

Chapter 9: Concluding Remarks

For the last few decades, Western scholarship has noticed that Islamic countries have been undergoing a fundamental change. Scholars of Islam employ such terms as Islamic resurgence, Islamic revivalism, Islamic reassertion, Islamic renaissance, and the re-flowering of Islam to grasp this change (e.g. Dekmejian,1985; Esposito,1983; Hunter,1988; Keddie,1994; Muzaffar,1986; Nagata,1984). These terms, though various, convey a common message, namely, Muslims' assertion of the centrality of Islam in their everyday life. The ways in which this assertion is manifested depend on the socio-economic, political and historical background of each region. In areas where Muslims' life is threatened by war, oppression from autocratic regimes or non-Muslims and where these threats are interpreted in religious terms, 'Islamic resurgence' may take the form of radicalism. In regions where Muslims' life is challenged by modern secularism, 'Islamic resurgence' may be directed at reinterpreting Islamic teachings and at reinstating Islamic values to accommodate them better to modern socio-economic and political realities.

In some sense, 'Islamic resurgence' may not be a specific feature of modern Muslim societies but an innate character of the history of Islam (see Dekmejian,1985; Maududi,1981; Voll,1983). Since the revelation came to the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims have reinterpreted Islam and applied it to their lives under changing historical circumstances. Nevertheless, there are reasons why the concept of 'Islamic resurgence' has been adopted widely to describe Islamic development in the modern era. On the one hand, we may attribute this to the expansion of the Muslim population for whom the question of the centrality of Islam comes to the fore. While the locus of 'Islamic resurgence' in traditional Muslim societies was placed mainly on religious specialists recognised as masters of religious texts (Eickelman,1992:652), that in the modern era has expanded to include the masses. In the consciousness of large number of Muslims, Islam has become a subject of 'objectification', so that such explicit and objective questions are asked as: 'what is my religion? Why is it important to my life? and How do my beliefs guide my conduct?' (ibid.:1992:643). With this shift, the process of reinterpreting Islam and of reinstating Islamic values at the centre of believers' lives, which was once monopolised by the religious elites, has become a concern of a wider circle of Muslims. On the other hand, the popularity of such a concept as 'Islamic resurgence' may be ascribed to a recent shift in the way of conceptualising Islam, a shift which has been precipitated by the concept of 'Orientalism'. According to Said, Western scholarship, in its efforts to understand Islam, has long been overwhelmed by an 'Orientalist' paradigm, namely, a view that 'Islam does not develop and neither do Muslims; they merely are (1978:317)'. In this paradigm, therefore, Muslims' life is supposed to be

defined by Islamic doctrines, and the study of immutable doctrines is thought to be the right way of understanding Islam and Muslims. Said's critical evaluation has helped scholars of Islam to shift their focus from a search for an a-historical essence to an examination of the multiplicity of Islamic expression, and this allows them to understand better Muslims' continuing efforts to negotiate Islam in the process of conceptualising their life and of giving meaning to their historical, socio-political and cultural experiences. In this respect, the popularity of the concept 'Islamic resurgence' may be regarded as a reaction on the part of Western scholarship which has rediscovered the dynamics in Muslim society.¹

Recent Islamic development in Indonesia has also been marked by such concepts as resurgence, revitalisation, revivalism, renaissance and reIslamisation (Hefner,1987a; Horikoshi,1976; Nakamura,1993; Pranowo,1991; Tamara,1986). The examples used to illustrate 'Islamic resurgence' in Indonesia, however, are less spectacular than those in other Islamic countries. Unlike 'Islamic resurgence' in Iran, no remarkable movement to implement Islamic values in Muslims' politico-economic life is evident in Indonesia. Some of the signs of 'Islamic resurgence' in Indonesia such as increasing participation in the fast, daily prayers and *Jumatan*, are what had occurred more intensively in other Islamic countries even before 'Islamic resurgence' was noticed. The same is true in the case of recent Islamic developments in Kolojonggo, which I have attempted to examine in this thesis. Islamic leaders' understandings of the Islamic scriptures might be no deeper than ordinary Muslims in other parts of the Islamic world and their efforts to incorporate Islamic values in their life are seen more clearly in their private life than in the political or economic spheres. In spite of these considerations, recent Islamic development in Kolojonggo can also be labelled as 'Islamic resurgence'. A group of Muslims has been created, who assert the centrality of Islam in everyday life, who try to understand things surrounding them not in terms of the categories which their elders have passed on to them but in terms of what they perceive to be Islamic, who negotiate what they perceive to be Islamic with their historical and socio-cultural realities, and who continue to objectify and question their Islamic ideas and practices. In this sense, their perspective on Islam contrasts sharply with that of their predecessors for whom Islam was taken for granted. 'Islamic resurgence' among Muslim villagers and a few characteristics of this process in Kolojonggo will be summarised below.

¹ Various other factors are discussed by scholars of Islam to explain recent 'Islamic resurgence'. Some of these are: an identity crisis precipitated by a sense of utter impotence and loss of self-esteem (Ahmed,1992; Esposito,1983; Hunter,1988); the reaction to Western domination after the post-colonial era (Ahmad,1983); disillusionment with Westernised government (Ahmad,1983; Dekmejian,1988; Hunter,1988; Keddie,1994; Muzaffar,1986); the spread of secularisation and the progress of Westernisation in Islamic countries (Ahmad,1983); disillusionment with the West (Esposito,1983; Muzaffar,1986); and the new-found sense of pride and power which resulted from the success of oil embargo in 1973 and from the Islamic revolution in Iran (Esposito,1983; Muzaffar,1986).

In Kolojonggo, a new phase of Islamic development started with the introduction of reformist Islam in the late colonial period. Before this time, Islam was deeply embedded in villagers' life: they were circumcised; their marriages were held in Islamic ways; new-born babies were greeted and the deceased were mourned with Arabic prayers; some of the important occasions in the Islamic calendar were celebrated; and the recitation of Arabic prayers was taught to children. However, as Islam was an integral part of villagers' life and no alternative form of perceiving and practising Islam was known to them, Islam was not a subject of conscious questioning but was taken for granted. No villagers were bothered much about whether certain practices were 'Islamic' or whether these were commanded, recommended or prohibited in Islam. Therefore, the significance of the introduction of reformist Islam was that it provided Muslims with the opportunity to come in contact with an alternative form of Islam to the traditionally practised one. By doing so, it increased the opportunities for villagers' Islamic beliefs and practices to become a subject of objectification, namely, a process by which the distinctions between these two streams of Islam could be highlighted and the 'Islam-ness' of both could be questioned, criticised and legitimised.

Reformist Islam's grip over Muslim villagers has strengthened rapidly throughout the last two decades. During this time, a group of reformist activists was consolidated in Kolojonggo, who tried to harmonise their religious practices and ideas with what they perceived to be Islamic values and to invigorate Islamic activities among Muslim villagers. Various factors have influenced the crystallisation of this group, including: the 1965 affair and subsequent government's policy in prompting villagers to confess their religion thereby removing the freedom to remain an atheist and to oppose religion; easy flow of information has allowed villagers to know more about Islamic development at the national or international level, which has been characterised as 'Islamic resurgence'; compulsory religious education in government schools and a longer period of schooling have provided the younger generation with greater exposure to regular religious education; and improving economic conditions have made it possible for villagers to mobilise a larger amount of economic resources for religious activities. Another factor which has also played a pivotal role in creating this group is reformist Islam's different emphasis on the way of learning Islam.

Unlike traditional Islam which considered the memorisation of the scriptures as the way of learning Islam, reformist Islam's emphasis is put on the understanding of the scriptures. To reformist Muslims, the memorisation of the scriptures is a praiseworthy work, but not a prerequisite for Muslims to make an attempt to understand the scriptures. Even those who do not know written Arabic should try to understand the scriptures translated into vernacular language. With this shift, to learn Islam by way of materials written in Indonesian is installed as a legitimate way to approach Islam and, subsequently the nature of religious

knowledge and the basis of religious leadership have changed. Religious knowledge is regarded more as material that can be consulted in books rather than as that which is mnemonically 'possessed', while the qualification of religious leaders shifts gradually from a long apprenticeship under an established man of learning to a commitment to read written materials about Islam and a claim to interpret what Islam 'really' is (Eickelman, 1978:511-12). When these changes take place, religious education in secular schools can facilitate the expansion of a group of people who claim religious leadership and who are considered leaders by others, in that an attitude and capability of religious leadership is not very different from that required to be a 'good' student in secular education. Although not all of those who received an extended period of religious education became agents leading Islamic development, the shift in the way of learning Islam, the nature of religious knowledge and the basis of religious leadership has created a group of Islamic activists more easily and rapidly than is the case where religious leadership requires a long apprenticeship under the established scholars.

After a group of reformist activists was crystallised and as its members initiated various religious programs, villagers have received more opportunities to recognise different religious behaviour among themselves. They can easily notice that there are villagers who carry out daily prayers and the fast, pay religious alms, attend other religious activities and try to observe Islamic rules and regulations, and those who do not. This different religious behaviour is interpreted by villagers as a reflection of different degrees of commitment to Islam, and such terms as 'Islam KTP' and '*anak masjid*' are employed to designate the different groupings of Muslim villagers. The equation of the outer, visible side of religiosity with its inner side in reformist Islam allows variations in the manifestation of religious life to be perceived and used by Muslim villagers as a way to differentiate themselves (cf. Pranowo, 1991). In this framework, one's outer self is thought to be the delegate of one's inner self and one's outward behaviour is supposed to be unable to cover what is in one's heart.

The differentiation of villagers on the basis of their religious outlook parallels the diversification of the notion of 'Muslim-ness'. While the recital of *sahadat* or circumcision was once considered to be a sufficient condition to make someone a Muslim, the same notion of 'Muslim-ness' can no longer be accepted, at least for the reformist villagers. To them, these are just the starting point of being a Muslim, while 'Muslim-ness' should include the fulfilment of Islamic duties. If one is to be considered a Muslim, or more precisely, a pious Muslim, they suggest, one should carry out daily *sholat* and the fast, should participate in other religious activities and should observe various rules commanded by Allah. In this sense, the status of a Muslim perceived by the reformist villagers is not what can be obtained once and for all by reciting *sahadat* or circumcision, but what must be maintained with continuous renewal by performing Islamic duties and by participating in Islamic activities.

Although different religious behaviour between the reformist villagers and other Muslim villagers is clearly perceived, is interpreted in Islamic terms and is employed to explain non-religious behaviour, the pattern of interactions between them has not experienced a radical change. No reformist villagers try to involve themselves in the religious life of those belonging to 'Islam KTP', are willing to instruct people who carry out religiously forbidden behaviour or to make explicit the controversial aspects of others' religious behaviour in public. This attitude of the reformist villagers helps to create a social environment where the norm of harmony (*rukun*) is maintained and where villagers' different commitments to Islam do not become a source of social conflict. The peculiar situation of the *umat* Islam in Kolojonggo, namely, the existence of a substantial number of Christians, has also helped the maintenance of this state. This is because Christians are believed to be the biggest threat to the *umat* Islam, so that to embrace all Muslims irrespective of their religious orientations under the rubric of the *umat* Islam is thought to be one of the most urgent tasks by the reformist villagers. In this respect, the notion of 'Muslim-ness' retained by the reformist villagers is dualistic. When the religious behaviour of Muslims is discussed amongst the reformist villagers and when they evaluate others' religious behaviour in private, different commitments to Islam and different religious outlooks come to the fore and the concept of the *umat* Islam employed in these occasions incorporates only a certain segment of the Muslim population, namely, those who are ready to carry out religious duties and to participate in religious activities. However, when the presence of Christians is taken into account, villagers' different commitments to Islam are overshadowed by emphasis on the sameness, and the boundary of the *umat* Islam is defined in its most inclusive manner, namely, all those who are not Christians.

The impact of Christians on the on-going process of Islamic development in Kolojonggo is not confined to the ways the *umat* Islam is conceptualised. The existence of Christians has also left a deep imprint on the ways religious responsibility is perceived by the reformist villagers. When discussing the fulfilment of one's religious duties and one's responsibility for other Muslims, the reformist villagers generally emphasise their private character. Islam does not allow Muslims to intervene in others' religious life and no one will be responsible for others' wrong doings. This emphasis on personal salvation, however, is not the only way religious life is perceived by them. In other social situations, they highlight the collective nature of religious life and the need to intervene in religious life. They justify this intervention with the idea that freedom to practise religion in a multi-religious community cannot be attained without due attention and regulation. As a result, when a Muslim girl wanted to convert to Christianity, the reformist villagers were willing to intervene in this matter, justifying their action with the idea that her decision was not based on her free will but on compulsion or deceit. In this sense, the Christian presence

in Kolojonggo has added a new element in the ways the reformist villagers grasp the nature of religious life. Although the private nature of religious life is not denied, the reformist villagers argue for collective responsibility for the benefit of guarding the privacy of religious life and religious freedom.

The existence of Christians in Kolojonggo has prompted the reformist villagers to defend the *umat* Islam from the alleged threat of Christians. One of the ways employed by them is to expose the absurdity of Christian theological tenets, which will eventually show the superiority of Islam over Christianity and the truthfulness of Islam. For this purpose, they rely heavily on the concept of *akal* (reason). They argue that many Christian teachings do not make sense (*masuk akal*) and use this argument as a proof that Christianity originated not from God but from human beings.

The frequent use of the concept *akal* in attacking Christianity seems to be a factor in reinforcing the tendency of reformist Islam to find rationales behind Islamic practices and ideas² and in allowing the reformist villagers to adopt *akal* as a tool to interpret their own religious doctrines. In the public discourse of Muslim villagers, therefore, it is not difficult to find villagers who rationalise Islamic teachings in terms of *akal*. For example, the prohibition on drinking alcohol is evaluated in the framework of 'advantage-disadvantage', namely, that the advantages one gains from drinking alcohol are far less than the disadvantages from drinking alcohol. The *salat* is sometimes interpreted to have practical advantages, namely, that it facilitates the flow of blood in the body. This emphasis on the search for the rationale behind Islamic teachings does not imply that they neglect the importance of faith. The statement that 'Allah commanded human beings to observe certain rules, so that Muslims should follow these rules', is considered as an absolute and unchallengeable proposition which explains all Islamic teachings and practices. However, the reformist villagers are of the opinion that faith cannot be maintained by itself but should be strengthened by the exercise of *akal*, which will eventually confirm the truthfulness of Islam.

The emphasis placed on *akal*, together with lack of an authoritative religious figure in Kolojonggo and its vicinity, has encouraged the reformist villagers to use their own independent reasoning and to base their understandings of Islam not solely on others' interpretations of it but on their own interpretations of the scriptures. They are also encouraged, and many are ready, to express their understandings of Islam in their own words, although they usually add an additional phrase, 'according to my own interpretation of Islamic teachings'. This attitude of reformist villagers makes it possible for a non-dogmatic, pluralistic and flexible approach to be instated as a way of understanding Islam.

² The concept of *akal* has been used by reformist Islam from its inception for attacking blind submission to the established scholars and for instating *ijtihad* as a right way to approach Islam.

The reformist villagers' emphasis on the rationales behind Islamic ideas and practices embodies a remarkable change that reformist Islam has brought to Kolojonggo. Whereas Islam once was a taken-for-granted subject, it is now, at least to the reformist villagers, a subject of conscious questioning. They raise questions about Islam as if they were objective observers, and search for answers which can rationalise their commitment to Islamic ideas and practices. In this respect, the change that reformist Islam has brought to Kolojonggo resembles a process of 'internal conversion', whereby what used to rest on habits now rests on rationalised doctrines (Geertz, 1973:170-189), or a process of 'religious rationalisation', whereby religious interpretation of the world is strongly exposed to the imperative of consistency (Weber, 1958b:324).³

'Religious rationalisation' proposed by Weber designates two interrelated processes, a process of systematising beliefs to make them more internally coherent, and a process of modernising beliefs to rid them of magical content (Bowen, 1993:322). The latter aspect of 'religious rationalisation' is also called 'the disenchantment of the world', a process whereby the image of the world is rationalised as being a cosmos governed by impersonal rules, deprived of concrete magic (Weber, 1958a:282) and the sense of sacredness is gathered up and is concentrated in a nucleate concept of the divine (Geertz, 1973:173-74).

Islamic development in Kolojonggo shows that the second process of 'religious rationalisation' has also taken place. The reformist villagers try to challenge and reformulate the nature of supernatural beings envisaged as intervening actively in villagers' life and to bring tangible consequences in human affairs. They equate supernatural beings with the malevolent *jinn* and condemn villagers' contact with them as *syirik*, the negation of the Oneness of Allah. These efforts, however, have not succeeded in attaining one of its goals, namely, to deprive supernatural beings of supernatural power and concentrate it in a monotheistic God. Supernatural power is still believed to be diffused to various supernatural beings who can be called, with the help of traditional magical practitioners (*dhukun*), by human beings to attain certain goals.

Compared with the reformist villagers, the role of those who work in the same domain as the *dhukun* but who employ different paradigms to interpret supernatural phenomenon in 'the disenchantment of the world' seems to be more

³ This does not mean that a process of systematising religious ideas is a new phenomenon in Kolojonggo, initiated by reformist Islam. Even before the introduction of reformist Islam, the syncretic religious tradition in Kolojonggo was liable to the drive toward systematisation and the ideologues of this syncretic tradition, namely *dhukun*, were not unreflective adherents of it but tried to make their ideational system internally consistent. However, at that time, the locus of religious rationalisation was placed more on the traditional aspects of religion, which is now viewed to be non-Islamic by the reformist villagers. In this sense, it can be suggested that Islam started to be strongly exposed to the imperative of consistency only after the introduction of reformist Islam. For Weber's assumption that traditional religions lack systematic thought and his attribution of comprehensive rationality to the world religions, and anthropologists' criticism of his ideas, see Bowen, 1993:321-22 and Hefner, 1993a:14-16.

significant in Kolojonggo. This is because their basic tenet is to bypass supernatural beings for obtaining supernatural power and to attribute supernatural power to a monotheistic God. If villagers can obtain the same result from a monotheistic God as they do from supernatural beings, there is no clear reason why they should resort to the *dhukun* who are strongly criticised by reformist Islam.

This distinctive rationalisation process seems to be one reason, among others, that the concept of God who is 'apart', 'above' or 'outside' of the concrete details of ordinary life in a rationalised world religion as is suggested by Geertz (1973:171) is not the only nature that Allah has in Kolojonggo. In addition to this, Allah inherits part of the nature that supernatural beings had and remains a Being who involves himself 'in an independent, segmental and immediate manner with almost any sort of actual event' (ibid.,172). In this way, the rationalisation process and subsequent concentration of supernatural power in Allah, a process which is still going on in Kolojonggo, does not result in a widening distance between human beings and Allah. Allah is still thought to be a Being who is close to human beings and whom villagers may call up for the fulfilment of their wishes related to the odds and ends of everyday life.

My experiences of living with Muslim villagers and of examining their religious practices and ideas allow me to adopt the same view as that proposed by Benda (1958:14) and Drewes (1955:286) in the 1950s, and by Nakamura (1993:180-83) in the 1970s, namely, that the history of Islam in Indonesia is the history of the expanding Muslim civilisation and its widening impact on the religious, social and political life of Indonesians. As I have attempted to show in this thesis, reformist Islam's grip over Muslims villagers has strengthened and a group of villagers has been created, who assert the centrality of Islam in their everyday life and who try to interpret their everyday experiences in terms of, and modulate their behaviour to, what they perceive to be Islamic values. This does not mean that the reformist villagers in Kolojonggo have been successful in achieving their ultimate goal of Islamising everyday life. On the one hand, as the persistence of rituals which are viewed, at least by some, to be related to syncretic religious tradition and as the use of non-Islamic themes to convey Islamic teachings by the *anak masjid* imply, traditional and local religious influences, which are not agreed unanimously to be Islamic, have not disappeared from villagers' life. On the other hand, the reformist villagers' efforts to Islamise everyday life have not touched on every aspect of their lives. Many of the socio-political issues such as economic inequality, corruption, social justice and the establishment of an Islamic state are seldom discussed by the reformist villagers and have not played a significant role in forging their Muslim consciousness. These limitations, however, do not seem to overshadow what the reformist villagers have achieved in the last few decades. Rather, it is better to consider their efforts to Islamise everyday life as an on-going process whereby the Islamic nature of

taken-for-granted ideas and practices is questioned and those which cannot be brought into harmony with Islam are abandoned, not at one stroke but gradually. Seen within this framework, it is certain that the reformist villagers' efforts to Islamise everyday life will include much larger domains of their private and social life and that the questions which have not come to be foregrounded in their Muslim consciousness will be taken into more serious account in the future. This is all the more so since Muslim villagers consider their efforts to Islamise their life to be a ceaseless, or in some sense endless, struggle toward an ideal state of Islam.