Indonesia's Urban Sufis: Challenging Stereotypes of Islamic Revival

Telling the future of this nation in turmoil is fraught with difficulties, not least because of the rapid spread of literacy through the state school system, especially since the 1970s, and the emergence of religious school study. The targeting of religious education, the degree of religious community, in all political contexts are also hampered by our limited vision of what religion means in daily life in Indonesia today. Not only are terms such as 'fundamentalist', 'traditionalist', and 'secular' loosely defined and likely to carry inappropriate implications when reading from the experience of one country to another, but even within Indonesia the religious landscape has been rapidly changing. Some 'traditionalist' orders (known as the ummah or the 'traditional' 'secular'? concepts are looking incongruously progressive, while 'modernists' (such as in Muhammadahy) have been accused, even by their own avant-garde, of getting 'stuck in outmoded visions of reform'.

While differences still nettle relations between 'traditionalists' and modernists, marked by the emergence of non-conventional forms of religious devotion, there are now constant interactions between 'secular' Muslims and other factors. This has been most demonstrated in the areas of public piety in the Muslim community at large and in the debate amongst the intelligentsia on interpretation in Islamic law. There has been a spread of literacy through the state school system, especially since the 1970s, and the emergence of religious school study. The targeting of religious education, the degree of religious community, in all political contexts are also hampered by our limited vision of what religion means in daily life in Indonesia today. Not only are terms such as 'fundamentalist', 'traditionalist', and 'secular' loosely defined and likely to carry inappropriate implications when reading from the experience of one country to another, but even within Indonesia the religious landscape has been rapidly changing. Some 'traditionalist' orders (known as the ummah or the 'traditional' 'secular'? concepts are looking incongruously progressive, while 'modernists' (such as in Muhammadahy) have been accused, even by their own avant-garde, of getting 'stuck in outmoded visions of reform'.

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