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Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java

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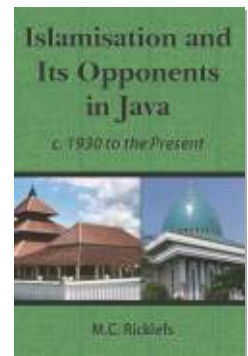
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Key analytical terms¹

Basic epistemological distinctions

Traditionalism Acceptance of the four Sunni Schools of Law as valid guides to knowing Islam.

Traditionalism usually recognises that these legal traditions are subject to change and redefinition. It commonly involves tolerance towards locally derived cultural expressions, acceptance of mysticism, and a gradualist approach towards greater Islamisation.

Traditionalist One who, or that which, adheres to Traditionalism

Historicalism An approach to knowing Islam which denies that the four Sunni Schools of Law are the sole authoritative guides and believes that Revelation can be clarified by observing how it has been understood in changing socio-historical contexts.

Because it accepts that understandings have evolved historically, Historicalism also commonly implies an acceptance that understandings may evolve in the present and future. It is often open both to mysticism and to local cultural expressions. Historicalism is a significant approach among intellectuals but lacks broad social networks.

Historicalist One who, or that which, embraces Historicalism

Modernism An approach to knowing Islam which denies that the four Sunni Schools of Law are authoritative guides and which

¹ These analytical terms and their definitions grew from discussions over several months with my colleagues in a research project at the National University of Singapore focussed mainly on the post-Soeharto period, Chaider S. Bamualim and R. Michael Feener. Several colleagues at NUS and overseas also gave valuable comments and suggestions.

relies fundamentally upon human reason in understanding Revelation.

This commonly involves a disregard for socio-historical contexts but openness to modern learning as a way of enhancing the power of reason. It is principally opposed to what it sees as the medieval obscurantism of Traditionalism, may reject local cultural expressions and is at least suspicious of mysticism.

Modernist
Revivalism

One who, or that which, embraces Modernism

An approach to knowing Islam which denies that the four Sunni Schools of Law are authoritative guides and which aspires to revive a pristine universal Islam as in the time of the Prophet and his Companions. Its epistemology rests on cognition of Revelation as found in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* through divine guidance.

Revivalism normally distrusts the application of human reason and denies that understandings of Revelation may legitimately change over time or that Islam may evolve in changing socio-historical contexts. It commonly rejects local cultural expressions and regards mysticism as a source of heresy.

Revivalist

One who, or that which, adheres to Revivalism

Social and political projects

Islamism

A project whose principal locus of activity is the state. It seeks a more perfect political order by establishing state institutions and/or controlling existing ones so as to impose deeper Islamisation, achieve greater justice, and safeguard the integrity of the Muslim community.

Islamism is most commonly associated with Modernist and Revivalist thought and sometimes (but not necessarily) validates the use of force to achieve its objectives. It usually seeks social conformity and, where it is tolerant of other faiths, normally expects them to accept a position subordinate to Islamic dominance.

Islamist

One who, or that which, embraces the Islamism

Dakwahism

A project whose principal locus of activity is at the level of the society. It seeks a more perfect social order by actively propagating what it regards as a correct understanding of the faith, its moral standards and its ritual obligations.

Dakwahism is found mainly among Traditionalists, Modernists and Revivalists. Traditionalist Dakwahism is normally consistent with tolerance towards locally derived cultural expressions, acceptance of mysticism and a gradualist approach towards greater Islamisation, and is usually said to rest upon the example of the *wali sanga*. Modernist and Revivalist styles are normally characterised by rejection of local practices and superstitions and insistence on the superiority of Islam over other religions. All styles may prioritise associated values such as the solidarity of the Islamic *ummah* and strict female modesty.

Dakwahist
Liberalism

One who, or that which, embraces Dakwahism

A project whose principal locus of activity is the individual. It seeks greater individual freedom in religious and other matters, so long as no harm is done to the rights of others.

Liberalism is found amongst Traditionalists, Historicalists and Modernists, but is rare among Revivalists. It is generally suspicious of the role of government in religious affairs and opposed to the use of force in any context. It commonly prioritises associated values such as social and gender equality, freedom of thought, interfaith harmony, social pluralism and economic progress.

Liberal

One who, or that which, embraces Liberalism

Socio-religious process

Islamisation

A process of deepening commitment to standards of normative Islamic belief, practice and religious identity. Those standards are subject to contestation among groups and individuals.

Islamisation as an objective is associated with all of the epistemological approaches described above.