

ABSTRACT

Key words: Elite nobility, military praetorian; devout Muslim; nominal Islam; Javanese phoneme; ruling elite —*wong ndhuwuran*; common people —*wong ndhek-ndhek-an*; political resources; undivided power; abuse of religion; Islam under siege.

The purpose of the study is how to understand the Javanese elite ruler have reconstructed religion and used it as a tool of power in the bureaucracy in Surabaya. It is argued that the Javanese aristocrats have dominated the composition of the Javanese bureaucratic elite. The aristocrats or elite nobility layer including the military praetorian dominate the ruling elite. A minority within the civil service, who use devout Islam as the basis for their support, successfully achieve vertical mobility and become a government official or a lower civil servant.

Javanese aristocrats and military praetorian, which derive support from socially remote areas, tend to be more open and tolerant. They adopt knowledge from different resources, including some values from Islam. However, the way they adopt these Islam values is more gradualist than revolutionary. The relational approach is more helpful in explaining the reality of Javanese Islam than divided approach into three categories: aristocrat, nominal Islam, and devout Muslim. To the relational approach the Javanese Islam is unique in that the shades of orthodoxy adopted fall within a continuum that remains complementary with local culture. Those groups who categorized as nominal Islam practice Islam daily in their lives without having to relate strongly to truly Islamic orthodoxy. Although they don't use Arabic words in prayer, instead using Javanese phoneme, and try to understand life through the use of puppets, rather than relying on the al Qur'an or prophet tradition. However, they retain *syahadat*, a belief in a single god (Allah) and prophet Muhammad, and undertake praying, charity, fasting, and Hajj pilgrimage. Thus, although they are still Muslim, they are best categorized as following Javanese Islam, similarly with many variants of Islam, such as Syrian Islam and Indian Islam.

The Javanese aristocrats, however, will still maintain their 'Javanese-ness' and local values as a source of pride and self-esteem. Therefore, although they are relatively more open to the outside world, they don't want new cultural elements emerging that may destroy the basis of this self-esteem. They tend to be prejudiced to other groups that they assume do not hold Javanese culture in high regard. For example they are hostile towards puritan Islam because this does not want to have local culture involved in their religion. In contrast, the Javanese aristocrats have always been more receptive to nominal Islam because of its openness to local culture.

This phenomenon has influenced the real politics in Surabaya. Activist puritan Islam has been excluded from the government, in contrast to the nominal Islam that has been more welcomed. In this regard, it can be applied to understanding the relationship between power and the division of Islam into devout Muslim, nominal Islam, and aristocrats. Devout Muslim and nominal Islam can be categorized as powerless groups and the aristocrats are powerful ones. The latter group do not want to lose their power or even share it with others, and thus try hard to maintain it. In certain cases, they share their power by promoting their loyal relatives or friends. Here, "a relative centered bureaucratic" (*birokrasi perkoncoan*) are often used by the ruling elite in Surabaya in the recruitment. Elite bureaucracy doesn't build hierarchical relation as in patrimonialism or clientelism, but an egalitarian relation with the same schism and interest person took place among them.

In order that their power cannot be divided, the Javanese ruling élites have attempted to adopt religion as a tool of power. Nevertheless it is clear that religion has been used as a tool of power rather than for enlightenment or empowerment. In short, religion, which is actually needed for the improvement of humanitarian interests, is instead finally distorted for the interests of the ruler. So, there are abuses of religion in power and distorted democratization.