

## ISLAM AND JAVANESE SOCIETY: SOME RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS IN PRE-20th CENTURY JAVA.

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RELIGION, it is said, constitutes the core of traditional culture and the integrative value system of society. As a social institution religion can thus be assumed to serve as a focus for the total society as well as it may become the primary factor of unification or cohesion. On the other hand, religious considerations could well divide society and undermine authorities. The role of religion in Java in regard to this is an interesting case to study.

While Islam has been the dominant religion for the majority of the people of Java, nevertheless a glaring evidence of Hindu-Buddhist thought could be perceived to underly the indigenous culture and religious attitude. Our knowledge on when exactly Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism began to be felt in Indonesia is rather hazy. The beginnings of the acculturation process, however, could well date from the second or third centuries A.D. By the fifth century the penetration of Indic cultural elements seemed to have made a mark on the Javanese people as evident by the various Hindu and Buddhist statues and shrines and the dating of Sanskrit inscriptions in Indonesia. Before the advent of Hinduism in Java, however, the Javanese had already had their own animistic beliefs. They believed that everything in nature, in the world of animals and plants, every object, big or small had a soul or spirit of its own. Underlying this belief were the notions of *fetishism*, *spiritism* and *shamanism*.<sup>1</sup> In *fetishism* concrete material objects regarded to have souls were worshipped because they were supposed to have certain powers which, if not acknowledged, would bring about evils to the individual or to the society as a whole. *Spiritism* required the invocation of the power of souls of the dead and of other spirits which were not bound to any living being or things. These spirits were believed to be capable of roaming around at will, to lead a disembodied existence or to transcend into another body or object. In *shamanism* the Javanese could let himself be possessed by a spirit through a ritual technique. These spirits were called *hyang* or *yang* which meant deity. Among these spirits there were those who acted as guardian of the *desa* (village) and there were others who acted as guardians of the hills, rivers, padi-fields and the ocean. The southern ocean was, according to Javanese belief, under the auspices of *Nyai Loro Ratu Kidul* (Goddess of the Southern Seas), a female spirit.

The penetration of Hindu-Buddhist religions into the lives of the Javanese did not mean that the animistic beliefs were discarded. Instead, a process of acculturation between the indigenous beliefs and Indic religions ensued. The result was a syncretism of Hindu (and Buddhist) - Javanese culture which enhanced the religion of the Javanese to a considerable degree. Hinduism provided the Javanese *dukun* (medicine-men) with the *mantra* (magical incantation) to appease or to drive away the spirits; and added to that, names of Hindu pantheon were attributed to the spirits. Hindu influence in Java seemed to have pervaded extensively in the court life of Java which gave birth to a flowering

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<sup>1</sup>Raden Supatmo, *Animistic Beliefs and Religious Practices of the Javanese*, n.p., n.d., p. 2.



of the arts, literature and philosophy. The rise of kingdoms witnessed the setting up of elaborate temples and religious shrines which extended from the eighth century until Islam made an impact in Java in the sixteenth century.

When Islam set foot on the island, the Hindu-Javanese religion which had penetrated into the life of the people was sustained and Javanese syncretism accommodated Islam with its indigenous belief. For example, Hindu *mantras* were given legitimacy by superimposing (if not grafting) them with Islamic incantations or *doa jampi*. Here again the Javanese culture was given further sophistication by another religion, by the inculcation of the concept of the oneness of God. And by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Islam had established a stronger grip on Java, the religion of the people was still a peculiar mixture of animistic worship and Hinduistic religious traits superimposed by Islam.<sup>2</sup> At the core of the syncretist religion lay what Geertz called the *slametan* or little ritual which prevailed Javanese life and which functioned as an institution that bound the Javanese in unity.

Religious considerations affected every aspect of the Javanese life. They governed the behaviour of the Javanese towards the State, his fellow villager or countryman, and they shaped the norms and mores of his society. In the *slametan*, for instance, the villagers were entertained to a feast but the purpose of the host holding it was primarily to appease the spirits or to give thanks to them and prayers were said by the holy man of the village to fulfil the wishes of the host. This little ritual symbolized the mystic and social unity of those taking part in it.<sup>3</sup> For at the *slametan* feelings of animosity should not be harboured. Invitation to the *slametan* should not be selective but be based on territorial basis. All those who stayed in the locality of the host should be invited irregardless of their being relatives or newcomers to the village. A *slametan* was held for various occasions: birth, circumcision, marriage, commemoration of the dead, successful harvest etc.

In the period of our study Javanese culture was closely bound with the feudal structure with religion playing an important role. In this structure the king was the focal point of the people and the State. This was a continuity of the Hindu concept of kingship whereby the king was regarded as the centre of the State (micro-cosmos).<sup>4</sup> According to this concept, since the administrative structure of the State (micro-cosmos) had to be a resemblance of the universe (macro-cosmos) the king was identified with a god and endowed with magical powers (*sakti*). He was to be the medium that linked the micro-cosmos of man with the macro-cosmos of the gods. In the Islamic period this Hindu notion of kingship was not eradicated but it was given legitimacy by claiming the ruler as Allah's *warana* (or God's deputy) and he was endowed with the titles of *Panatagama* and *Kalipatolah* (Caliph of God).<sup>5</sup> As in Hindu times the Islamic ruler of Java had a vital role to play, namely to defend the holy faith because it was only through such role that harmony could be maintained and peace and tranquility assured. Here again the syncretist characteristic of the Javanese people is demonstrated. Thus when we talk of Islam in Java prior to the advent of modernist Islamic ideas, this unique feature of Islam as professed by the Javanese should be borne in mind. Just as Hindu-Buddhist conceptions were very much modified by the pressure of indigenous ideas, Islam too underwent the process of 'Javanization'.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid* p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Soemarsaid Moertono, *State and Statecraft in Old Java*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1968, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> The king's full title in the case of the Sultan at Yogyakarta was Kangjeng Sultan Hamengkubuwana Senapati Ingalaga Ngabdurahman Sayidin Panatagama Kalipatolah and for the Susuhunan at Surakarta his full title was Kangjeng Susuhunan Pakubuwana Senapati Ingalaga Ngabdurahman Sayidin Panatagama.



But it would be a serious error to speculate that Islam in Java was basically different from that of other parts of the Muslim world. The basic contents, namely the principal pillars of the faith were still there. It mattered little how good a Muslim was so long as he considered himself a believer of the faith. In theory at least, the tenets as laid down by the Koran and *hadith* (tradition of the Prophet) were still the guiding principles of the religion. It was only the attitude of the Javanese in the interpretation of the faith in certain respects that differed and this was because they were very much influenced by their already syncretized Hindu-Javanese culture. This is to say that Islam for the Javanese was accommodated with certain beliefs, superstitions and rituals of their indigenous culture. This was facilitated by the fact that Islam itself contained mystical elements which very much appealed to the Javanese. This syncretist Islam was particularly true in the areas of central Java where there had been a process of continuity in the sustenance of the cultural traditions of Hindu Majapahit as preserved by the Muslim rulers of Mataram.

The gradual conversion of Java to Islam took place roughly from 1300 A.D. to 1525 A.D. The period coincided with the rise and decline of Majapahit. Muslim missionary activities had great success in the conversion among the Hinduized ruling classes of the Javanese states. Much of these activities were pioneered by the nine saints of Java popularly known as *Wali Sanga*. The spread of Islam was in a sense facilitated by the great sense of syncretism of the Javanese people. The *wayang* which was already a popular medium for the enlightenment for Hindu ethics and philosophical teachings during the great times of the Hindu-Javanese kingdoms, was in fact used to help in the spread of Islam. Theoretically Islam provided institutions for every aspect of human relations. Not only was it a religion that gave spiritual satisfaction to its adherents, it was also a regulator of the social structure. Because of this Islam was found attractive by the Javanese. For them religion and social life were inseparable. They considered their society as a religious unity. Islam moreover gave the ordinary man a sense of his individual worth as a member of the *ummah* (community) of Islam. In Islam the Javanese discovered that everybody, irregardless of one's position and status in society, was equal in the eyes of God. Because of this the Javanese saw the religion as one that could provide a sense of solidarity. They regarded their fellow Muslims as "brothers". In this sense Islam was able to bridge regional and tribal particularisms by means of a single Islamic unity.

For the Javanese rulers, Islam enhanced their authority by legitimizing them. For example, both Sultan Agung and the Sultan of Pajang had their authority legitimized by the Sunan of Giri because the place Giri was founded by one of the nine *wali* and it was the centre of pure or orthodox Islam, more orthodox than the syncretized Islam at the Mataram court. More important reason for the successful conversions to Islam could also be found in the fact that adherence to Islam could demonstrate pressures for political independence from the Hinduist Majapahit ruler.<sup>6</sup> When the north-coast harbour states had embraced Islam they asserted their independence and finally took up arms to attack Majapahit itself. Thus by the early part of the sixteenth century, around 1520, the Sultan of Demak successfully led the coastal states in overthrowing the last ruler of Majapahit and had the royal regalia carried off to Demak.<sup>7</sup>

In pre-Islamic times the indigenous nobility formed the sole upper class in society. But when Islam found its roots in Java another social group was introduced and this group which made up of the *ulama* seemed to be wielding much influence over the people that

<sup>6</sup> Robert R. Jay, 'Religious and Political Conflict in Java', Robert F. Spencer (ed.), *Religion and Change in Contemporary Asia*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1971, p. 145.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*



the royal rulers found it wise to assume the role of the *Panatagama* (religious leader) in order to guarantee their hold over the people. By adopting Islam the rulers had tried to preserve at least part of their claim to transcendental authority.<sup>8</sup>

The Javanese people had always acknowledged the leadership of people who possessed knowledge of the mystical art and magical powers. This was evident from the fact that the *dukun* gained respect and acknowledged leadership from the people because of their knowledge on magic, charms and medicine. The *guru* or ascetics of pre-Islamic times also gained such respect and held substantial authority over the people. So also the Muslim *ulama* or *kiyahi* were able to command influence because of their knowledge on Islam and spiritual power. Thus it was not surprising that the titular rulers of Java sometimes found it necessary to check the growing influence of the Muslim religious heads in order to protect their position from being undermined.

Towards the closing years of the sixteenth century there emerged a new centre of political power in central Java. This new, independent kingdom, taking the name of the old Mataram kingdom, was established in 1585. Its rise however provoked antagonism from the Islamic harbour states of the north coast of Java. Their leaders were themselves holy men and religious teachers and therefore were particularly opposed to the standard religious theory of the Hindu-Buddhist period which they regarded as heresy. These coastal states had at least at the *keraton* level, if not at the level of the general *rakyat*, tried to adhere strictly to Islamic teachings. No longer were the Ramayana and Mahabaratha texts resorted to for philosophical teachings and social ethics, but the Koran had become the source for court philosophers and religious teachers to understand traditional histories, moral inquiries, poetry and literary entertainments.<sup>9</sup> The rise of these coastal states thus marked the flowering of the arts with Islamic rather than Hinduistic motifs being adopted. The establishment of the new kingdom of Mataram was therefore seen as a challenge to Islamic orthodoxy of the coastal states. Although the ruler of Mataram was a Muslim, the state was however syncretist in form. Numerous religious and political elements of the old kingdom of Majapahit were retained. Even the royal officials of Mataram were recruited from the Majapahit families of officials and aristocrats. The court of Mataram had also reinstated traditional Hindu-Javanese learning and reduced Islam to mere formal observances. The traditional concept of Hindu-Javanese kingship which the ruler of Mataram adhered to with Hinduistic title such as "king of the mountain" was also seen by the coastal states as heresy.

The new kingdom of Mataram on the other hand saw the Islamic states of the north eastern coast as a threat. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries their fear was perhaps increased with the notion that if in the pre-Islamic days, rulers were identified as gods now that they were Muslims they were just servants of God and equal with their subjects in the eyes of God. Perhaps their fear of the Muslim *ulama* was also dictated by the increasing strength and popularity of the orthodox Muslim leaders who were deeply anxious to purify the syncretist Islam that prevailed in the courts in the inland regions. Religious rulers such as Sunan Giri exercised great influence not only in his small state but also in Madura and the Moluccas. In 1628 Sultan Agung felt it necessary to check the powers of Sunan Giri, with the excuse that the Sunan had aided the Prince of Madura to attack Mataram in 1615. The Sunan managed to defeat the Prince of Surabaya who was given the task of dealing with the Sunan by Sultan Agung. But the Sultan launched a second

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<sup>8</sup>C.A.O. Van Niewenhuizen, *Aspects of Islam in Post-Colonial Indonesia*, W. Van Hoeve Ltd., The Hague, 1958, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup>Robert F. Spencer (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 146.



attack and this time the spiritual leader of Giri was defeated and captured. The action taken by Sultan Agung was later repeated by Susuhunan Amangkurat I (1645-1677). An all-out massacre was launched on the religious orthodoxy of the northern coastal states. These Muslim states were regarded as extremist by the Java-centric government of Mataram.

The struggle for hegemony between the *pasisir* states and Mataram had originated from the beligerancy of Mataram. The Mataram rulers had emphasized from the very beginning their direct continuity with the lines of the Majapahit kings. As a matter of fact the Mataram kraton took pride in reviving the Hindu-Javanese tradition and culture by trying to make a synthesis whereby Islam was only super-imposed on the old Javanese tradition. Islam at the kraton of Mataram was thus a product of syncretism with the old Hindu-Javanese concepts. This cultural revival of Majapahit's past proves that Hindu-Javanese mystical concepts were able to survive the 'conversion' to Islam. That the Old Java was continued could also be gauged from the works of the Mataram court writers. Works such as the *Serat Manikmaya* and *Serat Nitisastri* were very much of Hindu-Javanese character. The *pujangga* seldom mentioned the Koran but instead drew their inspiration from Hindu epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. All these were contrary to the liking of the *ulama* of the coastal states. They felt that Islam could be purified and it was because of this conflict that Sultan Agung and the Sunan of Giri came to a clash.

The religious syncretism of Mataram shocked the Islamic leaders. Even among the religious leaders of the *pasisir* areas religious heretics were punished with death. This was certainly true in the case of Syekh Siti Jenar, who was accused of teaching the secret mystical truth (*ngelmu ghaib*) that Allah and His Creation, including man, were One. Although highly regarded as one of the nine *wali*, Syekh Siti Jenar was condemned to death for upholding what was then considered as heretical since it appeared identical with the Hindu philosophical notion of identifying the Self with the God-head.<sup>10</sup> In an effort to rid Islam of the impurities from pre-Islamic times, the Islamic religious leaders took steps to send teachers to the villages of Central Java to tell the people what Islam should be like. In the course of their preaching they could not help criticizing the fault of the ruler of Mataram for allowing heretical practices in the kingdom. The consequence of this was to arouse the anger of the ruler and thus at various times orthodox Muslims were persecuted and even slain. East Java soon became a target of the Mataram court. During Amangkurat I's rein, Sultan Agung's policy of assassination was carried further. This provoked the regions of East Java to rebel and one of these rebellions [was] led by the Madurese Prince Trunajaya who, drawing support from the *pasisir* areas, raised the banner of Islam.

On the death of Amangkurat I, his son succeeded to the throne as Susuhunan Amangkurat II (1677-1703). But shortly before the former's death, he had sought Dutch help to curb Trunajaya's success. With the assistance of the Dutch East India Company victory over the eastern states was thus achieved, but at the expense of Mataram having to pay back the Dutch by ceding the ports of the *pasisir* in exchange for restoring Amangkurat II to power over his father's kingdom.<sup>11</sup> From the end of the Surabaya war (1718-1723) there were uprisings directed both against Mataram as well as the Dutch. And almost all the revolts made use of Islam as their ideological standard. The leaders were religious

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<sup>10</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *Jogjakarta Under Sultan Mengkubumi 1749-1792, A History of the Division of Java*, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid* p. 20.



men who in the eyes of their followers were more orthodox and thus more Islamic than the rulers.<sup>12</sup>

The Dutch, sensing the possibility of Islam being made use of as a rallying banner adopted a policy of unfriendliness towards the orthodox Muslim states and as they gradually became entangled in the politics of Mataram they soon inherited the hostility of the Mataram court towards the so-called Muslim 'popes'. Actually the policy of the Dutch towards Islam was already outlined in a church order of December 7, 1643 for the municipality of Batavia concerning the conversion of so-called 'pagans'.<sup>13</sup> Among other things the said order stipulated that Islamic circumcision and Islamic schools should be forbidden. This intolerant attitude on the part of the Dutch was further exacerbated by the prohibitive instruction issued in 1716 forbidding transport of pilgrims to Mecca on the Dutch East India Company's ships. The Dutch felt that "such vagabonds were harmful because of their influence among the Mohamedans".<sup>14</sup>

Javanese interest in the haj pilgrimage had been on the rise since the sixteenth century. The Javanese rulers had found it to their advantage to have their authority legitimized by receiving their title "Sultan" from Mecca. In spite of his Hindu-Javanese inclination in matters of government and court rituals, Sultan Agung's (1613-1646) Islamic title was Sultan Abdul Muhammad Maulana Matarani. Another ruler, Sultan Haji, who bore the title of Sultan Abu'n-Nazar 'Abd al-Qahhar even went to Mecca twice, from 1669 to 1671 and again from 1674 to 1676.<sup>15</sup> The Javanese held the *haji* in high esteem. The title *haji*, 'acquired after making the pilgrimage, was some form of 'status symbol' in society. Thus Muslims who had been to Mecca for the pilgrimage could gain great prestige in the eyes of the people and with this prestige they could exert their influence to induce people to fulfil their religious obligations more conscientiously. As a matter of fact the influence of the *haji* was not restricted in the religious aspect only. The Dutch had always feared the political influence of the *haji*. Even the English thought it unwise to overlook the potential threat to their administration as a result of the haj pilgrimage.

Both Raffles and Daendels considered the Mecca pilgrimage a political danger.<sup>16</sup> In 1810 Daendels issued a decree making it difficult for the *haji* to travel in Java requiring them to have pass'ports when they travelled from one place to another. Raffles himself was of the opinion that the *haji* who returned from Mecca assumed the character of 'saints' and that the people believed them as having supernatural power of *ngelmu*. It was assumed that these *haji* would face no difficulty in arousing the people to rebellion and hence they were considered "the most dangerous instrument in the hands of the native authorities opposed to Dutch interest.<sup>17</sup> Raffles seriously believed that in every insurrection, the *haji* were the most active and according to him it was by their intrigues that the Javanese chiefs were stirred up to attack or massacre the Europeans whom they regarded as *kafir* (infidels) and intruders. It was only in the post-Napoleonic years that the Dutch began

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<sup>12</sup> Robert R. Jay, *Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java*, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale University Press, 1963, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Raden Abdul Kadir Widjoatmodjo, "Islam in the Netherlands Indies", *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 8, 1949, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>15</sup> B. Schrieke, *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, Selected writings of B. Schrieke, vol. II, W. Van Hoeve, The Hague, 1957, p. 242.

<sup>16</sup> Jacob Vredendregt, "The Haddj", *Anthropologica III* (BIK 118), 1962, p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Stamford Raffles, *The History of Java*, vol. II, London, 1830, p. 3.



to be more flexible and adopted a more liberal stand in their dealing with non-Christian religions.<sup>18</sup>

The *haji* were feared and distrusted by Europeans in Java because of the fact that the Mecca pilgrimage had implanted in the mind of the *haji* a sense of awareness of Muslim brotherhood irregardless of race or creed. When these *haji* returned to Java there was a possibility of them trying to instil the sense of unity among their people with Islam as the binding dogma. In this way the Javanese could be made to realize that they belonged to the *Ummat Islam* (Islamic community) as opposed to the infidels.

One other characteristic of the religion of the Javanese was the messianic feature that underlay their belief. The Javanese had their own traditional belief in the concept of *Ratu Adil* or *Joyoboyo* who was supposed to liberate Javanese society after a period of great disorder. This was almost synonymous with the belief in the coming of the Mahadi held by shi'ite Muslims. The Mahadi was purportedly a messianic figure who would appear when the end of the world was at hand. For the Javanese, the belief in the coming of *Ratu Adil* in their period of social stress could always find expression in revolts led by certain *kiyahi* who, as was proven in the late nineteenth century, would lead the peasants to rise up against the colonial authorities. In relation to this concept of the 'holy liberator' the Javanese strongly believed in the significance of the *jihad* or holy war. The followers of such a revolt were usually imbued with fervour of the holy war to drive away the infidels. Usually the *kiyahi* or *guru* or *haji* who assumed leadership of any revolt or uprising was endowed with supernatural powers and charismatic authority. The *kiyahi* was able to issue *jimat* (talisman) and impart *ngelmu* (supernatural power) to his followers which could render them the power of invulnerability.

As the Dutch began to increase their involvement in Javanese court intrigues and local politics the difference between the 'Christian man' and 'Islamic man' grew increasingly sharper.<sup>19</sup> Islam began to be identified as a rallying standard for the people. For example, when the Javanese rebels led by Martapura and Mangkubumi attacked the Dutch garrison at Semarang in 1742, the Javanese demonstrated their hatred of the infidels by having the four hundred and fifty prisoners circumcised, followed by execution.<sup>20</sup> At another instance, religious considerations also played a part in the course of events that culminated in the Java War of 1825-1830. In that war Dipanegara, among other reasons, did have a score to settle with the Dutch when he noticed that his step-mother, the queen dowager was colluding with the Dutch Resident in unIslamic and immoral activities at the *keraton*. As a religious mystic, Dipanegara wanted to purify Islam from the 'contamination' of Western customs and values. He was also not too pleased with the Hindu-Javanese character of Islam in the kingdom. For all the immorality that he witnessed in the court and the growing decadence of Islamic values, Dipanegara pointed an accusing finger at the Dutch for being responsible in bringing in European practices to the *keraton*. (One of these abominable practices was the taking of alcoholic drinks).

Dipanegara was very unhappy over the fact that his half-brother, Sultan Hemengku Buwono IV, Jarot, had given himself to a life of pleasure and ignoring Islamic religious practices. The queen mother was especially singled out for her immoral behaviour and for having 'turned the palace to a complete brothel.' Dipanegara did try to advise the young

<sup>18</sup>Raden Abdul Kadir Widjoatmodjo, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup>C. Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup>J. Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago, containing an account of the manners, arts, languages, religions, institutions and commerce of its inhabitants* . . . , Vol. II, Edinburgh, 1820, p. 360.



ruler by pointing out to the latter the obligations and responsibilities of the Islamic ruler to his subjects. He even quoted verses in the Koran to make the sultan realize the true situation of his government. But his efforts were to no avail. Feeling frustrated with events that happened all around him, especially when he realized that Islam as a religion was no longer gaining its due respect from the ruler who theoretically was the *Sayidin Panatagama Kalipatolah*, the defender of the holy faith, Dipanegara resolved to put things right again by undertaking to purify Islam. Thus with a mixed feeling of anger and disappointment, he withdrew from the court to lead an ascetic life. His meditations and asceticism had a great impact on the people in the country. Rumours circulated that he was destined to lead a religious mission. He was even said to have met the Queen Spirit of the southern coast of Java, Nyai Loro Ratu Kidul. In a dream, he was asked to adopt the name of Ngabdulkamid ('Abdul Hamid), servant of God.

Thus far, one could see Dipanegara as a messianic figure endowed with mystical qualities and charismatic authority who soon chose to lead the holy war against the Dutch, who were looked upon as the *kafir* who had violated Javanese Islamic ethics and indigenous values. Like many other uprisings of the period Islamic religious consideration played a part in uniting the Javanese to fight against foreign rule. However, the Java War should not be construed as to be solely motivated by religious factors. Islam became a popular rallying banner for the Javanese because of the unique perception of religion which the Javanese possessed and the way religious content came to be understood by them.

It is certainly true that in the latter half of the nineteenth century incursions and revolts against the Dutch were launched mostly on religious platform. Although the revolts were prompted by a variety of factors such as social unrest and economic hardship, nonetheless the central issue always took a religious turning and one could see that religious leaders and spiritual mystics always played a major role in such revolts. By resorting to religious considerations it was not impossible for the leaders to awaken the masses to the call for *jihād*. Furthermore, it was not difficult to identify the Dutch as the common enemy by virtue of their alien faith. With such consideration, it was not too difficult to exploit social and economic unrest by resorting to armed revolt against the Christian intruders.

But Islam as a religious consideration in uniting Javanese society could only be rationalized when it was made the rallying standard in fighting the Dutch who as Christians were also zealous missionaries in propagating their faith among Muslims whom they wrongly regarded as 'heathens'. But when seen in the context of relationship between petty Muslim states, religious considerations took a slightly different twist — it need not necessarily contribute towards uniting the society. As a matter of fact there were strifes and rivalries between states because of the need for individual rulers to exert their hegemony over others. As was shown in this paper earlier, the period of the late seventeenth century had witnessed the rise of the Muslim north-eastern coastal states but their rise had in turn been looked upon as a threat that endangered the position of the inland Javanese kingdom of Mataram. Javanese rulers, be they Muslims or otherwise, were not willing to let their positions be undermined by their arch-rivals and so in order to preserve their thrones they at times felt it necessary to check potential rivals even though the latter could well be fellow Muslims.

Nonetheless one should always bear in mind that religion to the Javanese of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had been a syncretized product of their animistic and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs with a superimposition of Islam which lent sophistication to their culture. And this syncretist "religion of Java" prevailed every aspect of their life. The uniqueness of Islam in Java could be seen even in the *santri* like Dipanegara who, despite his desire



to see the purification of Islam in Java, also indulged in asceticism and the belief in the *Nya/ Loro Ratu Kidul*. Nevertheless, religious values and considerations did influence the social, political and economic behaviour of the Javanese as manifested in the *slametan* and other rituals and as such religion in Java had always been a way of life for the people, for not only did it find expression in places of worship but also in the visual literature arts, music, wayang and philosophical ethos of the society. It can hardly be proven otherwise — that religious considerations did unite Javanese society, at least at the social level.