

Chapter 1: Introduction

One of the surprises that Kolojonggo (a pseudonym for the hamlet in which I did my field research) gave me came a few days after I had settled there. Walking aimlessly along a hamlet path, I found a house, or more precisely a building, that looked different from other houses in the hamlet. It was taller than the other houses and had a loud-speaker on top of the roof. Getting closer, I recognised that it was a *masjid* (mosque). I could see the place for ablution, decorations taking the shape of the dome and a large hall inside the building. The reason I was surprised at the presence of a *masjid* in Kolojonggo, a scene which might not surprise anyone from Yogyakarta, was simple: I had not expected hamlets (*dusun*) in rural Yogyakarta to have their own *masjid*. I assumed that I might see a *masjid* at the village (*kelurahan*) level. My surprise, however, did not end there. The next day, I obtained more surprising information from village officials: Sumber (a pseudonym for the village to which Kolojonggo belongs) which consisted of 19 hamlets had 23 *masjid*, signifying that a few hamlets had more than one *masjid*. After this encounter, I could not help reconsidering my decision to do research in Kolojonggo. To me, Sumber did not seem to be 'the ordinary village' in Yogyakarta that I had looked for as my research site.

It is not certain what the notion of 'the ordinary village' meant to me at that time. This concept probably consisted of several elements that I had selected as the characteristics of 'the ordinary village' in Yogyakarta while reading the literature: the significant role of agriculture in villagers' economic activities; a dominant socio-economic position of large landholders and village officials; increasing influences from the city; and, in terms of religion, the dominance of syncretism characterised by an integration of the Javanese folk tradition, Hindu-Buddhist, and Islamic elements. Whatever the exact meaning of 'the ordinary village' might be and irrespective of whether this notion was relevant or not, the first few months of my stay in Yogyakarta were marked by my search for 'the ordinary village'. The strategy that I used to select a fieldwork site also reflected my obsession with this concept. I did not employ any specific criterion in selecting the site. Instead, what I relied on was something like luck or fate. Behind this attitude lay my belief that, if I chose a hamlet according to certain criteria, the hamlet thus selected might not represent 'the ordinary village'.

After making several short trips to rural Yogyakarta, I at last discovered a more specific way to select my research site. As I could hardly communicate with villagers either in Indonesian or in Javanese, I decided to use English teachers living in rural areas as guides. I met five English teachers, visited five hamlets and met five village and hamlet heads. In these meetings, my obsession with 'the ordinary village' hindered me from asking any specific questions about the hamlet or village. I just observed their degree of hospitality and the scenery of

each village. My decision to settle in Kolojonggo was based on these considerations. The English teacher who introduced Kolojonggo to me and the village head in Sumber reacted more enthusiastically to my plan to do research in their village than others, while, unlike the other villages, all paddy fields in Sumber were located on flat land and this gave me a good impression.

It took almost three months after the discovery of the *masjid* for me to reach the final decision to continue my fieldwork in Kolojonggo. This decision was based on two considerations. First, for these three months, I visited other villages once or twice a week in order to ask how many *masjid* were in these villages. The finding was rather surprising: most villages in the western part of Yogyakarta had as many as, or more *masjid* than, the hamlets. This implied that, contrary to my previous assumption, Kolojonggo was not such an unusual hamlet. The second factor which made me stay in Kolojonggo was inconsistent with my search for 'the ordinary village'. A few days after I had found the *masjid*, I also discovered a Protestant chapel (*kapel*) in Kolojonggo. Although no clergyman lived there and it was used only for Sunday services, a chapel was what I had least expected to see in a rural village. At first, this extraordinariness gave me an additional incentive to search for another fieldwork site. Later, especially after I knew that the presence of the *masjid* in Kolojonggo was not extraordinary, however, the co-existence of the *masjid* and *kapel* prompted me to continue my research in Kolojonggo and, consequently, I stayed there until the end of my fieldwork. I lived in Kolojonggo from October 1992 till June 1994 except for one month's absence. The major focus of my research throughout this period was placed on Islam while I also dealt intensively with agricultural development.

Looking back on the first stage of my fieldwork, I am perplexed at my groundless obsession with the notion of 'the ordinary village'. What surprises me even more is that I expected to see the *masjid* only at the village level. This might have been based on another assumption that I had at that time, namely that villagers' commitment to Islam may not have been strong enough for them to build their own *masjid* in their hamlet.

The whole period of my field research was a process of realisation that, to put it simply, there was a group of villagers for whom Islam was more than a veneer on their life, and that the influence of this group over others was on the increase, although the process was gradual. Therefore, one of the main themes in this thesis follows my changing perception of Islam. This, however, does not mean that I now have another image of 'the ordinary village', although I probably would not be able to stop myself from saying, on seeing a hamlet without its own *masjid*, 'what has made this hamlet so extraordinary?' One of the insights that my stay in Yogyakarta gave me was that the people of Yogyakarta and the villages where they live are extremely diverse. Each village has its own dynamics and, in some cases, each hamlet in one village shows more distinguishing features

than sameness. This diversity makes it futile for me to claim that the portrait of Islam in Kolojonggo can be generalised to include other Yogyanese or Javanese villages. Rather, this thesis describes one possible mode in which Islam in Yogyakarta may be developed and manifested.

Before I go further, it seems necessary to examine previous studies of Islam in Java. Such an examination will help to put my study into a certain perspective and will provide a chance to understand better the notion of, and my search for, 'the ordinary village'. As I had never been to any Javanese village before I started my fieldwork, all my preconceptions about Javanese villages had been constructed from the literature on Java.

1.1. Review of Studies about Islam in Java ¹

It may not be an exaggeration to say that the ideas C. Geertz presented in his books, *The Religion of Java and Agricultural Involution*, have dominated the scholarly discussions about the socio-political, cultural, economic and religious behaviour of the Javanese. Although there are abundant discussions of these books, there are reasons for me to carry out another review of Geertz's work and of scholarly debates on it. My orientation in doing field research was influenced by these debates and, although the main purpose of this thesis is not to support nor to refute Geertz, his paradigm has influenced the course of my writing. The 'spectre' of Geertz has been with me throughout the whole period of doing fieldwork and of writing this thesis.²

In *The Religion of Java*, Geertz proposes three main cultural types which reflect the moral organisation of Javanese culture, the general ideas of order in terms of which the Javanese shape their behaviour in all areas of life: *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi* (1976:4-5). The *abangan* sub-tradition is characterised by a balanced integration of animistic, Hinduistic, and Islamic elements, a basic Javanese syncretism which is the island's true folk tradition, the *santri* sub-tradition by a stress on the Islamic aspects of the syncretism, and the *priyayi* sub-tradition by a stress on the Hinduist aspects. These three religious sub-traditions are associated in a broad and general way with three major social-structural nuclei in Java, namely, the village, the market and the government bureaucracy (ibid.:5-6).

One of the debates concerning Geertz's trichotomy has centred on the relevance of the *priyayi* variant. Some scholars argue that *santri* and *abangan* are the terms designating differences in the religious outlook cutting across social classes, while *priyayi* is a term referring to a social class, namely, the aristocrats (Bachtiar, 1985; Boland, 1982:4; Koentjaraningrat, 1963:188-189; Noer, 1973:19).

¹ This review includes only the major works written in English.

² In this review, I will focus only on *The Religion of Java*. For the review of Geertz's *Agricultural Involution*, see Alexander & Alexander (1978 & 1979), Collier (1979 & 1981) and White (1983).

People belonging to the *priyayi* may show strong *santri* or *abangan* orientation, implying that *priyayi* on the one hand and *santri* and *abangan* on the other are not mutually exclusive. Those dissatisfied with Geertz's trichotomy on this basis support one of the two alternative positions. The first is to drop the *priyayi* variant in favour of the dichotomy of *abangan* and *santri*: the Javanese should be grouped into two, those who look on their Islamic duties seriously and those who do not.³ The second position tries to incorporate a concept or concepts comparable to *priyayi*. One of the concepts thus selected is *wong cilik* (literally, small person), a term referring to the lower class living mainly in rural areas. With the introduction of this concept, the Geertz's trichotomy expands to quadri-partite system: *wong cilik-abangan*, *wong cilik-santri*, *priyayi-abangan* and *priyayi-santri*. The incorporation of new concepts, however, also has an analytic problem: the concepts which can be included seem to be almost inexhaustible. For example, Ricklefs, in addition to his use of *wong cilik* as opposed to *priyayi*, incorporates a lateral axis of *kolot-moderen* (old fashioned-modern) (1979:118), while Koentjaraningrat contrasts *priyayi* to *wong cilik* and *wong sudagar* (traders) and includes another axis of urban and rural (1967:245-46).

These two alternative positions seem to be based on different understandings of Geertz's paradigm and its applicability. Those who confine the relevance of Geertz's paradigm to the study of Javanese religion take the first position, while those who apply his paradigm to the general study of the Javanese worldview take the second. To the latter, religion is not a sufficient condition to understand the world outlook of the Javanese, so that social class, *kolot-moderen* and city-urban should be included as relevant variables to understand the different world outlooks. Whatever positions are taken, however, all scholars supporting either of the two positions agree on one point, namely, that in terms of the religious orientation, the Javanese are divided into two groups, those who take their Islamic duties seriously and those who do not. Some of them prefer the term '*kejawen*', '*agami Jawi*' (literally, Javanese religion) and 'Javanism' to the term *abangan*. 'Javanism' in this context may be defined as the indigenous elements of Javanese religion which have remained constant in the face of the tremendous impact of foreign ideas (Zoetmulder, 1967:16) or, more broadly, the religion of those who do not take their Muslim religious duties seriously (Jay, 1969; Koentjaraningrat, 1985a; Mulder, 1978).

³ The dichotomy of *abangan* and *santri* was used as a framework to understand the religious orientation of the Javanese by the scholars in the Dutch colonial period. As early as the 19th century, the terms *abangan* (literally, the red people) and *putihan* (equivalent to *santri* used by Geertz, literally, the white people), were used by a Dutch writer to show the contrast between orthodox and syncretist Javanese (Poensen, C. 1886, *Brieven over den Islam uit de Binnenlanden van Java*, cited in Ellen (1983:58)), while Snouck Hurgronje is said to have used the term *santri* to designate the purist Muslims and *abangan*, the syncretists (Peacock, 1986:344). Berg and Djajadiningrat also adopt these terms. To Berg, *abangan* refers to slackers and *putihan*, pious Muslims (1932:303), and to Djajadiningrat, *abangan* designates those who do not live religiously but nevertheless are Muslims and *putihan*, those who live religiously (1958:384).

By contrast with the critics of Geertz who generally agree to the dichotomy of *abangan-santri* but try to modify the *priyayi* variant, another group of critics evaluates Geertz's paradigm from a different angle. Their basic premise is that the *abangan-santri* dichotomy is not relevant to an understanding of the religious orientation of the Javanese. In this respect, their criticism is directed not only at Geertz but at the majority of scholars who have argued for the presence of division among Javanese Muslims in terms of their attitude toward and commitment to Islam. Interestingly enough, the precursor of this group of critics was not a scholar of religion in Java *per se*, but an Islamologist who probably came to know Islam in Java by way of Geertz. According to Hodgson, many of the ethnographic data interpreted by Geertz as proofs of syncretic tradition are actually Islamic. He attributes this shortcoming to Geertz's prejudicial view in identifying 'Islam' with what the school of modernists (reformists) happens to approve of and in ascribing everything else to an aboriginal or Hindu-Buddhist background. Hodgson suggests that the data presented by Geertz show how little has survived from the Hindu past even in inner Java and raises the question as to why the triumph of Islam has been so complete (1974 vol.2:551). Although his argument is persuasive, Hodgson is not generous enough to share his understanding with others. He proposes that his conclusion can be appreciated by 'one who knows Islam' (*ibid.*), and does not clarify, for example, how the invocation of such beings as *dhanyang* (a local guardian spirit), the spirits living in the rafters of the house, the animals that crawl along like snails, 'mother earth', guardian of the land and the water, and the as yet unborn child alongside Allah, the Prophet Adam, Eve and Muhammad (Geertz, 1976:40-41) in order to ask all of them not to bother people, not to make people feel ill, unhappy, or confused (*ibid.*:14) can be an evidence of the triumph of Islam over the local religious tradition rather than that of syncretism.

Recently, Woodward claims that he is the 'one who knows Islam'. He argues that Islam is the dominant force in the religious beliefs and rites of the Javanese, shaping the character of social interaction and daily life in all segments of Javanese society (1989:3). Although his effort to incorporate the Sufi tradition of Islam as a framework with which to examine religious practices and ideas may be considered as a contribution to the study of Islam in Java, Woodward's argument suffers from several shortcomings.⁴ The first of these is his method of interpreting historical and ethnographic data. In order to show that certain religious practices or ideas in Java are Islamic or fully Islamised, Woodward does not present any direct evidence that these have textual references in the Quran and Hadith or have an Islamic origin. What he uses instead is corresponding examples, namely, the presence of similar ideas and practices in the Quran and Hadith, and sometimes in the lives of people in other parts of the

⁴ For more about criticism of Woodward's argument, see Ricklefs (1991) and Stange (1990).

Islamic world. For example, in order to argue that *slametan* (communal feast), which has been considered by many as a typical example of Javanese syncretism, is based on the textual tradition of Islam, he does not show that the Prophet Muhammad actually celebrated *slametan* nor that Allah commanded human beings to celebrate *slametan*. Instead, he selects a few features arbitrarily from *slametan* such as inviting neighbours for a communal feast and giving the left-over food, and then shows these features are in the Islamic scriptures. Seen within this framework, the fact that the Prophet Muhammad accepted the invitation to a meal from his follower, ate together with his companions and asked the latter to give the left-overs to people is already enough evidence to prove that *slametan* is based on the textual tradition of Islam (1988:62-3). As Geertz notes (1976:11), the communal feast is the world's most common religious ritual. This implies that, if I apply Woodward's method and argument, all parts of the world where the communal feast is practised and the left-over food is distributed are areas whose religious practices may be Islamic. Woodward, who is bold enough to say that 'Roman legal principles or Neoplatonism becomes Islamic if interpreted in terms of a system of symbolic knowledge derived from Quranic or other Islamic principles' (1979:63), may not object to my application of his idea, if I add a phrase, 'as long as the actors who participate in the communal feast consider it Islamic'.

At this point, we encounter a second weakness in Woodward's argument. He relies heavily on the interpretation of actors to examine religious practices in Java. This method itself does not seem to be wrong. What is problematic, however, is his acceptance of actors' interpretation as an absolute criterion on which to judge whether certain practices or ideas are Islamic or not. In the paradigm of Woodward, therefore, interpretation and judgement merge. It may be beyond the capacity of an outside researcher to argue that informants' interpretation of certain practices is factually or historically wrong on the basis of written materials to which he or she has access but informants do not. However, it may be a mistake to use actors' interpretation as an absolute basis to judge the 'Islamic' or 'non-Islamic' nature of certain practices and ideas. An outside researcher may say that 'such and such practices are interpreted as being Islamic' but cannot argue, from this interpretation, that 'such and such practices are Islamic'. On the other hand, this method of Woodward can easily be proved to be wrong, if one uses his method in attacking his argument: if there are Javanese who have a different interpretation of certain practices from that of Woodward's informants - for example, if some interpret *slametan* to be Hindu-Buddhist - this, according to Woodward's method, shows that *slametan* is Hindu-Buddhist, not Islamic. Woodward tries to avoid this issue by using the phrase, 'many people'. For example, he writes 'many people believe that if he chose to, the sultan [in Yogyakarta] could rule the world, and that Yogyakarta is the center of the universe' (ibid.:21) and 'the prince's personal opinion, which

is shared by many modern Javanese, is that because books are written by men ... they are less reliable sources of historical knowledge than meditation' (ibid:35). In one sense, this form of argument cannot be falsified, since no one will be able to seek after the opinions of people in Java whose number reaches more than a hundred million and to say confidently that many people do not share the same opinion with those called 'many people' by Woodward. However, it is legitimate to ask from which segment of the Javanese society do Woodward's 'many people' come. Do 'many people' refer to many of the informants whom Woodward questioned during his fieldwork, many people in Yogyakarta or many people in Java? This question is essential since many people in Kolojonggo and Sumber may not agree with the interpretation of the 'many people' in Woodward's book.⁵

Whatever the pros and cons concerning Geertz's ideas, it cannot be denied that his conceptual framework in *The Religion of Java*, namely, that the Javanese can be divided into two groups in terms of their religious orientation and of their attitude toward and commitment to Islam, has been an axis with which the scholarly discussions of religion in Java have been developed. Throughout this process, two contrasting views have emerged: the first argues that Islam has been gaining influence over a much wider circle of the Javanese, while the second puts much more emphasis on the maintenance of the syncretic tradition or 'Javanism' and its continuing popularity with the Javanese. The studies of Mulder, Stange and Nakamura give us good examples of both positions in the study of Islam in Java. The comparison of these studies is all the more interesting since these scholars carried out their research in the early 1970s and in places sharing a similar historical background, Mulder in Yogyakarta city, Stange in Yogyakarta and Surakarta regions, and Nakamura in a town not far from Yogyakarta city.

The starting point of Mulder and Stange is quite similar. They note the popularity of *kebatinan* mysticism and try to understand its contents and implications. According to Mulder, the *kebatinan* or mystical world view in Java is characterised by its emphasis on the oneness of the order of existence, on the superiority of the inner (*batin*) over the outer (*lahir*), on the superiority of the intuitive feeling (*rasa*) over the rational, and on the harmonious order of society. These characteristics have persisted to guide and interpret action in spite of structural change and modern developments (1978:xv), constituting the generic type of Javanese-ness (ibid.:100) and providing tools to understand significant social change (ibid.:103). Mulder admits that Islamic doctrines have influenced Javanese mystical thinking and terminology. However, these influences have

⁵ The criticism that I make here does not mean that Woodward's work does not have any significance for the study of religion in Java. As noted earlier, one of his contributions is to show that the influences of Sufism are visible in traditional Javanese culture. In this respect, he helps us to have a more balanced view of traditional religious ideas and practices in Java which have been considered to be related closely to Hindu-Buddhist tradition (e.g. Hadiwijono, 1967).

not been strong enough to replace the Javanese world view, are felt to be foreign to Java (ibid.:10-11) and have reached only a small segment of the Javanese who are isolated from the mainstream (ibid.:105). Accordingly, for virtually all the Javanese, mysticism and magical-mystical practices have always been a most powerful undercurrent of their culture (ibid.:1).

Stange shares much of Mulder's understanding of *kebatinan* mysticism, but he takes a slightly different position to locate mysticism in the present life of the Javanese. He argues that the syncretic and traditional factors within each religious community have lost ground to modern scripturalism (1980:48) and that Javanese mysticism is no longer a fundamental element within the polity of ethnic Javanese (ibid.:43). This does not mean that Stange argues for the dominance of Islam in the religious life of the Javanese. He suggests Islam is integral to, but not at the heart of, local culture, noting that mosques are often little more than gateways to the graveyard in the rural religious pattern of contemporary Java (ibid.:33). In evaluating the position of Islam and Javanese mysticism, what Stange has in mind seems to be a religious polarity (ibid.:47). The syncretic and mystical religious tradition has gradually lost ground to the surge of (scriptural) Islam but the latter has not been successful in replacing the former.

Nakamura gives a contrasting picture of religious life in Yogyakarta to that of Mulder. He finds that an increasingly large number of individuals in the *abangan* category have moved and are still moving towards the category of *santri*, becoming more orthodox in their thought and deed as Muslims (1993:13). To Nakamura, this development is not a recent phenomenon but a part of the ongoing process of Islamisation. One of the interesting findings of Nakamura is that, in contrast to the conventional view of reformist Islam in Java, Javanese reformism is not severed from Javanese traditions nor is it anti-Javanese, but it actually embodies Javanese traditions (ibid.:183). He shows how such basic concepts as '*lahir*' (outer self) and '*batin*' (inner self), and '*kasar*' (literally, coarse) and '*halus*' (literally, refined), which have been employed to analyse 'Javanism' or 'Javanese religion' (Geertz, 1976:232-234; Moulder, 1978), are used by reformist Muslims to interpret Islamic doctrines and to introduce Islamic virtues to the mass (1993:159-167).⁶ In this respect, Nakamura's study gives us a chance to

⁶ In an article published in 1984, Nakamura extends this idea to criticise Geertz's treatment of the *abangan* variant. He notes that such concepts as *slamet*, *sabar* and *ikhlas* which constitute the central values in the *abangan* outlook have their origin in Islam, so that, he argues, the traditional Javanese outlook cannot be considered to be Hindu-Buddhist or animistic but Islamic. Nakamura's criticism seems to be based on his misinterpretation of the *abangan* variant. In *The religion of Java*, Geertz does not argue that the *abangan* variant is immune to the Islamic influences, but he proposes that the *abangan* variant is characterised by a balanced integration of animistic, Hinduistic, and Islamic elements (1976:5). It is obvious from this that Islamic elements should be included in the *abangan* variant as one of its main constituents. If syncretism is the central feature of the *abangan* variant, Nakamura's criticism of Geertz ironically shows that Geertz's understanding of the *abangan* variant is exactly to the point. This is because not all key concepts which constitute the central values in the *abangan* outlook originate from Islam. For example, such notions as *rasa*, *nerima*, *rukun* and *cocok* which have been considered by many

appraise the dichotomy supported by Geertz and others from a different angle. The division between *santri* and *abangan* variants may not be as neat as Geertz unconsciously portrays⁷ and the elements constituting each variant may be understood and interpreted by the Javanese in a different fashion from the ways these are interpreted by Geertz and others (see also Dhofier, 1978:71-2).

From the 1970s on, observers of Islam at the national level have shown that a remarkable change has been going on in Java. Increasing numbers of Javanese show their strong commitment to Islam; the participants in Friday prayers and in the fast have increased and more Indonesians have made the pilgrimage to Mecca (Johns, 1987:224); Islamic activities such as prayers and studies take place everywhere and nominal Muslims participate in these activities (Adnan, 1990:444); publication and public discussion about Islam have flourished (Tamara, 1986:5-8); the number of students in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) has increased dramatically (Dhofier, 1978:68); and the appeal of Islam among modern people has increased (Tamney, 1987:62). In spite of these forms of change, the argument for Islam's increasing influence in Java has not been shared by everyone. Many consider that Islam has not been successful in taking a strong grip over the population even after the 1970s (Koentjaraningrat, 1985a; McVey, 1983; Ricklefs, 1979; Slamet, 1977:35), while Johns, who reports the increasing popularity of Islam, suggests that, in observing Islam in the rural areas, their (Javanese peasantry) cultural traditions through which they perceive Islam are strongly animist with an Indic religious overlay (1987:226). Some of these scholars use the key symbols of traditional Javanese culture to explain the position of Islam in Java: 'given the depth and comprehensive character of traditional Javanese culture, in any struggle for allegiance which may develop ... between the *wayang* (shadow play) and the Quran, the *wayang* is likely to win' (Ricklefs, 1979:126); and 'Javanese society still cannot dispense with the *dhukun* (traditional medical and magical practitioners) (Koentjaraningrat, 1985a:426).

The continuing importance of traditional religious ideas in the life of Muslim Javanese is also noted by Keeler who did field research in Central Javanese villages. Keeler argues that people's actions, their speech, their fortunes and their interaction within the family, in village life and among those of different status are thought to be affected by the spiritual potency they wield and by the potency others wield (1987:19). Accordingly, Javanese are preoccupied with asceticism which is considered to be an ideal way to accumulate spiritual potency

as the key Javanese value terms (see Anderson, 1965; Koentjaraningrat, 1985a; Mulder, 1978; Stange, 1984) are not Arabic but Javanese. These diverse origins of the key notions in the *abangan* outlook imply that the central feature of the *abangan* variant is syncretism.

⁷ In *The Religion of Java*, Geertz proposes clearly that the division of *abangan*, *santri* and *priyayi* is not absolute and these variants should be understood as 'cultural types', or probably as 'ideal types' in the Weberian sense. This statement of Geertz, however, seems to be easily overshadowed by the way he presents his book. In *The Religion of Java*, he divides the three categories and explains them one by one, a presentation which gives an impression that this division is clear-cut.

(ibid.:112), and traditional belief in spiritual beings maintains its popularity as a way to accumulate spiritual strength (ibid.:44). Keeler mentions the existence of villagers who disregard spiritual potency and asceticism, but he suggests these villagers, who are identified as some of the most highly educated reformist Muslims (ibid.:114), are exceptions and most villagers are more syncretic than orthodox in their attitude toward Islam (ibid.:23). Keeler's view is also echoed in Bråton's study of a Central Javanese village. Differing from Keeler, Bråton gives us a more balanced view by incorporating Islamic development in rural Java into his discussion: he notes the mushrooming of mosques and villagers' incorporation of Islam as one of the frameworks to interpret traditional rituals (1989). In spite of this, however, he interprets the villagers' commitment to Islam and their acceptance of an Islamic paradigm more as a strategy to present their actual identity actively in a distorted or even opposite way rather than as a genuine sign of the growing importance of Islam in their life (ibid.:72). Accordingly, Islamisation leads primarily to changes in ritual forms while the traditional interpretations, meanings and beliefs still pertain (ibid.:93). Bråton's view can be summarised in the comment of his informant concerning the use of Arabic verses from the Quran in casting spells: '[when you verbally recite Arabic prayers], you can utter a Javanese phrase in your thoughts' (ibid.:76).

Recently, the argument emphasising the continuing importance of 'Javanism' has been challenged by several scholars who argue that Islamic development in rural Java has been accelerated since the 1970s and that Islam has become a much more important factor in determining the religious life of rural villagers. Noting the institutional advantage of the orthodox community, the unprecedented scale of Islamic missionary activities and the continuing and increasing effectiveness of Muslim organisation in the countryside (1978a & 1978b), Hefner maintains that the social forces unleashed under the New Order contribute to the partial realisation of one of the Muslim community's primary religious goals: the Islamisation of Java (1987a:551). The children of many '*abangan*' are becoming good Muslims and Javanese culture is giving way to Islam (ibid.:547). Hefner's view is paralleled in the works of two Indonesian scholars. Pranowo, who studied Islamic development in a Central Javanese village, finds that a genuine resurgence of Islam has taken place in the New Order period and that the villagers show strong affiliation and commitment to Islam (1991:152-179), while Mansurnoor shows that the influence of the *kiyai* (religious leaders) over the rural Madurese populace has not been weakened with the advent of modernisation, indirectly implying that Islam's strong grip over the villagers in rural areas has been maintained in the face of rapid changes (1990).

1.2. Organisation and Objectives of the Study

The review of previous studies shows that there have been two streams of thought regarding the position of Islam in Javanese religious life: one emphasises

the continuing importance of traditional values and religious ideas, while the other highlights the increasing importance of Islam. This review then shows how prejudiced was the notion of 'the ordinary village' that I had at the initial stage of my fieldwork. I did not consider the view of such scholars as Hefner and Pranowo, assuming that villagers' commitment to Islam would not be strong enough to lead them to build a *masjid* in their hamlet.⁸ In spite of this shortcoming, however, the notion of 'the ordinary village' provides one of the keys to understand my orientation in doing field research, in that it reflects my dissatisfaction with some of the studies dealing with religion in Java. In reading the literature, I had an impression that some scholars avoid 'the burden of complexity' (Roff, 1985:26) in the interest of 'a patterned understanding' (ibid.:8). They select and focus on a specific place or group where a certain religious orientation of the Javanese is manifested more clearly and, in doing so, neglect how people with different religious orientations interact and how they interpret and evaluate their own and others' religious ideas and practices.⁹ These latter aspects of religious life should be taken into more serious account since those who are committed strongly to Islam and those who show less commitment to it do not live separate lives, but share the same living space and interact with one another.

My dissatisfaction with the approach which focuses on either the *abangan* or *santri* variants and which puts less emphasis on the complexity of religious life became stronger while I stayed in Yogyakarta city. During this time, I could easily observe two contrasting trends in the religious life of the Yogyanese. Each Friday, I could see the *masjid* full of people carrying out their religious duty. In a hotel where I stayed, the female receptionist wore a *jilbab* (female headgear that exposes face but not ears, neck, or hair), went from time to time to the inner part of the hotel to carry out daily prayers, did not sell alcohol and forbade the guests from bringing a local woman to their room. If there were complaints from the guests, she was kind enough to point out the hotels where the guests could do what they wanted freely. On the other hand, when I visited the *alun-alun* (city square) where a night market was open in commemoration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (*Sekaten*), the sound I could hear from loud speakers

⁸ There were several reasons I paid less attention to the view that Islam has increased its grip over the Javanese villagers. First, my research site, Yogyakarta, has been considered to be a place where tradition is much stronger than in other parts of Java. Second, Pranowo's and Mansurnoor's researches were carried out in places where *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) was located and the *kiyai* (the head of the *pesantren*) had a strong influence over the villagers. In this respect, it was plausible to assume that the villagers living in the research areas of Pranowo and Mansurnoor might show much stronger attachment to Islam than those in other parts of Java where there are no *pesantren* and *kiyai*. Although I expected that there would be some villagers trying to carry out their Islamic duties seriously in rural Yogyakarta, I assumed that they would be few and their influence over the religious life of others might not be strong.

⁹ Notable exceptions are Bråton (1989), Hefner (1985, 1987a & 1987b) and Pranowo (1991). See also Siegel (1986:59-80).

was not the recitation of Arabic prayers but popular music called *dangdut*. One of the most crowded places in the *alun-alun* was where several troupes opened stages for *dangdut* performance. There, female singers, wearing mini-skirts or short pants, swayed their body to the rhythm of music, mimicking the dancers in Western pop videos. It might not be a surprise if I had seen the *dangdut* performance in any other place. However, this was done in front of the Sultan's palace and to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad. My visit to one *kebatinan* group also impressed me a lot. There, I could see people exercising to strengthen their spiritual power. What interested me the most at that time was the diverse composition of its members. There were teenagers and men in their forties, while there were teachers, civil servants, and manual labourers, the composition implying that the popularity of the *kebatinan* group was not confined to a certain segment of the Javanese society.

These contrasting experiences in Yogyakarta gave me an impression that, if I wanted to find a place where villagers might show their strong attachment to Islam or 'Javanism', I could easily do so. This then prompted me to give up employing any criterion in selecting a research site. By doing so, I believed, however naively, I might be able to find 'the ordinary village' where I could see the diversity and complexity of religious life among people who had different degrees of commitment to Islam.

My emphasis on the study of the diversity and complexity of religious life was also influenced by a recent shift in studying Islam from a search for an ahistorical Islamic 'essence' to an examination of the multiplicity of Islamic expression, and historical, socio-political and cultural contexts in which a certain understanding of Islam is adopted, maintained and reproduced (Eickelman, 1982; see also el-Zein, 1977).¹⁰ This approach opposes the assumption that Muslims' life is dominated by one interpretation of Islam and Islamic practices. Instead, it focuses on the pluralistic character of Muslim life where more than one competing frameworks coexist, ready to be appropriated by human actors. There are always ambiguities and contradictions which allow for various interpretations and which allow some of these to be accepted as more 'orthodox' than others or to be rejected as 'non-Islamic' at particular times and in particular contexts.

One of the main objectives of this study is to look at *the* Islam understood, interpreted and practised by villagers in Kolojonggo which has been influenced by the surge of reformist Islam for the last two decades. The foci of my 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 a (reformist) Islamic framework to question taken-for-granted practices and ideas, on the position of traditional practices and ideas and their

¹⁰ For more about the trend and recent shift in the studies of Islam in Western scholarship, see Bowen (1993:3-8).

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 will be dealt with at length is the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim villagers. Although the co-existence of Muslims and a substantial number of Christians in Kolojonggo is a peculiar phenomenon, it provides an opportunity to understand the dynamics of Islam. The presence of Christians has had an impact on the process by which Muslims define themselves, their neighbours, their religion and their religious community.

The organisation of this thesis parallels the ways I designed and carried out my research. For the first half year of my research, I focused on the socio-economic developments in Kolojonggo. This was essential, although not directly related to my main research topic, since the last three decades have witnessed the introduction of the so-called green revolution and the transformation of the national economy from an agriculture-based to a non-agriculture-based one, both of which have had enormous impacts on the socio-economic structure of rural Java. By looking at these developments, it is expected that the socio-economic circumstances of villagers in Kolojonggo will be clarified.

The aim of Chapter three is to examine the development of reformist Islam in Kolojonggo. We will see the process whereby a group of reformist villagers has been formed and its impact on the religious life of Muslim villagers. 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'. In Chapter four, the notion of 'Muslim-ness', or of 'being a Muslim' held by the reformist villagers will be examined. In this discussion, the religious activities of Muslim villagers, their understandings of the most important normative duties in Islam, namely, the daily prayer and the fast, and their efforts to adopt an Islamic perspective with which to re-interpret their everyday life will be highlighted. In the last section of this chapter, the attitude of Muslim villagers who show a strong commitment to reformist Islam toward those who do not will be discussed in order to see the basis of interactions between these two groups of villagers.

After examining the development of reformist Islam and its characteristics as understood and practised by Muslim villagers, my discussion proceeds to look at several changes which have taken place as Islamic development has accelerated. In Chapter five, the focus will be placed on traditional rituals. By looking at how traditional rituals are interpreted by Muslim villagers, we will see the complicated process by which an Islamic tradition emerges from a syncretic background. This process 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 will be examined. We will see the efforts of the reformist villagers to impose their own paradigm on interpretation of traditional belief in supernatural beings and the achievement and limitation of these efforts. In the last section of this chapter, emerging new paradigms through which to look at the supernatural world and their impact on the process of 'religious rationalisation' will be discussed.

Chapters seven and eight deal with a peculiar situation in which the Muslim community in Kolojonggo is located. In Chapter seven, the development of Christianity in Java, Yogyakarta and Kolojonggo, and the impact of the Christian presence on Muslims' conceptualisation of their own community, will be discussed. In Chapter eight, the focus will be placed on the interactions between Muslims and Christians in Kolojonggo and the ways Muslims conceive Christians, Christianity and Christianisation.

As I emphasised earlier, this portrait of reformist Islam and reformist Muslims in Kolojonggo cannot be generalised to show the dynamics of Islam in Yogyakarta and in Java. Rather, this portrait may be just one possible manifestation of Islam and of Muslim religious life that may be deployed in Java. In this respect, I would like to consider this thesis as a response to the appeal of Hefner who, after examining Islamic development at the eastern edge of Java, wrote 'the Pasuruan example awaits ethnographic comparison with other areas of rural Java' (1987:551).