

ANTHROPOLOGY OF CIVILIZATION:
Personal Reflection on Anthropological Approach in the Study of
Muslim Societies in Southeast Asia (Antropologi Peradaban:
Renungan Pribadi atas Pendekatan Antropologis dalam Studi
tentang Masyarakat Islam di Asia Tenggara)

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Abstrak

Dalam konteks antropologi peradaban atau antropologi peradaban Islam di Asia Tenggara, saya telah meneliti perkembangannya selama lebih dari 40 tahun. Sebagai contoh, setelah mengamati beberapa riset historis tentang perkotaan Indonesia, agaknya menarik untuk menulis tentang ‘Kotagede’ (atau lebih tepatnya Kuto Gede) yang seperti pemaparan Van Mook menyimpan keberadaan sejarah kota yang lebih tua daripada yang diteliti oleh Clifford Geertz di Modjokuto, Jawa Timur. Saya telah meneliti sejarah sosial kota di Jawa dengan membandingkannya dengan penelitian Geertz di Jawa Timur itu. Penelitian saya tentang Muhammadiyah di Kotagede menunjukkan posisi kritis tentang peran peneliti antropologi di Indonesia yang masih banyak menerapkan paradigma Geertz.

Kata kunci: Antropologi peradaban, Islam, Asia Tenggara, Kotagede, Clifford Geertz

Anthropology of civilization, or more exactly anthropology of Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia, is what I have been pursuing for about 40 years since I started my career as anthropologist. I engaged in the study of the Muhammadiyah movement in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, 1970-72, for my PhD dissertation. I am very happy to be here to join prominent colleagues of mine in a seminar aimed at exactly what I am interested in most, that is “the Study of Malay Muslim Civilization,” or

Study Peradaban Melayu. I am also honored very much to witness with you the occasion of launching Doctorate Program at IAIN Raden Patah, Palembang, with particular emphasis on the advanced level of research and education in the study of Malay civilization. I am impressed with the recent progress achieved by a number of institutes of Islamic higher education in Indonesia in enhancing their teaching and research capacities by incorporating general sciences including social science and humanities (Azyumardi et al 2007). IAIN Raden Patah is now joining in the progress, and I congratulate you for that.

I am also particularly delighted to be in Palembang for the first time in my life. I have already visited all five major islands of Indonesia, i.e. Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Java, Papua, and have traveled literally from Sabang to Merauke. But, I have never been to this part of Sumatra where the capital of the maritime empire Srivijaya was once located. I have learned in history class at Cornell that Maritime Srivijaya, together with agriculture-based Mojopahit, made up the two regions of great pre-Islamic civilization in Southeast Asia. Later, in the Islamized period of the regions, the two Muslim polities of Mataram Kingdom originated I Kotagede and the sultanate of Palembang brought a significant prosperity in the vast areas of region. When I was visiting Masjid Agung Mataram in Kotagede for the first time in 1970, I found a very old wooden minbar in its prayer hall. I was told that that minbar, almost 400 years old, was a gift from the Sultanate of Palembang to his counterpart in Mataram. Since that time, I have been anxious to visit Palembang some day. Having been my wish realized, I now feel I am here to stand in the midst of a grand narrative of the history of Peradaban Melayu.

I would like to take this opportunity to present to you some personal reflections on my academic career as an anthropologist, especially as anthropologist of civilization. Before that, I would like to sidestep to mention the fact that my wife, Hisako who is also an anthropologist, was eager to join me in this conference but, unfortunately, she is not accompanying me. As some of you may know, almost always Hisako and I have traveled overseas together. But, a recent family misfortune has prevented her from joining me. In fact, our grandson, an 11 years old boy of our daughter, is gravely ill because of bone cancer (*osteosarcoma*), a disease of very rare occurrence—one case of every one or two million children. He will be undergoing a surgical operation soon. So, Hisako decided to stay in

Japan to attend the grandson and help around his parents. She regrets her absence in this meeting very much but sends you her best regards to all.

Now to begin with, let me answer a question why am I interested in Indonesia, and why on Java?. This is an often-asked question for me. In fact, many incidents and many encounters have brought me into Indonesian studies. During the early student days, I was moving from Hegelian philosophy to Marxism, then to American anthropology of cultural relativism. Meanwhile, I made acquaintance with a number of scholars from Indonesia: Pak Selo Soemardjan in Tokyo, Pak Sartono Kartodirdjo and Pak Koentjaraningrat et al. in Ithaca. Then, as a graduate student, I experienced an overwhelming influence of Clifford Geertz. I was deeply impressed by his work, *The Religion of Java*, with its thick description and neat analysis. It was really *the* model for any young anthropologists to follow at that time. But, I was not so satisfied with his work on his social history of Javanese town, Modjokuto. For me, as a citizen of Japan where we find a long history of indigenous urbanization, Modjokerto's history of a few hundred years sounded to shallow to be taken up as a model for the study of "pre-industrial indigenous urbanization"- this was my academic interest before going into the field. So, after reading some historical research findings on Indonesian urbanism, I found "Kotagede" (or more exactly Kuto Gede) in the work of Van Mook to have a much longer historical presence of urban community than Modjokuto. So, I decided to do "a social history of Central Javanese town," to compare it with Geertz's Modjokuto in East Java.

Thus, I began my fieldwork in kotagede to learn its social history. I had no intention of studying Islam at all in the beginning, not to speak of Muhammadiyah. Yet, in the course of fieldwork, something changed. For sometimes, I engaged in standard ethnographic inquiry, i.e. gathering official data and written documents interviewing a number of key persons, and observing various events-rituals, cultural performances and religious and political meeting, etc. via the standard method of anthropological fieldwork since Malinowski (1922), that is participant observation. However, at about in the middle of my 18 months stay in the town, I experienced realization that Islam had been a vital living force in various forms in the community since the Mataram kingdom was born. I feel that Javanese civilization had been deeply imbued with Islam and indigenized it, and the Muhammadiyah movement was its most recent manifestation. I came to be convinced that social history of the town of Kotagede could not be described and discussed

without setting islam and Muhammadiyah in it properly. This was, in fact, a tricky academic operation under Orde Baru, which forbade foreign as well as domestic researchers to deal with any SARA matters at all. So, I had to collect data on Muhammadiyah rather secretly even without making my assistants to realized my intension!

My experience in studying Muhammadiyah in Kotagede gradually made me critical of anthropology's role in Indonesia studies dominated by Geertzian paradigm. The problem with the trichotomy of *santri*, *abangan*, *priyayi*, was already well exposed and criticized by many. So, perhaps there needs no more comment from me. However, more serious was lack of proper civilization approach in Geertzian anthropology, especially among his eigones.

In broad perspective, American anthropology of Geertz's generation was taking up a new task of studying civilization or complex societies in place of primitive societies in place of primitive societies, which were fast disappearing after WWII (Redfield 1956). Then, there developed a framework for studying civilization or complex society, i.e. its division into Great Tradition vs. little tradition. With the help of others disciplines in area studies, anthropology was to play a coordinating role to integrate the achievements of those disciplines and produce a coherent, whole picture of civilization under the study. However, in reality, anthropology often concentrated only on the latter, i.e. little tradition alone, at the expense of the former, Great Tradition. The question of understanding the whole was often left undone.

It was my perception that this bias in anthropology of civilization became prevalent and rather serious among American researchers of Muslim societies in Southeast Asia. In their framework of ethnography, i.e. observation and description of certain local culture and society, often on adequate attention was paid on the position and significance of Qur'an and the Hadits, which was the core of Islamic great Tradition in the region subsuming the particular society under study. It was taken for granted that the Al-Qur'an and the Hadits and a number of classical commentaries on them were irrelevant for ethnography despite frequent reference to them by local ulama and sometimes even by ordinary people in actual life. To take an example in the above mentioned monograph on Javanese religion, Geertz extensively touched upon the Islamic teaching especially in chapters dealing with "Santri Variant" of Javanese religion. But, he never quoted the Qur'an

or the Hadith that had been quoted in the informant's statements. He just reported that "informant quoted it" from the Qur'an or the Hadith without reporting the exact source of the said quotation (Geertz 1960: 159, *passim*).

I became critical of this approach as anthropological undertaking. To say the least, it was incomplete, imbalanced and inaccurate as the anthropologist's task of recording and reporting exactly "what natives say and what natives do" – a maxim of Malinowski for ethnographic fieldwork. Realizing this deficiency in Geertz's ethnography, I wanted to be faithful to the guidelines set by the founding fathers of modern anthropology (Malinowski 1922 and Radcliffe-Brown 1922). In my PhD dissertation, I tried my best, to the limits of my linguistic ability then, to record and report the statements of informants including the quotations from the Qur'an and the Hadith as much as possible. Also, in tracing the development of Muhammadiyah movement from its very beginning in Kotagede during the 1910s until the early 1970s, effort were made to utilize contemporaneous documents as much as possible and carefully examine the statements the statements of key informants. In my dissertation, I described the development of Muhammadiyah as a phase in the process of on going islamization in java, in which increasingly large number of individuals are moving from the *abangan* outlook and life style to the *santri* one in the mode of Muhammadiyah in the concomitant process of social, economic and political change. The dissertation was published in 1983 (M.Nakamura 1983).

When I published it, I did it with a full realization of serious limits contained in my work. The major shortcoming of my work was as follows. I had no language ability to follow the informant quotation from the Qur'an and the Hadith in Arabic. This limit was, however, not personal but rather institutional. For my generation of PhD candidates in anthropology, no Southeast Asian or Indonesian studies center in the US provided language lessons in Arabic (or even in Jawi/Pegon for that matter) as part of their pre-field training. Rather, prevalent attitude at a number of centers for areas studies was that the language of Great Tradition should rather be avoided lest it interfere the study on Little Tradition. For example, it was reported that a prominent professor of anthropology of South Asia gave such an admonition to his students: "There is no need to learn Sanskrit to do proper fieldwork in India. Just concentrate on folk tradition, or subculture of Little

people via vernacular language-it is enough for anthropology. Sanskrit will contaminate your perception.”

After our field experience, Hisako and I had to make personal effort to overcome this deficiency in the anthropology of Muslim societies in Indonesia. In fact, after Indonesia, we had a chance to stay for a rather long time at ANU in Canberra, and got acquainted with Anthony Johns and his work there. We became increasingly aware that there was necessity to familiarize ourselves with the achievement of Islamic studies to do proper Indonesian studies. Pak Soebardi was also helpful to make us aware of the significance of traditional Islamic literature in the Malay Muslim world to understand their spiritual life. In fact, it was in the environment of ANU that I came across and impressed very much for the first time in my life by the poems, or *sya'ir*, of Hamzah Fansury. The revision of my dissertation for publication was mostly done in this environment of ANU.

At ANU, Hisako wrote a master's thesis on divorce among Muslims on the basis of data gathered from one of KUA (Office of Religious Affairs) offices in Yogyakarta region while we were living in Kotagede. In order to analyze and interpret the significance of those data, she had to study Fiqh on marriage and divorce since the data was recorded, collected and arranged by Pak Naib (head of KUA) and his subordinates following the framework of Fiqh. Using this unobtrusive method, the research results made her assert that Yogyanese Muslim practices in divorce following Islamic law. This was contrary to a widely held view among western scholars that divorce in Java was regulated by *adat* (ex. H.Geertz 1961). The late Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) who joined the examination of Hisako's thesis as an external examiner gave a high evaluation on her thesis and later wrote a foreword to its published version. Gus Dur stated: “in essence, this work's message should be taken seriously: it is impossible to separate completely Indonesian from Islamic studies...since exclusive reliance on one approach... endanger the objectivity of the findings.”(H.Nakamura 1983:x)

In international Qur'an conference held in Canberra in 1979 to commemorate the beginning of the 15th century of Islamic calendar made Hisako and me acquaint with a number of prominent scholars in Islamic studies including William Graham, a student of Wilfred C. Smith and the professor of comparative religion at Harvard. We were very happy to be invited to Harvard by him as visiting fellows at the center for the Study of World Religions, a famous institution established by Prof. Smith, for 1981-

82. In fact, Smith initially had appreciated Geertz's ethnography, *the Religion of Java*, as a detailed description of Islam lived by actual people. He hoped for more to come from Geertz in this direction and wished for a close cooperation to develop between Islamic studies and anthropology in the future (personal interview in 1981). Smith confided to us that his expectation had not been filled. However, Smith's wish became exactly what we wished for; a closer cooperation between anthropology and Islamic studies.

Harvard experience made us richer intellectually. We learned elementary Arabic and also took courses in Islamic studies given by Smith, Annemarie Schimmel, and Graham. As I wrote in the postscript of *Banyan Tree* book, through our stay at Harvard we learned that a number of practices and notions, which we had regarded specifically of local Javanese or *kotagede* origins, were in fact universal ones in the Islamic world (M. Nakamura 1983: 183). For the first time, we realized that *Pendopo Sopingin* was named after Imam Syafi'i, and my friend's name *asngari* was taken from Imam Asy'ary! Also, we understood why the names of the *kampongs*, *Kudusan* and *Boharen* were appropriate for areas of traditional strongholds of *santri*.

However, our wish for the promotion of cooperation between Indonesian, or more widely, Southeast Asian area studies and Islamic studies met doubt, denial, and disregard by our colleagues for some times to follow. We were often regarded more as 'Islam-file' in spite of the fact that I came from a Christian family and Hisako, a Buddhist one. It was only that we became aware to the significance of Islam and Muslims for the total humanity mainly through our academic exercise. We came to share the conviction of W. C. Smith that mutual understanding between the Muslim and Non-Muslim part of the mankind was vital to its future. Meanwhile, plans for publication of our works from Anglo-Saxon publishers met some difficulty so much so that we had a fortune of having an offer from Gadjah Mada University Press headed by a Christian Chinese Executive Director, the late Pak Drs. Kusoemanto to publish both of them.

Back to Japan in 1983, the academic situation was no less miserable than Western campuses in spite of the fact that social life of the Japanese was gravely affected by the OPEC's control over oil export since 1973 and Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. Islamic studies were still very much underdeveloped yet, engaged by only a small group of scholars. Department

of Islamic Studies was barely established as only one in the nation at University of Tokyo in 1983.

The following story will indicate clearly how far area studies and Islamic studies were kept separated in Japan of mid- 1980. Shortly after my return to Japan, I attended a national conference of Southeast Asian studies in Tokyo. There were a number of political scientists who were still seeing the rise of modern Indonesian nationalism solely in terms of the growth of Western educated intellectuals, exemplified by the birth of Budi Utomo. Nagazumi's work on Budi Utomo was a Bible of them. I cast a doubt on that generalization and pointed out the presence of KH Ahmad Dahlan in the very organization as a religious adviser and the fact that the formation of the first mass organization of Indonesian national awakening, i. e. Sarekat Islam, which was inspired by very Islamic nation of popular sovereignty and based upon Muslim solidarity. I mentioned the point that '*kedaulatan rakyat*', i. e. the core concept of modern nationalist movements then was a concept of Arabic/Islamic derivation from the root conference countered my statement with utter disbelief and questioned where on the earth I came up with that strange idea, I answered simply, "please look up in Hans Wehr's Arabic-English dictionary edited by Cowan". In fact, my meager familiarity with the Arabic language, which I had begun at Harvard made me utter the above statement rather spontaneously.

Still in the mid-1980s in Japan, I had an occasion of interviewing candidates for research fellowship in which I had to face a sad reality: I interviewed a Malay studies student and an Indonesian studies student. Both were PhD candidates in anthropology from a leading university. I gave the former a passage from Sejarah Melayu depicting the famous scene of conversion of Parameswara into Islam and asked him to translate, tell from where passage was taken and comment on its significance for Malay studies. He was apparently puzzled and finally confessed that he was unable to answer my questions. He speculated that the passage might be quoted from the Qur'an! It was obvious that he, an anthropology student of Malay studies, never read Sejarah Melayu before, neither the Qur'an. The latter student was given a passage from babad Tanah Jawi in Indonesian translation, the part describing the scene of trial and eventual execution of Syeh Siti Jenar by the council of *wali*. The student was also at a loss

for some time but finally answered hesitantly that it might be a quote from contemporary kebatinan literature.¹

Separation of Indonesian and Islamic studies went on for some time during the 1980s in spite of the warning of Gus Dur (H.Nakamura *ibid.*) and lament of William Roff over “an extraordinary desire on the part of western social science for the diminution of Islam” and “obscuring its role and position in southeast Asian, past and present” (Roff 198:7). We can find this tendency as late as 1987 in the publication of a book by another leading American anthropologist, James Peacock, on the Muhammadiyah movement. Peacock was surprised to come across in an official biography of KH Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, the fact that “traditional Javanese virtues like *sabar*, and *ikhlas* were employed to depict his personality” (Peacock 1978: 1020). On the basis of these and other observation, Peacock conclude that “Javanese cultural core in hidden underneath the Islamic layers of Muhammadiyah” (Peacock *ibid.*). Apparently he was unaware of the fact there of the fact there was one of the most frequently recited Sura in the Qur’an entitled ‘Al Ikhlas’.

Attempts of Hisako and myself to promote cooperation of anthropology, or Western social science in general, and Islamic studies began to receive warm support from Muslim intellectuals of Indonesia. We came into rather close relationships with a number of Islamic scholars and administrators including Nurcholish Madjid, Mukti Ali, Munawir Syadzali, Soedjatmoko, Syafi’i, Ma’arif, Malik Fadjar et al. in addition to Abdurrahman Wahid mentioned above. Some of them occupied high government positions and leaderships of mass organizations, and so much so that we were often accused that we were inclined to associate with power holders disregarding Little people who should be the proper partner of

¹ I am happy to inform you now that this situation has begun to become a thing of past. Recently a number of graduate students and junior scholars covering Muslim Southeast asia are developing language ability in Arabic and *Jawi/Pegon* in addition for vernaculars as exemplified a working papper written on the basis of careful reading of the back issue of a journal for Islamic education, *Pengasuh*, published in *Jawi* from Majlis Agama dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan (Kusimoto, 2011). Also ee the case of HATTORI Mina, currently associate professor of Nagoya University, who stayed at dinyah Putri of Padang Panjang for her Disertation research for long time. There she acquired Arabic fluency. She recites the Qur’an bbeatifully and reads Kitabs in Arabic original. She was one the original members of Study Group on Islam in Southeast Asia, which I started in 1985.

anthropologist. In fact, our association with them began well ahead of their social eminence. All those individuals were independent persons standing on their own feet with integrity and dedication for cause. Hisako and I were given tremendous encouragement from them.

The most critical of Geertz among them was Pak Koko, i. e. Soedjatmoko. In a seminar held at the LP3ES in 1978, answering to a question from the floor, I heard him comment on *the Religion of Java*. He said to the effect that Geertz had applied anthropological method suited for the study of primitive, illiterate society, i.e. participant observation and interview alone, in Java, at the expense of ignoring the vast amount of civilization attainment of Javanese people (see below for detail)². Pak Koko's criticism expressed mine so beautifully. I became more boldly critical of Geertz after having heard those words uttered by one of 'the Best and the Brightest' of the contemporary Indonesian intellectuals".

Meanwhile, towards the ends of 1980s, a number of young American anthropologists started to express critical stance vis-a-vis the preceding generation of Geertz and Peacock concerning their views on Islam in Indonesia³. Most prominent among them are Robert Hefner, John Bowen and Mark Woodward. Hefner initially followed Geertz's concern for peasant economy of Java covering a highland area, Tengger, which was an enclave of 'Hindu' people for his field (Hefner 1985). However, he became to feel that 'Islam has often not been given its due' in the Indonesian studies of the US (Hefner 2000:xix) and started to 'seek to correct the earlier marginalization of Islam in Indonesian studies' (ibid.). Bowen went to study social structure and history in the Gayo highlands of Sumatra. There, he has

² He [Pak Koko] tated: the approach taken by Geertz was completely wrong. Think about a situation in which it were applied to the US field. Say, you visit and conduct fieldwork in a small country town in the Midwest. You interview some townspeople including a butcher, a corn farmer, an employee at a gas station, a teacher at primary school, a Boy Scouts leader, a Catholic Father, a minister of a Baptist church so forth, and then, on the basis of those interviews, produce a book presenting that 'this is the American religion'. American reader will get angry. For such an approach will result in ignoring totally historical depth of religion in American civilization—its richness in theology and thoughts, the complexures of the church organization, etc. Geertz has done something exactly like that for Java. I criticized him personally, but he would not listen. ('post Postscript of M. Nakamura n. d. revised and enlarged edition of my 1983 book to be published in 2012).

³ For a General survey of contemporary Western anthropology of Southeast Asia, see King et al. 2003.

found that Gayo's 'local knowledge' had been developed over centuries by "elaborating, transforming and adapting elements from broader Muslim traditions" (Bowen 1993: 3). In Gayo, religion was a continuing discourse in which "the elements of muslim tradition that were most universal were also matters of intense local concern and debate" (ibid.). Woodward, intending to find syncretism remains if Hinduism in the sultanate court of Yogyakarta, visited and lived near the court. There, instead of Hindu remains, he came across the Garebeg festival, which was no other than the Javanized celebration of Maulud Nabi. Following this, in the very core of the Yogyakarta court culture, he found a series of evidence suggesting the fact that Islamic piety and mysticism were finely integrated into a whole (Woodward 1989).

Hefner, Bowen, Woodward and I were all encouraged by and learned a lot from pioneering work of Dale Eickelman, who began as a loyal student Geertz yet later became bold enough to revise the teaching of his Guru. Getting master's Degree in Islamic studies at McGill and obtaining a PhD in Anthropology from Chicago – an ideal combination of two disciplines to engage in anthropology of Islam – Eickelman has contributed greatly to the real shaping of anthropology of Islam. He advocates a research strategy of setting up a 'middle ground', which is larger, than 'village'- that is the traditional field of participant observation for anthropologist – yet narrower than the concern of scholars of religious studies and Orientalists (Eickelman 1983:11). 'Middle ground' is space, where the anthropologist can accumulate substantial amount of empirical data on the transmission of universal teaching of Islam in the local contexts with a definite framework of space and time. He did show the practice of this middle ground approach in his work on the life history of a qadi in contemporary Morocco (Eickelman 1985).

Another significant contribution to the development of anthropology of Islam came from Europe in the peson of Martin van Bruinessen. He commands Arabic as well as a number of local languages of the Muslim world and maintains personally a comparative perspective since his major fields of concern are the Kurdi and the Javanese. Bruinessen has also contributed to the revival and further development of centuries-old Dutch scholarship on traditional Islamic literature in Java. His concentration on the study of Kitab Kuning has indicated persuasively that textual studies are inseparable from contextual approach in order to grasp the actual working of

universal values of Islam in local contexts via the texts taught by *kyai* and *ulama* at *pesantren*. Spearheaded by Eickelman and Bruinessen and supported by a number of capable anthropologists of the current generation, anthropology of Muslim societies in Southeast Asia, especially that of Indonesia, seems to have entered a new stage of maturity.

In the neighboring disciplines of history and philology, a great advancement has also been made recently. First of all, two standard modern histories on southeast Asia, one on Indonesia (Ricklefs 2008) and the other on Malaysia (Andayas 2001), start their historical narratives from the time of islamization of the region. This perspective has been shared and consolidated by a number of their colleagues including Anthony Johns, Anthony Reid, and Anthony Milner. More recently and more specifically on the literary history of Islam in Malay-Indonesian world, significant contributions were made by Alijah Gordon (2001), Peter Riddell (2001), and Vladimir Braginsky (2004). Among them, the work by Braginsky seems to be most comprehensive and will become one of the most reliable reference books for the study of Peradaban Melayu for anthropologist as well⁴ for a long time to come.

In the discipline of history, Prof. Azyumardi's achievement is truly monumental. Pak Azra has explored and presented personal networks and intellectual genealogy among *ulama* connecting them beyond the regions of North Africa, the Middle East the Indian Sub – continent, and across the Indian Ocean during the 17th and 18th centuries. He did on the basis of examining primary sources of their biographies in Arabic⁵. Following Pak

⁴ Braginski states, "Traditional Malay literature provides us with knowledge about the way of life and customs of Malays, their psychology and beliefs, statecraft and social organization, ethical values aesthetic norms" (2004: 773). I fully agree with him recalling an extreme excitement and eye-opening experience when I first read Hamzah Fansuri's *syais*.

⁵ No longer in the discipline of modern history of Southeast Asia any one can keep talking about the incidental cases of guaranteeing the title of sultan, occasional hajj of dignitaries, or the sudden increase of pilgrimage after the appearance of steamboats and the opening of the Suez canal as evidence of connectivity of Islamic world between Southeast Asia in the Middle East. Also, a claim that the development of so-called "imagined community" via the growth of print media as a singularly important precondition for the formation of modern nationalism should come under scrutiny. The growth of modern print media since the last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was certainly amazing and Islamic communications were enhanced greatly utilizing the new technology. Yet, it is also obvious that before and beneath appearance of so-called "imagined community", there was a long period of maturity in the growth of "real community" of *ulama*, i. e. global

Azra's path, Michael Laffan's new work seems to be exploring the significance of these networks in the field of modern Islamic politics as the basis of popular nationalism (Laffan 2011).

Now I would like to mention a recent statement by Prof. Dr. Amin Abdullah, former Rector of UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, and uploaded on-line on 12 January 2011 at his own home page, <http://aminabd.wordpress.com/>. It is entitled "Urgency of anthropological approach in the study of religion and the study of Islam", or in Indonesian original, "*Urgensi pendekatan antropologi untuk studi Islam*". Through the essay, Pak Amin is urging his colleagues in the circles of UINs, IAINs, and other institutions of Islamic higher learning in Indonesia that the discipline of anthropology is to be brought into the circles in order to make a substantial advancement in the study of religion in general and in the study of Islam in particular. In summary, Pak Amin's argument is as follows: religious phenomenon always has two dimensions, normative and historical, which cannot be separated but differentiated for study. In reality, religious practices among people are often different despite they are referring to the same sources for norms, ex. The Qur'an and the Sunna in the case of Muslims. Anthropology is required to deal with this complicated situation. It can provide a map (peta) to describe and guide without being biased by certain interests. Anthropology, through its long-term, intensive, systematic, deep and balanced participant observation, produces 'thick description', on the basis of field notes rather than relying on texts like philologists. Pak Amin's discussion goes on to touch upon a contemporary problem of diversity of views among Islamic jurists, *fukaha*. He proposes a three-stage historical development of the relationship among Syariah, Prophetic Tradition and *fuqaha*. Anthropology of religion can explain the religious diversity in objective terms and help promote mutual understandings among individuals and groups holding those diverse views.

I do agree with his appeal to take anthropology of religion seriously in the circles of UINs and IAINs provided that those employ the discipline do not step into the bias and excess I have mentioned above, that is the tendency to disregard great tradition of a civilization. In fact, the UIN/IAIN

networks of actual living individual scholars of Islam accumulated over a number of generations with sure information on their biological and intellectual genealogies.

communities seem naturally free from that tendency since the people of those academic communities are supposedly well versed in Arabic, have memorized the Qur'an and have read widely in the Hadith. Therefore, when they are properly trained in anthropology of religion with 'participant observation' as a major tool for fieldwork with actual living people and also well supported by textual knowledge and sensitivity, their achievements in research on Muslim communities can be expected very high in level and rich in content. The results should be higher and richer than those conducted by non-Muslim foreign researchers since they can be better prepared to do the job.

Successful anthropology training often requires a student's experience of culture shock, through which he/she can develop sensitivity to cultural diversity of the mankind. Also, doing fieldwork outside one's own group in terms of ethnicity, religion and even in some sub-cultural terms is regarded essential for the training of anthropological fieldworker. Over all, if prospective anthropology practitioners need psychological detachment as a prerequisite for anthropological training, i.e. distancing oneself from the familiar field of daily life, experiencing culture shock, avoiding personal commitment, taking no side yet emphatic, obtaining honest and balanced information and so forth, they can probably go and visit neighboring countries for fieldwork. Say Indonesian and Malaysian students doing field research in Southern Thailand or Southern Philippines, or even going into Swahili region of East Africa. Furthermore, it will be much greater, if a number of UIN/IAIN students of academic excellence dare to going to complex societies with Great Tradition quite distant and different from Islam. Say PhD candidates from UIN/IAIN going into a Buddhist monastery in Myanmar, or into a Hindu pilgrimage center in India to do dissertation work.

By adopting anthropology of religion as an integral component of their teaching and research, hopefully, UINs, IAINs, and other institutions of Islamic higher learning of Indonesia will be able to produce world-class anthropologist of religion in the near future. It is well recognized by the outside world that Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. If Indonesia can produce a significant number of competent Muslim anthropologists who can promote mutual understanding among peoples of different religions-above all between Muslim and non-

Muslims – they will be far-reaching contributions to the welfare of the mankind.

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