Foreword

This study by Hyung-Jun Kim of a village in Yogyakarta presents a remarkable case-study of the processes of reform and renewal that are occurring widely throughout Indonesia today. Rarely have these profoundly important processes been examined at the local level in such detail. As a case study, this work offers significant insights that carry well beyond a single village. Such insights provide the basis for a critical understanding of contemporary socio-religious change.

Hyung-Jun Kim’s stated objective in this work is to consider how Islam is “understood, interpreted and practiced”. In many villages, perhaps most villages in Java today, this is no longer a simple matter. Taken for granted practices can be questioned and abandoned, reaffirmed or reinterpreted. To a certain extent, this has become part of the quiet dynamic of daily life. In the case that Kim Hyung-Jun studies here, however, this whole process has come much more to the fore in an effort to Islamize daily life.

When as a graduate student, Hyung-Jun Kim set out to find an “ordinary Javanese village” in which to do his fieldwork, he had no idea that the village he had selected was the site of concerted efforts by a small group of committed young men to remake their village and its traditions in the light of their understanding of a reformist Islam. In his study, Hyung-Jun Kim provides an understanding of this village setting and then proceeds systematically to examine local efforts at reform and their consequences for the social life of the community.

The particular value of this work as a whole is in the way that Hyung-Jun Kim conceretedly probes the way villagers now think about rituals such as the communal meal — *kendhuri* — that they share with one another to celebrate life-cycle events and the way that the reformers are have endeavoured to alter accepted practices to better define these practices as Muslim. If tradition is the accumulation of practice, such simple, intimate changes at the local level eventually become of defining importance.

It is perhaps no accident that this Yogya village has, among its population, Christians, both Catholics and Protestants. Their presence in the village adds a further dimension to this study prompting among villagers a heightened sense of what it means to be Muslim or Christian. The value of this study is in the range of its considerations and the quality of its attention to the living reality of contemporary village life.

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