anthropology for their support and hospitality. Susan Toscan has never forgotten to show her deep concern about my progress and my life, Ria van de Zandt provided me with invaluable technical support and Margaret Tyrie drew a wonderful map for me.

Research in Indonesia was sponsored by Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta and carried out under the auspices of Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia (LIPI). I would like to express my gratitude to both institutions for their support.

I also want to thank Dr. Syafri Sairin, Dr. P. M. Laksono and Dr. Budi Susanto in Yogyakarta, who provided me with priceless suggestions and hospitality throughout the whole period of my fieldwork. Many thanks go to Romo Budi who helped me to find a research site, and to my research assistant and friend, Surono, who willingly sacrificed his time to share the most critical moment of my research with me.

There are far too many people in the village of Sumber to whom I am indebted. I would like especially to mention Bapak Susilarto who introduced Sumber to me, and Bapak Suramto and Bu Suramto who were generous enough to share their life with me and accepted me as a member of their family. I thank other people in Sumber, all of whom were my teachers and were willing to share their life with me. I apologise for not listing individual names due to space limitation. I also would like to apologise and ask forgiveness to people in Sumber for my intentional and
unintentional wrong doings during my stay, hoping that the portrayal of their life in this work does not distort what their life really was.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my parents. Although they did not and still do not understand completely why their son was attracted to anthropology and selected Java as a research site, and won't understand what is written in this thesis, their love and support were essential for the completion of my work in Australia and in Indonesia. It is to them I would like to dedicate this thesis.
ABSTRACT

This study examines the religious life of reformist Muslims in a Yogyakarta village. The foci of this discussion are on Muslim villagers' construction, with the help of the reformist paradigm, of the image of the 'good Muslim' and 'Muslim-ness', on their efforts to incorporate an (reformist) Islamic framework to question taken-for-granted practices and ideas, on the position of traditional practices and ideas and their relation to reformist Islam, and on the interplay of villagers who show a strong commitment to reformist Islam with those who do not. Another topic which is investigated in this study is the interactions between Muslim and Christian villagers and the impacts of Christian presence on the process by which Muslims define themselves, their neighbours, their religion and their religious community.

After examining the recent socio-economic developments in a Yogyakarta village in Chapter two, this study deals with the development of reformist Islam, the process whereby a group of reformist villagers has been formed and its impact on the religious life of Muslim villagers in Chapter three. The formation of this group precipitated a differentiation of Muslim villagers in terms of their religious outlook and of their participation in religious activities, and has accelerated the diversification of the meaning of 'Muslim-ness'.

Chapter four looks at the notion of 'Muslim-ness', or of 'being a Muslim' supported by the reformist villagers and the interactions between villagers who show a strong commitment to reformist Islam and those who do not. The analysis shows that the profession of faith (sahadat) or circumcision, which was once considered to be a sufficient condition to make someone a Muslim, is no longer regarded so by the reformist villagers. Instead, they put absolute emphasis on the fulfilment of faith, such as carrying out daily prayer and the fast, as the central part of the notion of 'Muslim-ness'. The different religious understandings and practices among Muslim
villagers have not become a basis of social conflict. No villagers try to involve themselves in the religious life of others, are willing to instruct other people and to make explicit the controversial aspect of others' religious behaviour in public. These attitudes help to create a social environment where the norm of harmony is maintained.

From Chapter five to Chapter eight, the focus is placed on several changes which have taken place as Islamic development has accelerated. Chapter five examines the way traditional rituals are interpreted by Muslim villagers and the emergence of a new Islamic tradition. It shows that the process by which an Islamic tradition emerges from a syncretic background is not simply one of imposing a certain criterion on traditional practices and ending them, but of questioning their relevance, abandoning what cannot be accommodated, reinterpreting what can be made harmonious with reformist Islam and recontextualising them in Islamic terms.

In Chapter six, traditional belief in supernatural beings, supernatural power, and related practices are examined. The reformist villagers try to challenge and reformulate the nature of supernatural beings by equating them with the Islamic concept of the malevolent jinn and by condemning villagers' contact with them as syirik, or the negation of the Oneness of Allah.

Chapters seven and eight deal with the impact of the presence of Christians on the religious life of Muslims. The study shows that their presence has prompted the formation of a clear boundary based on religious identity and of the idea of 'in-group' and 'out-group', and that the importance of religious identity has begun to extend into non-religious domains. The alleged threat of Christians have also prompted the reformist villagers to defend the umat Islam, and their specific mode of attacking Christianity has instated the concept of akal (reason) not only as a way to expose the absurdity of Christian theology but as a way to evaluate their own religious practices and ideas.
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