

Between Modernity and Tradition: 'Local Islam' in Tidore, North Maluku, the Ongoing Struggle of the State and the Traditional Elites¹

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In Tidore, researchers on Islam as a belief system are confronted with so-called local Islam, *kebudayaan* or 'culture', and also, by how the Tidorese refer to their Islamic belief in Indonesian. The Tidorese are proud of their *kebudayaan*, which they view as an Islamic belief system through which their link to a person (i.e. the ancestor, called

the *jin*²) is constituted. Islam in Tidore can only be understood in this context. The two clans (extended families) or *soa* described here are the main traditional religious groups in Tidore. They are regarded as the guardians of the ancestors. However, since the advent of the modernisation campaign (development programme, *program pembangunan*) and *Islam Pancasila*³, people have become reluctant to admit their belief in their ancestors, and are now proudly calling themselves Muslim, in the sense of *Islam Pancasila*. Many have started to see their 'Islam', in the sense of ancestor worship, as old-fashioned and backward. Being active in the development programme means being modern, i.e. a Muslim who only worships *Allah* and not the ancestor, as the Tidorese do. However, the Tidorese were always Muslims and very religious too. The question is, what do people really want to show by identifying themselves in this way? What is their intention when they connect Islam, as a religion, with the Indonesian state ideology of *Pancasila*? In this paper, I argue that Tidorese reacted strategically in the face of modernisation and its influence. They participate enthusiastically in the development programme on the one hand, and on the other, they still practise 'their Islam'. Thus conflicts are unavoidable. But how are these local conflicts between 'being modern' and 'being traditional' managed? The local social structure that is completely determined from the 'top' (i.e. the state, or in this case, the civil servants) would not have collapsed if the state government were unstable. What kind of social structure is this? And, is there indeed any social structure? Over the decades this social structure seems to have been supporting the political institution, without actually being prepared to deal with conflicts. I attempt to address these questions both in a micro and macro level, in which I regard modernisation as coming to the village both as a state programme and as a part of the globalisation process. In this respect, not just Tidore but all of Indonesia is

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² The word 'ancestor' in Tidorese is *gosimo*. The Tidorese believe that their ancestor is the spirit, the *jin* itself. Nevertheless, in this regard ancestor is equivalent to spirit. To speak about 'ancestor' means to speak about spirits; in other words, ancestor is spirit (*gosimo* is *jin*).

³ *Pancasila*, the philosophical basis of the Indonesian state, was created in the 1945 constitution. The central place that religion occupies in Indonesian values is best expressed in the *Pancasila*, the five (*panca*) principles (*sila*). The first principle is: Belief in one supreme God. One implication here is that monotheism, belief in the existence of one God, is embraced. Several considerations support the distinction Indonesians draw between world religions and traditional religions. Islam is seen as one of the world religions, whereas 'Islam', in the Tidorese context, is understood as ancestor worship and included in the traditional religion category, and thus not accepted as one of the world religions; and in this regard it is not seen as being Islam (see Atkinson 1988 and Dove 1988). The five principles of the *Pancasila* as the state's sole ideological foundation are monotheism, humanitarianism, national unity, democracy and social justice.

affected. Here I quote Roland Robertson (1993:57) who writes:

National societies are increasingly exposed internally to problems of heterogeneity and diversity and, at the same time, are experiencing both external and internal pressures to reconstruct their collective identities along pluralistic lines. Individuals are increasingly subject to competing ethnic, cultural and religious reference points....

The legend and the understanding of 'Tidorese Islam'

Tidorese understand their island to be the so-called Serambi Mekkah, the veranda of Mecca (see Baker 1987; van Bruinessen 1990). This means that Tidore is seen to be as important as Mecca and, in this sense, the Island of Tidore and its sacred mountain, Kiematubu, is the real place of pilgrimage for a devout Muslim. The Tidorese used to boast, 'We needed no Indian traders to Islamise us, we were always Muslim.'

Saidnya Assyed Jafar Sadik was the first Arab to come to Tidore. He claimed to be the direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. In Tidore he is generally known as Jafar Sadik. He married the female spirit, *jin*, named Nursafa, who is the ancestor, *gosimo*, of the Tidorese. This marriage is understood as an alliance between Islam and the local tradition (the *jin*). They were the forefathers of the natives of Tidore and represented Islam in Tidore; the Tidorese indeed argue that Islam in Tidore can only be understood in the context of this legend. Being Muslim in Tidore means accepting, worshipping and believing in one's ancestor; this is never against Islam, *Allah* or the Prophet. To the Tidorese, the local tradition, i.e. that of the *jin*, is as important and valuable as Islam itself. Thus, in Tidore, Islam must be accepted as having its origin in the spirit, *jin*, in their ancestor, *gosimo*. To be Tidorese is to be 'Islamic' and Tidore is the home of Islam.

The marriage of Jafar Sadik and Nursafa produced four sons. This was relevant in regard to the rise of the four Sultanates of North Maluku, *Maluko Kie Raha*. These four Sultanates included the islands of Ternate, Tidore, Jailolo (now Halmahera) and Bacan. Until today this has been important for an historical and cultural understanding of the close political relationship between these four North Maluku islands. Tidore, as the central of the four Sultanates, was the centre of 'Islam' as well.

Soa Sowohi and Soa Joguru

The first Sultan of Tidore, Mohammad Nakel, is commonly known as Sahyati. He established several clans, *soa*. Every *soa* has to fulfil certain social and political duties. A *soa* consists of families, *hali*, and can be understood as an extended family or clan, who lived together at the same location which later became a village. There are two important *soa* relevant to this essay, *soa Sowohi* and *soa Joguru*. Both

were close to the Sultan and fulfilled essential duties.

Soa Sowohi consists of five families, namely *Fola Sowohi*, *Toduho*, *Mahifa*, *Tosofu Lamo* and *Tosofu Kene*. They represent the spirit, *jin*, that is the ancestor, *gosimo*, of Tidore and the world. The *Sowohi* understand themselves as the original natives of Tidore. The *soa Sowohi* live in the village of Gurabunga, at the foot of the sacred volcano Kiematubu. Gurabunga is considered to be the navel of the island of Tidore. In Tidore the name *Sowohi* is used for a person, a family, *hali*, and a status. One of the five *Sowohi* is determined by the ancestor in a ritual as the head of the *Sowohi* (the next *Sowohi* mentioned in this essay is the head of the *Sowohi*), someone more powerful and competent than the other four *Sowohi*. The *Sowohi* is not subordinate to the Sultan in status and is closer to the *jin* than the Sultan himself. People in Tidore accept him as having the highest authority from the *jin*. He is also the only person allowed to tend the Sultan's grave, which is regarded as sacred and magical. *Sowohi* can establish contact with the *jin* without any lengthy or elaborate ritual. Seen from the cultural and political perspective, *Sowohi* is still the most powerful person in Tidore, as he is in North Maluku. All decisions must have the agreement of the *Sowohi*, otherwise things will go wrong. The *Sowohi* does not only agree to, but gives permission to carry out the task, which is subsequently accepted by the Tidorese. *Sowohi*, like many other members of the traditional elite in Tidore, is a key figure for the development programme on the island. The *Sowohi* is accepted as the owner of the island of Tidore. People view him as responsible for the sacred world, and the Sultan for the profane world. To refer to Foucault (1979), one can say that *Sowohi* has the power/knowledge by which social spaces are regulated.

Soa Joguru also consists of five families: *Togobu*, *Fabanyo*, *Jawa Toru*, *Jawa Konora*, *Jawa Yuke* and *Doyado*. The *Joguru* claim that they were originally Arab migrants and traders who came to Tidore. They live in a hamlet on the outskirts of Soa sio (the capital of Tidore). *Soa Joguru* are responsible for the religious affairs on Tidore, namely for Islamic interpretation and for the understanding and teaching of Islam, and are traditional religion teachers, accepted even today as experts on Islam. During the time of the Sultans of Tidore, when Islam was understood as a religion of the court and part of the Sultan himself, *Joguru* were responsible for the implementation of Islam outside the court, integrating Islamic jurisprudence into the society.

Almost all *Joguru* are members of the *tarekat* Brotherhood (in Tidore), a *Sufi* order which practices austerities that are thought to facilitate the attainment of union with the divine essence; the term *tarekat* is derived from the Arabic *tariqah*, the way; *Sufi*-Islam is understood as mystic Islam. Even today, they continue to perform various *tarekat* rituals. However the head of the *tarekat* Brotherhood on Tidore is not a *Joguru* but a *Sowohi*; this fact makes it evident that

the *Sowohi* has the power in Tidorese Islam.

As an expert on Islam, each *Joguru* has his pupils or participants, so that in the village society a *Joguru* can create a social group by mobilising pupils, young people studying Islam and the mystic path that leads them to the *tarekat* tradition. Because every *Joguru* has a particular religious secret, which he shares with his most serious pupils, there are often tensions among the pupils of the *Joguru* that can be understood as 'secret competition'.

One prominent *Joguru* with highest grade in the *tarekat* Brotherhood, a man very close to the *Sowohi* and secretary of the sub-district Department of Education and Culture, *Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, in Tidore told me,

I see no difference between Tidorese Islam and the Indonesian Islam, or the so-called *Islam Pancasila*, as many civil servants say. We worship *Allah* and the Prophet and we also celebrate rituals for our ancestor, who is the *jin*, as we find in Koran.

This habitus was very unusual. No other civil servant in Tidore at that time openly defended and admitted their close affinity to their own local tradition.

Many of the *Joguru* are not only culturally prominent but also civil servants in the sub-district office, *Kantor Daerah*, in Soa Sio. Thus they have a high social and religious status. They are well-educated people, aware of the importance of education nowadays. Unlike the *Sowohi*, *Joguru* own modern houses, and enjoy a comfortable way of life. Like all civil servants in Tidore, Arabic calligraphy and pictures are the main decorations in *Jogurus'* houses.

Tahlil, koro and ratib

People in Tidore differentiate between the local traditional rituals, in which the ancestor is 'contacted' and worshipped through trance and ritual prayer, and those without trance. The latter consists only of recitation from the Koran.

Tahlil, *koro* and *ratib* are recitation rituals. I observed two sorts of recitation in Tidore: recitation of a part the Koran and recitation of secrets, not from the Koran, but nonetheless in Arabic. The ritual prayers *tahlil* and *koro* are almost identical in their performance; they are both recitation in the evening, or evening prayers. The practice of *tahlil* as a ritual prayer has a unique function. As a ceremony it is able to unify the 'traditional' and the 'modern' members of the village. *Tahlil* is not 'traditional', to the extent that this prayer ritual is not performed to contact the ancestor, but nor is it 'modern', in the sense of being completely new and extraordinary to the villagers.

It is interesting to note here that the participants in *tahlil* are almost all civil servants in the village. Civil servants are eager to come to a *tahlil*, but not to ritual ancestor worship. For them *tahlil* is more acceptable to Islam, in the sense that trance plays no part in the ceremony. This is strongly related to the idea that everything, which has to do with trance is

primitive, or at least not modern, and, also not Islamic⁴. It was very easy to ascertain in Tidore, especially in a coastal village like Tomalou, that *tahlil* is 'the ritual for the civil servants', whereas *gahi sou* or *dabus* or *salai jin* are 'the ritual for the farmers and the fishermen' (these are rituals worshipping ancestors accompanied by a sort of trance; see Probojo 1998). The meal that follows the ritual is certainly the most important part of the evening *tahlil* rituals, being a kind of lobby similar to that encountered after the *gahi sou* ritual. It provides an opportunity to communicate and moreover discuss the business of the Fishery Cooperative in the village⁵.

As soon as a farmer or fisherman has a position as a civil servant, he will change his ritual habits, attending the evening *tahlil* rituals in the village more frequently. The owner of a fishing boat told me,

'I have always participated in the traditional ritual worship of our ancestor, *gosimo*. Now I have a position in the Village Cooperative, *Koperasi Unit Desa*, *KUD Perikanan*, in Tomalou. Therefore, I decided not to participate in the local rituals anymore but become more involved in the *tahlil* evenings. I meet my colleagues and pray with them and have late dinner after that.' He insisted: 'I am not against the local rituals or against my own ancestor now that I am a civil servant. I do not forbid the young men (fishermen) who work on my boat to attend their ancestor worship if they need to do it. But I have to conform with my new position.'

Here we see that positions transform identity, and indeed are constitutive of identities. Two groups can be discerned: 1) the local traditional groups consisting of wealthy farmers growing nutmeg and cloves, and fishermen who confidently worship their ancestor as well as *Allah* in the mosque; and 2) civil servants and wealthy fishing boat owners who consciously separate themselves from the local tradition, and only worship *Allah* in mosque. Hence, I agree with Edward Said (1994) in relation to the consensus of group or national identity. Said (1994) emphasises that a group is not a natural or God-given entity but is a constructed, manufactured, even, in some cases, invented object, with a his-

⁴ Another argument to present in this regard is the influence of the Muhammadiyah stream in Indonesia, which does not tolerate any ritual celebration except prayer, *salat/shalat*, (canonical ritual prayer, conducted in the mosque). Muhammadiyah differ very much from the Nahdathul Ulama (NU) stream in their concept; the latter accept the local tradition as a part of the Islam, whereas the former judges this as *kafir*, heathen (see also Nakamura 1976; Peacock 1978; Woodward 1989). The Islam I found in Tidore clearly has greater affinity with the NU, as does Islam in almost all Indonesia. It belongs to the NU's concept to consider the Mystic (e.g. Javanist Mystic) as Islamic. As an Islamic stream, NU is traditional on the one hand and very liberal on the other. Beyond this, the reality that NU belongs to the nation's biggest Muslim organisation shows that their Islamic concept is appropriate to the Indonesian culture.

⁵ As the village head, *lurah*, of Tomalou (a coastal village in Tidore) once informed me, the right time to negotiate with fishermen and farmers is just after a ritual, that is, during the big meal.

tory of struggle and conquest behind it, that is sometimes important to represent.

Ratib, another ritual prayer, is similar to the *tahlil* in its performance, but not in its substance. *Ratib* is not a mass prayer ritual but more an individually focused prayer consisting of special secrets. This prayer must be followed by actions like fasting, sleeping on a sacred grave, or having secret prayer meetings with the teacher. The *Sowohi* of the village Gurabunga explained:

Few people in Tidore know the difference between *ratib* and *tahlil*. And there is a basic difference between both events. When the prayer ritual is held following a death, families who know to behave correctly have an open *tahlil* ritual, as people usually do. *Ratib* is like the core of every traditional ritual that gives one the ability to go into trance, or to have invulnerability, to contact the supernatural. In other words, without *ratib* a ritual won't be effective. In contrast, *tahlil* is only a prayer meeting. We find it on every occasion and everywhere.

The local traditional elite and the modern secular elite

The Tidorese are very religious people. Many wealthy families sent their youngsters to Ternate, the next island to Tidore. Many of them had also gone to Makassar (Ujung Pandang), the capital of South Sulawesi, or to Manado, the capital of North Sulawesi, to study at an early age⁶. In Makassar they attended an Islamic theological school, *pesantren*. Many civil servants in Tidore, especially those who have a position in the Village Fishery Cooperative, *KUD Perikanan*, or a high position in the sub-district Office, *Kantor Daerah*, in Soa Sio, the capital of Tidore and Central Halmahera, have this kind of educational background.

When they return to Tidore with their degrees, they frequently clash with the local traditional elite (i.e. *Joguru*), since they have become critical of their own culture and local tradition. They try to apply what they have learned and seen to influence Tidore's social structure. The political religious movements in other parts of Indonesia are often seen by them as 'enhancing' society, which accounts for the strong tendency of Tidorese who have lived outside Tidore to reject and indeed work against their own local tradition, to make Islam in Tidore into 'real Islam', based only on the Koran and free of any local elements (i.e. local rituals, ancestor worship). Do these religious civil servants really want to realise their ideas of purifying Tidorese Islam? Or is this only

a strategy for the sake of the state? Will they eventually succeed in their mission of modernising Tidore in this way?

The strategy of defending Islam with *Pancasila* (state ideology), and the championing of *Islam Pancasila* have the same motive. Under *Pancasila* as the state ideology of Indonesia (the first principle), people should only worship one God, and that is *Allah*. In this regard worshipping ancestors is not only not Islamic and not modern but goes against the state (Indonesia) itself. To this extent the civil servants put the understanding of Islam as worshipping *Allah* alone on the same level as *Pancasila* (the state ideology), that is, Indonesia as such. Consequently, from the civil servants' point of view, to be Muslim is not only to be an Indonesian (due to the state ideology *Pancasila*), but also to be modern (which requires the rejection of ancestor worship). Hence, to be a Muslim is to be an Indonesian, and the 'real Tidorese' are not the 'real Muslims' (cf. the understanding of Javanese Islam in Pigeaud 1975). One prominent civil servant at the Fishery Cooperative in Tomalou said:

How can we make the Tidorese into Indonesians like those who lived in Jakarta? How can we modernise Tidore like what is happening in other places in Java? We appear so backward in our way of thinking, compared to the other Indonesians. People are proud of their ancestors, not of modern new Fishery Management and Marketing.

The civil servant used a socio-cultural paradigm to differentiate the Indonesian, referred to as *Islam Pancasila*, from the non-Indonesian, referred to as Tidorese, and their local traditional Islam. Those who still worship their ancestors are 'Tidorese', and 'not seen as Indonesian', and thus 'not Muslim'. He insisted further: 'There is only one way, that is to make them into devout Muslims. that is, Muslims who place emphasis on their faith in the Koran, not on their ancestor.' This shows how easy it is for the civil servants to instrumentalise the state ideology in judging faith as well as socio-cultural status, i.e. whether people are modern or only traditional in their estimation. Almost all Tidorese accept that contacting the ancestors in a ritual does not mean being against Islam or the Koran. Indeed, to participate in a ritual performance is actually more familiar to them than going to the mosque (see Koentjaraningrat 1980)⁷. This is because many Tidorese see their ancestor as a part of themselves, as their forefather, whereas going to the mosque means meeting the mosque means meeting an *Allah* who is omnipotent and ineffably far away⁸. Ancestor belief is not an ideology

⁶ The motive for sending children to study outside Tidore is prestige. Usually children were sent to Makassar for religious instruction. Indeed the Islam found in Makassar does not accept any kinds of local rituals, but only that what people find in the Koran. Manado is a Christian town where Tidorese youngsters attend the university to study law, engineering, economics, etc.; this is a city where Tidorese fishers have close business connections. Later on we will see that Tidorese who got their education in Makassar or who stayed there for a long time are very determined in their championship of 'the real Islam' in Tidore.

⁷ Parallel to this view, Koentjaraningrat (1980:127ff) wrote regarding the familiar and unfamiliar religious concepts among the Javanese people, that there are 'the ancestral and the local spirits, belonging to the familiar category, whereas the supernatural beings who are associated with Islam belong to the unfamiliar category'.

⁸ Especially in the remote villages, Tidorese were more eager to visit the ancestor house and perform rituals (mostly *gahi sou*) than to go to the mosque, not only because of the lobby (big meal and discussion) taking place afterwards. In addition, they went to

or merely a cognitive perception, but a tangible part of their life, which is put into practice in a ritual celebration and in day-to-day affairs that has less formal character. The prominent *Joguru* explained,

The ancestor and the spirit, *jin*, are our life, our identity ... In view of our religious historical background it is also impossible that 'Islam' is against us. For us, the Tidorese, the traditional local ritual and Islam are unified. To banish the local traditional rituals would mean banishing our ancestor, banishing Islam, and not least, banishing the Tidorese.

Soa Marsaoli is one of the prominent *soa* (extended families) living in the coastal village Tomalou. It has traditionally been in charge of fishery activities there since the Sultan's reign and is very prominent in modern fishing and fish marketing in the entire North Maluku. Its members are also well known to be devout Muslims. Many Tidorese, in particular the *Marsaoli*, have become very wealthy from fishing, and many of them are influential civil servants working for the Fishery Cooperative, *Koperasi Unit Desa Perikanan/KUD Perikanan*. Many civil servants who work in the sub-district office also come from this clan. There are some differences between a civil servant in the sub-district office and a civil servant in the Village Cooperative, who works very closely with fish processing factories and the local bank. The latter are engaged in the former State Party, *Golkar*; and hence they are politically powerful. They are able to send their children to study for academic degrees outside Tidore. The majority of Tidorese who have been to Mecca on pilgrimage are members of the *Marsaoli*. They are eager to speak about modernisation and Islam. Many of them are Muslim teachers, *ustad*, in the village school in Dokiri, a coastal village near to Tomalou. The *Marsaoli* people are behind the development of a form of intellectual competition to give correct information about the local tradition and Islam on the island.

The government officials who work hardest against all kinds of rituals for the ancestor are the *Marsaoli*, and hence they celebrate *tahlil* mostly during the month of Ramadhan. Surprisingly however several *Marsaoli* people are members of the *tarekat* Brotherhood and celebrate the *tarekat* ritual to some extent as well.

As has been pointed out before, these men are not only civil servants at the Fishery Cooperative, but most of them were also closely involved in the formerly dominant political party, *Golkar*, which donated large sums of money for the modern new village mosque in Tomalou. Their main goal is to modernise Tidore and the Tidorese, which means making the Tidorese 'real' Muslims. It has been mentioned above that the *Marsaoli* families are highly influential in socio-economic and political life in Tidorese society. In several

respects they seem to be even more prominent than the *Joguru* and indeed even than the *Sowohi*. However, they are not missionaries like some *mubaliq* (Islamic missionaries), who saw it as their mission to convert the Tidorese, whom they perceived as pagans due to the practice of ancestor worship.

Nonetheless, the *Marsaoli* clan cannot ignore the influence of the traditional leaders, not only because of the latter's position in the village, but also due to their traditional status as leaders. Thus, they still accept the traditional elite and see them as important figures in Islam. Many civil servants from the *Marsaoli* clan recognise the strategic position of their traditional village elites in several fishery businesses. They consider the traditional leaders' main function to be that of brokers, not only in an economic but also in a cultural sense, although they are still convinced that the maintenance of the local tradition is the main barrier to the modernisation of Tidore. In fact, they are in a dilemma. On the one hand, they realise that the local tradition is the main pillar of modernisation and, on the other hand, they believe that the same local tradition represents a real handicap to modernisation.

Perhaps people are likely to continue to practise their convenient local tradition, that is, in their 'Islam' as they understand it. As told by a prominent *Joguru* from Soa Sio with much conviction, even if modernisation and prosperity come, deep in their hearts, the Tidorese will be loyal to their ancestor. He emphasised his argument by reminding me of the precept of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, unity in diversity, so central to the Indonesian way of thinking and way of life, which supports the maintenance of local tradition. Is it indeed possible for Islam to be maintained without the traditional ritual leaders, who are also *imam*, prayer leaders, in the mosque? The same prominent *Joguru* stated: 'Tidorese and the traditional elite stay with the ancestor on the one hand, and speak for Islam on the other hand. This is not traditional or heathen. As people say, this is our Islam and this is Islam.' On another occasion, a very influential teacher of Islamic religion from the *Marsaoli* clan, who is also a civil servant, told me that he got his religious education at Pondok Gontor, Jombang, East Java. This is a *pesantren*, an Islamic school run by the *NU* (see footnote 4). He is the most sought-after *imam* in the village, and indeed throughout Tidore, for celebrating *tahlil*. In addition, he always takes a very active part in the *dabus* ritual or the *tarekat* Brotherhood in his village, Tomalou. He also told me that,

'*Tahlil*, as well as ritual celebrations for the ancestor and the ritual of the *tarekat* Brotherhood, are important and acceptable to Islam as long as they strengthen our belief, that is, our Islam. And indeed we Tidorese do this as a spiritual exercise in several ways to come closer to the understanding of the real Islam'. He continued, 'Everything, say, meditation, fasting, recitation, as well as going into a trance, has its motive. And this is the most important thing, again, the motive behind all the actions. I am a product of the Tidorese tradition, and our local tradition never takes us away from Islam. On

the mosque when the mayor, *bupati*, of Tidore came once a year (usually during the month of *Ramadhan*) to hold Friday prayer and to preach in the village mosque. (Probojo 1998:140).

the contrary, all these devotions train us to be pious Muslims.'

Answering my question as to how this issue related to the so-called *bidah*, he explained:

Bid'ah is to be understood as *tradisi tanpa hukum* (that is, customs outside the Islamic legal tradition, author)⁹, which accepts all local rituals as Islamic. Rituals like *tahlil*, the tarekat ritual of the Brotherhood or even local rituals worshipping the ancestor are, in terms of the concept of *bid'ah*, totally credible and adequate to Islam.

Epilogue

The tendency to advocate a return to real Islam has partly to do with polity. It has less to do with the belief system itself, at least in the Tidorese context. The main problem is, which will prevail in this competition: the local tradition (locality) or the real Islam (civil servant/state)? Another important factor is whether Islam could be maintained at all without any local Islamic tradition to support it. And is there any Islam that is not local Islam?¹⁰ The case of Tidore shows that Islam is only understandable in its traditional context and in this case, in its Tidorese context. The civil servants' advocacy of so-called *Islam Pancasila*, which meant rejecting their own local tradition, has to be understood as a political strategy, because in fact they still consider the local tradition and the existence of the traditional elders significant in the Tidorese context. Consequently this has more to do with the position of being a civil servant, who represents the state's interests and its policies, as opposed to representing local needs. Evidently as long as they stand to gain an advantage in their position as civil servants, they will continue fighting against the local traditions. But are they really opposed to these traditions? Or has this to do with the resources connected with the state? And are they really convinced about this rejection of their own ancestor? Or are these social boundaries they build to strengthen their group collectivity and in this way exclude the other group, those who worship their ancestor? The ambivalence of the civil servants themselves, depicted above, provides the answer. The debate on *Islam Pancasila* or the pure Islam was raging

at the time I did my field research in Tidore. To some extent village civil servants were mainly against local devotional ritual due to their position, which resembles a collective habitus. The stereotypes of the Tidorese as not being industrious people, and of the Tidorese as 'traditional' (because of their practice of ancestor worship), and the reality that the Tidorese prefer to perform ancestor worship are all condemned as derivations of local traditions that are a waste of time and thus viewed as uneconomical. Civil servants, especially from the Fishery Cooperative, tend to see these as a handicap to progress in modernising the village. They claim that the main problem in Tidore is the traditional way of life, the traditional way of thinking, which is based on ancestor worship. But this assumption, as shown above, is not true. Modernisation does not necessarily mean damaging the local tradition, since these much-maligned local traditions are adaptable and furthermore represent an integrating factor and harbour a good deal of power besides. In this sense the local tradition is truly progressive and 'modern'.

Civil servants try to convey the impression that only the Islam they mean (*Islam Pancasila*) can be the motor of civilisation, of technology and of modernisation. On the contrary, however, local Islam and the traditional leaders are the actual basis of all these models of progress. During my field research in Tidore, it was particularly interesting to observe that there were rituals to worship ancestors, which (during my stay there) were performed more frequently in the remote villages, whereas the *tarekat* ritual for the dead was found more in the coastal area. Local rituals place emphasis on trance as a sign of contact with ancestors, whereas local rituals like *tarekat* put stress on the invulnerability complex, which is nevertheless a variant of trance. And indeed all these rituals have the same substance, namely to communicate with ancestors, with the dead, in other words, to establish contact with spirits. No one in Tidore can say which is more or less Islamic. In terms of the Tidorese understanding of Islam, all the rituals observed in Tidore are fully Islamic. *Tarekat* rituals feature Arabic ornaments and decorations, which make the atmosphere viscerally more Islamic and therefore, to some extent, acceptable.

There must therefore be another factor behind the struggle against the local tradition. And this indicates that the main problem is either local Islam or Islam. *Tahlil*, which consists almost entirely of Koran recitation, is acceptable to the civil servants' village society and to those who champion 'real Islam'. Nevertheless, seeing it in the context of other local rituals, it is invalid to regard *tahlil* as a part of Islam, or indeed as being completely Islamic, purely because there is no element of trance in the *tahlil* celebration. Theoretically *tahlil* stays on the same level as other local rituals, including ancestor worship, found in Tidore (see footnote 9 on the concept of *bidah*). Consequently, abolishing other

⁹ *Bidah* or *bid'ah* is to be understood as innovation in the Islamic tradition. The word was used for approved customary practices by the Arabs before Islam (Hodgson 1974:252). Other Muslims, including followers of the Shafite law school that is dominant in Indonesia take a more liberal approach. They distinguish between innovation (*bid'ah*, author), which leads to unbelief and innovation (Hodgson 1974), which fosters true piety. ...Shafis (Shafite law school see above, author) and Indonesian neomodernists understand Islam as a more flexible system that can, and indeed must, adjust to varying historical and cultural contexts. ...They (shafis and Indonesian modernists, author) take a broader view of the traditions of the Prophet cited by the ninth century scholar al-Bukhari, according to which 'Works are in their intention only'. This view, in combination with a liberal understanding of *bidah*, leads Shafis and neomodernists to an understanding of who and what can be considered Islamic (Woodward 1996:8).

¹⁰ See Woodward (1966), Introduction.

local rituals would mean forbidding *tahlil* too. But *tahlil*, like other rituals, still maintains its due place and function. And the ritual elites remain as the guardians of local Islam, that is, of Islam.

The reality is that purifying Islam, and condemning local Islam, is inconsistent. These are revealed to be nothing more than a strategy to attain economic or political goals, in short, power. Moreover, promoting modernity is a camouflage designed to maintain the prosperity of certain people, or else those who also aspire to a slice of the cake (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993).

Quite evidently, it would be impossible to abandon the local traditions (synonymous with local Islam) in Tidore, because this is the basic part of Islam itself. It is hard to believe that the civil servants who are so intent on attacking the local tradition do not realise this. The inconsistency of their actions shows clearly that they have other motives, and moreover that they are aware of their ambivalence. And as long as there is an advantage to be gained from condemning local tradition, people will continue to do so. If there were no vested interest in it, people would probably never criticise the primitiveness of their local tradition or even talk about modernity as such.

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