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**CONTINUING DISCOURSE ON *KEBLAT*:
DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES OF THE SURINAMESE JAVANESE
MUSLIMS IN THE NETHERLANDS ¹**

Moch Nur Ichwan²

Study of the Javanese diaspora is not yet as well-known as that of, for instance, the Black and Indian diaspora. Most the scholars of Java concentrate their study on the Javanese 'inside Java' and only few of them deal with the Javanese in diaspora. The Javanese, most of whom were Muslims, for one or other reason migrated to South and East Sumatra and other parts of Indonesia, Peninsular Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, Thailand, Burma, South Vietnam, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Curacao, New Caledonia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Surinam, and The Netherlands.³ This very large area of study still has attracted little attention from the scholars of Java, in fact less than they deserve. To contribute to this study, this present article is devoted to studying the Javanese who migrated to the Netherlands by the way of Surinam.⁴ In this respect, I shall focus on the discourse on *keblat*.

¹ I am very grateful to Yvonne Towikromo and Dr. Joost Cote who read and gave some fruitful comment on the first draft of this article. My gratitude also goes to Prof. P.S. van Koningsveld for his invaluable comment and encouragement to publish this paper, which originally was submitted to his seminar on *Islam in Contemporary Western Europe* at Leiden University. I also thank to Dr. Arend Jan Termeulen for his critical account, and Mrs. Rosemary Robson who made this article more understandable.

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³ Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1989, 25-26; but he fails to mention the Javanese in Arabia, Egypt and the Netherlands).

⁴ This research was conducted from October 1997 to September 1998 in two cities, The Hague and Rotterdam. I have observed Rukun Islam and Pitutur Islam in The Hague, Al-

Discourse on *keblat* (Arabic: *qibla*)⁵ as a societal dispute and living discussion, which symbolizes power relation and domination, is the most peculiar diasporic experiences of the Surinamese Javanese Muslims. Diasporic experience is that encountered during migration and settlement in the new country or countries, and is resulted from a long process of negotiation between the tradition brought from the mother land and the new situations and challenges in diaspora. Some traditions probably to be lost, some others to be modified, and new tradition to be created. Diasporic experience is contingent and contextual, and not something given and final.⁶ The dispute and living discussion on *keblat* has taken place through generations since the Javanese came to Surinam in 1890 or, more precisely, since they started to realize of the position of Ka'ba in the beginning of the 1930s. This very discourse is expressed in some individual elements of complex discourse, such as myth, story, ritual, conversation and imagery.⁷

The discourse on *keblat* among the Surinamese Javanese Muslims goes beyond the question of the direction of prayer,⁸ it expresses a religious-cultural identity and complex relationship between 'official' Islam and Javanese tradition. Some Surinamese Javanese Muslims maintain the west-*keblat* in their prayers, as

Jami'atul Hasanah and Sida Mulja in Rotterdam, and interviewed their leaders and some members. I also interviewed an Islamic *dā'i* (preacher) from ICCN (Islamitisch Cultureel Centrum Nederland) and PPME (Persatuan Pemuda Muslim Eropa), two Indonesian Muslim organizations in the country. Besides this, I have also corresponded with an Indonesian *dā'i*, Ahmad Muslih Mardi, who served in the Netherlands from 1986-1988 and has since returned to Surinam.

⁵ I prefer using the Javanese term '*keblat*', as they usually use it, to using the Arabic term '*qibla*'. In Javanese, the word *keblat*, which means '*adhep*' (facing in a certain direction), is both semantically rich and ideologically charged. The verbal form *ngeblat* (*ng+keblat*) means both 'to face Mecca' and 'to obey.' The Javanese word *adhep* also means 'belief' or 'obedience', and 'the one [authority] to which or whom one executes obedience and, or belief'. Nancy K. Florida, *Writing the Past, Inscribing the Future: History as Prophecy in Colonial Java*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995, 336.

⁶ Mandy Thomas, "Introduction", *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 9, no. 1 (1998), 4.

⁷ D. Dracke, "Discourse Theory in Anthropology", in Jan van Bremen [et al], *Horizons of Understanding*. Leiden: CNWS, 1996, 30.

⁸ On *keblat* (*qibla*) in Islamic teaching, see H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 1953, 260; Sayyid Uthmān, *Tahrīr Aqwā al-Adilla fī Tahsīl 'Ayn al-Qibla*. Batavia: n.p., 1320/1901; Ahmad Dahlān al-Tirmasī, *Tuhfat al-Mardiyya fī Tahrīr Qiblat Ba'd al-Bilād al-Islāmiyya*. Singapore: Hājj Muhammad Amīn, 1317/1898.

did their ancestors in Java, while some have changed the *keblat* towards the south-east or usually simplified as east, as the Ka'ba is in a north-easterly direction from Surinam and south-easterly direction from the Netherlands. The former is called *Wong Madhep Ngulon* (west-*keblat* people, hereafter WKP) and the latter *Wong Madhep Ngetan* (east-*keblat* people, henceforth EKP),⁹ and both have their own position in interpreting Islam and Javanese tradition, which has been crystalized in their religious-cultural identity.¹⁰

This article will begin with some historical insights by describing the discourse of *keblat* among the Javanese in Surinam, from which the discourse has begun to become a part of the lives of Surinamese Javanese. Hence, I shall study this very discourse among this community in the Netherlands and uncover the relationship between Islam and Javanese identity in the framework of their diasporic experience. Some questions are to be answered: Why does *keblat* become problematic for the Surinamese Javanese Muslims? How does the discourse of *keblat* express power struggle and domination?

The Javanese Muslims in Surinam and the Discourse on *Keblat* (1890-1975)

The discussion of *keblat* began when the Javanese, 97% of whom were Muslims, migrated to Surinam as plantation workers in 1890.¹¹ Most of them were villagers from various parts of the island of Java. They did not bring with them persons learned in religion. Because of the high degree of illiteracy and the absence of guidance in religious matters, Islamic teachings became even more blurred than they probably were already.¹² For more than three decades they prayed (*salat*) by

⁹ They are also often called "*wong ngadep (ngeblat) ngulon*" and "*wong ngadep (ngeblat) ngetan*" with the same meaning.

¹⁰ By cultural-religious identity I mean that which has been resulted from the unseparated relationship between cultural stance and religious understanding, and has been crystalized socially as identity. In this respect, *keblat* is both the matter of religion and of culture.

¹¹ On the history of Javanese immigration to Surinam, see J. Ismael, *De Immigratie van Indonisiërs in Surinam*. Ph.D. Dissertation of Leiden University, 1949, 25-90; Rosemarijn Hoeffte, *The Place of Slavery: A Social History of British Indian and Javanese Laborers in Suriname*. Gainesville etc.: University Press of Florida, 1998, 26-55.

¹² Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, *The Javanese of Surinam: Segment of a Plural Society*. Assen: Van Gorcum Com. N.V., 1963, 196.

facing in the direction of west, as they did in Java. It was not until the beginning of 1930s that it was realized that the *keblat* (*Ka'ba*) was in the north-east of Surinam.

Some of the Javanese labourers who arrived in Surinam during the 1920s thought the way Islam was practiced by the Surinamese Javanese was syncretic. They saw that the Javanese did not observe the five pillars of Islam strictly. They did not criticize the latter's practices openly, but equally they also did not participate in the social or 'religious' activities. Nevertheless, these few people also faced west in their prayers. From both their contact with the Hindustani Muslims and from their own study of world geography, they knew that Ka'ba is located north-east of Surinam. According to Parsudi Suparlan, many of them began to change their *keblat* in the late 1930s and some others followed suit during the 1940s.¹³ But, according to Pak Paino Resamenawi (a member of Rukun Islam The Hague), around the time that he was born in 1932, there had been a small group who had had faced east-*keblat*.

Since then the Javanese Muslims in Surinam have been divided according to their attitude towards *keblat*. Most of them still maintain the west-*keblat* in their prayers, and are called "*wong madhep ngulon*" (west-*keblat* people, henceforth WKP). They do realize that Ka'ba was more in the direction of east, or more precisely north-east of Surinam, but they maintain a common desire to abide by, even literally, what their ancestors in Java did. Some others face east-*keblat* in their prayers, as they want to follow 'official' Islam. They are called "*wong madhep ngetan*" (east-*keblat* people, hereafter EKP). They are not only different in their *keblat*, but also in their views of religion, tradition, and cultural identity.

Some people have gradually changed their *keblat* towards east. In this case, the Indonesian Embassy in Paramaribo has played an important role, especially since the 1970s. Pak Resokarijo (the *imām* of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah Rotterdam) received a book from the Indonesian Embassy in Paramaribo which pointed out the correct *keblat*. He stated that he took this book wherever he went. He showed it to his friends. Some of them then followed him in facing east. And Indonesian Embassy has provided some religious teachers, some of whom have been Abdul Ghofir, H. Sobari Mahmud, Ahmad Mudjib, Ali Arifin, Jumadi, and Kamal. Two

¹³ Parsudi Suparlan, *The Javanese in Surinam: Ethnicity in an Ethnically Plural Society*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1976, 205.

religious teachers, Ahmad Muslih Mardi and Muh. Ali, are funded by an Islamic institution in Saudi Arabia.¹⁴

Parsudi Suparlan classifies the Surinamese Javanese Muslims into traditionalists, reformists, and moderate reformists. The traditionalists maintain the west-*keblat* but do not adhere strictly to the Islamic teachings and practices, and try to preserve the continuity of the existing Javanese customs. In contrast, the reformists are Muslims who face the correct *keblat*, and who try to reform Islamic teachings and practices, as well as the Surinamese Javanese socio-cultural system, by taking the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions as general references for reasoning and justification. In between these two opposing groups there are the moderate reformists. This group prays towards the east and adheres to Islamic teachings and practices similar to those of the reformists, but they still tolerate the practices of much of the Surinamese Javanese cultural system, especially the ceremonies marking the life cycle.¹⁵

The reformists began criticizing the traditionalists openly and strongly in the early 1940s. This criticism led to a conflict between reformists and traditionalists. The conflict seems to have become fairly acute around 1950. For instance, the groups declined to attend each other's *slametans*, and marriages formerly arranged between members of families belonging to opposite side ended in divorce.¹⁶

The people of west *keblat* usually give at least three rationales when they are confronted with the fact that the Ka'ba is located to the northeast of Surinam.¹⁷ First, This world is round like a ball. If one prays towards the west, his or her *keblat* is still directed to Ka'ba, even though it will have a longer distance to go than if it is directed to the east. Second, the true Ka'ba is not located in Mecca, but in the center of the self of every individual human being. Third, Allah is wise, and He knows that their prayers are devoted to Him only and not to others. They base their argument on the Qur'an (2:177): "Righteousness is not to turn your faces towards

¹⁴ Gunarso Tjokrosutikno, "Islam 'Ngeblat Ngetan dan 'Ngeblat Ngulon", *Pos Kota*. 15 November 1996.

¹⁵ Parsudi Suparlan, *The Javanese*, 205-206.

¹⁶ G.D. van Wengen, *The Cultural Inheritance of the Javanese in Surinam*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975, 7; Parsudi Suparlan, *The Javanese*, 210.

¹⁷ Supardi Suparlan, *The Javanese*, pp. 213-215.

the East or the West; the righteous is he who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the prophets."

At present, these three groups are represented in three major organizations. The first is the Stichting Islamitische Gemeente in Surinam (SIS), founded in 1968, belonging to the reformist Muslims, with the east-*keblat*. It has three mosques as the centres of their activities: Masjid Nabawi in Paramaribo, Masjid Namiroh in Lelydorp, and Masjid Darul Falah in Blauwgrond. Second is the Federatie Islamitische Gemeente Suriname (FIGS), belonging to the Javanist Muslims, with the west-*keblat*. Third is the Persatuan Jama'ah Islam Surinam (PJIS), the organization of the moderate reformists. This has the east-*keblat* as the reformists have, but they still tolerates people who maintain their culture and tradition.¹⁸ Despite the reform movement, most Javanese in Surinam still maintain the west-*keblat*.¹⁹

The Surinamese Javanese Muslims in The Netherlands: Continuing Discourse on *Keblat*

In 1989, Dassetto and Nonneman estimated the number of Muslims living in the Netherlands at 450,000.²⁰ Islam in this country is embraced mostly by migrants from such countries as Turkey, Morocco, Tunisia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Surinam (especially Hindustanis and Javanese). Based on the research by Surinam Policy Organ and Foundation of Steering Committee for Javanese about the position of the Surinamese Javanese in the Netherlands, the estimate total

¹⁸ I am very grateful to Miss Murti Djuffan, an official of the Indonesian Embassy in Paramaribo, for this data.

¹⁹ In his letter, Ahmad Muslih Mardi estimates that approximately 70% of Javanese people maintain the west-*keblat*, whereas the rest 30% have changed towards east (dated, Paramaribo, May 13th 1998). The *keblat* is still a latent problem for Javanese in Surinam, which sometime triggers conflict between the two groups. In the beginning of the 1990s, for instance, a Muslim leader of the west-*keblat* in Wynish Project was requested some fund for founding a mosque. He agreed with a condition that the mosque must be with west-*keblat*. But in the process of the foundation, some committee changed the *keblat* towards east. Knowing this change, this funder strongly protested. This problem was then brought to the court in 1996. See Gunarso Tjokrosutikno, "Islam".

²⁰ Dassetto, Felice and Gerd Nonneman. 1996. "Islam in Belgium and The Netherlands: Towards a Typology of 'Transplanted Islam'", in *Muslim Communities in the New Europe*. Edited by Gerd Nonneman et al. UK: Ithaca Press, pp. 189. W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld propose a lower estimated number, that is 400,000. See Idem, *Religious Freedom and the Position of Islam in Western Europa*. Kampen: Kok Paros, 1995, 2.

Surinamese Javanese is 22,306.²¹ They are scattered in various cities, but are concentrated in the Hague, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Den Bosch.

There are a number of Surinamese Javanese Muslim organizations in the Netherlands, such as Rahmatullaah Islam (RI) in Brabant; An-Noer in Hoogezand; Al-Jamiatul-Hasanah (AJH) in Rotterdam; Rukun Islam in The Hague; Himmatoel-Islam (HI) in Amsterdam; Sahabatul Islam and Djami'atul Islam Alfatah Nederland (DIAN) in The Hague. There are also some Surinamese-Javanese organizations which are basically cultural organizations but maintain Islam as their religion, however syncretic, such as Perukunan Sedulur Groningen (PSG) in Groningen; Gotong Royong (GR) in Delfzijl; Pitutur Islam and Pari in The Hague; Sida Mulja (SM) and Perkempalan Bangun Darmaning Agami Islam, Rotterdam.²²

Here I classify the Surinamese Javanese Muslims into: Javanist Muslims (*Kejawen* Muslims),²³ moderate-reformist Muslims, and reformist Muslims.²⁴ The Javanist Muslims maintain the west-*keblat*, whereas the moderate-reformist and reformist Muslims maintain the east-*keblat*. The difference between moderate-reformist and reformist Muslims is based on their theological and Islamic legal perspective. Generally speaking, both base their theological and legal perspectives

²¹ Unfortunately, the data from this research, which was funded by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Recreation and Welfare Work, is still not available in a publication. H.K. Patmo-Mingoen, "De Javaans-Surinaams Keuken en de Volkscultuur", *OSO, Tijdschrift voor Surinaamse Taalkunde, Letterkunde, Cultuur en Geschiedenis*, 9:2 (1990), 70. Landman estimates that in 1990 the number of the Surinamese Javanese Muslims amounted to approximately 6,000 out of (only) 13,500, his estimate of the total number. Nico Landman, *Van Mat*, 231. The first estimation seems more authoritative than Landman as it was resulted from a joint research conducted by both Surinamese and Dutch institutions. Nevertheless, a more accurate number of Surinamese Javanese Muslims still needs to be researched in detail.

²² See Yvonne Towikromo, *De Islam van de Javanen uit Suriname in Nederland*. Den Haag: Amrit, 1996, 26-52. But she does not classify them into religious and cultural organizations. She regards all of them as Islamic religious organizations, regardless of the fact that each kind of organizations has a different orientation.

²³ Javanist or Javanism here is derived from *Kejawenism*, meaning the syncretic Islam of Javanese. See Roy F. Ellen, "Social Theory, Ethnography and the Understanding of Practical Islam in South-East Asia", in M.B. Hooker, *Islam in South-East Asia*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988, 50-91.

²⁴ I adopt Suparlan's classification, as aforementioned, but I use Javanist or *Kejawen* instead of traditionalist, as it is the way this people address themselves. My Javanists or *Kejawen* corresponds to Landman's traditionalists, moderate-reformists to moderate-puritans, and reformists to puritans. Cf. Nico Landman *Van Mat*, 231.

on the Ash'arite-Shāfiite school, but the reformists also incorporate elements of the Hanbalite and Wahhābite teachings, owing to their contact with other puritan Muslim organizations. Unlike Suparlan's findings in Surinam,²⁵ the moderate-reformists no longer tolerate the burning of *menyan* and offering *sajen* to the spirits, but they do not criticize this practice openly.

West-Keblat People (WKP) and East-Keblat People (EKP):

Religious and Cultural Orientation

Most of the Surinamese Javanese 'cultural' organizations, including Pitutur Islam (founded in 1989) and Sida Mulja (founded in 1979), maintain the west-*keblat*. The main characteristic of the WKP is that they have a very syncretic understanding of Islam. Islam is intertwined with the older Javanese beliefs (*kejawen*), including Hindu-Budhist belief. This syncretic attitude is not a new thing as we can trace this phenomenon in Java and Surinam.²⁶ Unlike their counterparts in Surinam who have their own mosques, the WKP do not have a mosque. This fact has a significant impact on their religious understanding. They are gradually being detached from religious discourse on one hand, but, on the other hand, are coming closer to Javanism and to cultural activities.

Conversely, the EKP consist of moderate-reformist and reformist Muslims. Both organizations have their own mosques in which the *mihrab* points towards south-east. They use the mosques for such activities as prayers (*salat*), religious instruction (*pengajian*), courses on Islam, and discussions (*mushāwara*).

Al-Jami'atul Hasanah (founded in 1980), a moderate-reformist organization, shares its office, mosque, and activities with PPME (*Persatuan Pemuda Muslim Eropa*, Young Moslem Association in Europa) Rotterdam branch. Some leaders of PPME are close to, or even members of the Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest moderate-reformist Muslim organization in Indonesia. A calendar with the image of Abdurrahman Wahid, the president of Nahdlatul Ulama, hangs on the wall of the meeting room. Some PPME leaders from other cities, especially the Hague such as

²⁵ In the 1970s, the moderate-reformists still tolerated some Javanist practices, such as burning *menyan* and profiding *sajen*, which were considered by the reformists as polytheistic (*shirk*) practices. Parsudi Suparlan, *The Javanese*, 205-206.

²⁶ About syncretic tendency of the Javanese, although it is rather exaggerated, see Clara Brakel, *Islamic Syncretism in Indonesia: from Historical Written Sources to Contemporary Ritual Practice in Java*. Jerussalem: Giteson Peace Publication, 1995.

K.H. Hambali Maksun and Naf'an Sulhan, are regular *khātibs* and Islamic teachers of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah.

Rukun Islam (founded on February 5th, 1980), a reformist organization, has an informal relationship with the ICCN (Islamitisch Cultureel Centrum Nederland), a Muslim organization led at the present time by Sufjan S. Siregar. Some leaders of the ICCN are close to, or even members of the Muhammadiyah, the largest reformist Muslim organization in Indonesia. But, unlike Al-Jami'atul Hasanah, Rukun Islam does not share its office, mosque, and activities with the ICCN. Some members of ICCN, such as Sufjan S. Siregar and Sjukur, are the regular *khātibs* and Islamic teachers of Rukun Islam.

This relationship and co-operation results in some influences on their respective religious orientation. For example, the members of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah like reading *Salawāt* (Javanese: *salawatan*), such as *Salawat Badar*, *Salawat Nariah* and the like, especially before performing *salat*. They also read *Ratib Hadad* and *Raja Istighfar* during Ramadan, especially after praying *Tarāwih* (Javanese: *Trawehan*). These practices are not found in Rukun Islam, as they do not have any basis in the Qur'an and the (authentic) *hadiths*.²⁷

The following discussion focuses on some common issues which express the complex diasporic experience of both the WKP (especially Pitutur Islam and Sida Mulja) and the EKP (mainly Rukun Islam and Al-Jami'atul Hasanah).²⁸

a. *Keblat* and the Problem of Arabization

For the WKP, the change of *keblat* from west to east took place under the influence of the Arabs (*Tiyang Saudi*). This is clear in the opinion of Pak Misran, the leader of Pitutur Islam:

Facing east (*madep ngetan*) is done according to the people of Saudi Arabia (*tiyang Saudi*). We heard that in Indonesia our ancestors

²⁷ In Rukun Islam this process of 'puritanization' began in 1986 when the organization was controlled by the young generation. But under Pak Muslih Mardi's guidance, Rukun Islam still remained a moderate-reformist Muslim organization. After 1988, when Pak Muslih went back to Surinam, the process of puritanization has been intensified further, especially since the early 1990s. Landman, who conducted his research before 1991, tends to classify Rukun Islam as moderate-puritan, but the internal changes afterwards have led this organization in another direction: that of reformist (puritan) Muslim organization. See Nico Landman, *Van Mat*, 233.

²⁸ On these four organizations, see Yvonne Towikromo, *De Islam*, 62-76.

faced west [in prayer], faced the so called Ka'ba. That was in Indonesia, in *Negari Jawi* (Java land). When they migrated to Surinam, they still maintained the west [*keblat*]. They were told by the Saudi teachers:²⁹ 'No, you shouldn't do that. In Surinam you should face east.' But the people from *Negari Jawi* said: 'No, in *Negari Jawi* we faced west. I cannot change [the direction]. I should maintain the west [*keblat*].' I also follow my parents, facing west. Because originally our ancestors in Indonesia faced the west, we do so too. If we are forced to face east, we will say absolutely: No!

Pak Senen, the leader of Sida Mulja, shares the same opinion as Pak Misran. But he gives more explanation saying that *keblat* is not important, even though he personally chooses the west-*keblat*. The most important thing is heart and 'tongue' (refrain from hurting and offending others). If one has a pure heart and tongue (*resik ati lan lisane*), one can face anywhere, not just west and east, as God is omnipresent.

The problem of *keblat* has been discussed internally in both Pitutur Islam and Sida Mulja, as they were aware that Ka'ba is located south-east of the Netherlands. But this discussion did not induce them to change the *keblat*. They did not want to change the custom of their ancestors. However some members of Pitutur Islam have changed personally their *keblat* towards east, although they are still members of this organization and tolerate the practice of their colleges.

Pak Senen has the same explanation for this matter, but he tends to lay more stress on Javanese practices. In some conversations he even emphasizes that Islam is the religion of the Arabs. On a programme broadcast by SETASAN Radio Rotterdam in the early August 1998, Pak Senen stated that to be a devout Muslim one should behave like an Arab and abandon his or her Javanese identity. A fundamental question which has been troubling his mind is why some Javanese texts were written in Arabic script (*pegon*) and some prayers are rendered in Arabic language. He considers these to be signs of the Arabization of the Javanese culture.

In contrast, the history of Islamization in Java does not emerge with such a 'negative' image among the EKP. Islamization is not the equivalent of Arabization. The change of *keblat*, for instance, was, and is, not seen as a process of Arabization. Instead, they think that knowing the right *keblat* is part of religious imperative.

²⁹ Saudi teachers do not always mean ethnic Saudi teachers, but those who have been influenced by, in the view of WQP, Arab-centred Islam.

Pak Resokarijo, the *imām* of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah, and Pak Moentari, the leader of Rukun Islam, already faced the east-*keblat* when they were in Surinam. They maintain the east *keblat* for the rational reason that geographically Ka'ba is located north-east of Surinam, and south-east of the Netherlands. "*Turn your face then towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it.*"³⁰ This is their principle. Facing *keblat*, for them, is not just facing the Ka'ba, but showing a readiness to follow Islamic conduct.

Even though the WKP criticize the fact that, as they see it, the EKP have been Arabized, the latter in fact also do not agree with Arabization of Javanese, beyond a certain degree. They are very careful to distinguish Islamization from Arabization. Islamization aims to invite someone to become Muslim, and the goal of Arabization is to make someone an Arab or adopt Arab culture. Reading or reciting *donga* (prayer) in Arabic is not considered Arabization, because prayer is part of religion, not of culture. But they regard the Arabic language as having highest religious significance and value.

b. Being Muslim and Being Javanese

The WKP call themselves Muslims who maintain the Javanist practices. Pak Senen, for instance, said: "*Aku ya Islam, ya Kejawen. Campur-campur* (I'm a Muslim as well as a Javanist, mixed)." Pak Senen is an 'intellectual' in his organization, Sida Mulja, who has charged himself with the study and maintenance of the legacy of Javanese civilization. But he has also memorized some verses and *sûras* of the Qur'an and reads a little Arabic script as well. Some members of Sida Mulja, like those of Pitutur Islam, also read the Qur'an quite well.

Like Pak Senen, Pak Misran also said that he is a Muslim and a Javanist, or a Javanist Muslim. As the leader of Pitutur Islam he organizes both 'religious' and cultural activities. During Ramadan, for instance, Pitutur Islam organizes *darusan* (recitation of the Qur'an) for those members who are capable of reading it. This activity is absent in Sida Mulja.

For the EKP (both moderate-reformist and reformist Muslims), being a Muslim is more important than being a Javanese. But they also believe that the problem is not one of being Muslim *or* being Javanese, as one cannot deny his or her genealogy as an ethnic Javanese. Being Javanese for them is no more than being

³⁰ The Qur'an, 2: 144.

born Javanese. Moreover, being Javanese has nothing to do with the older Javanese practices (*Agama Jawa*). 'Javaneseness' is something given, not acquired.

c. Circumcision and Islam

It is important to mention that the meaning of *Islam* in Javanese is both religion and circumcision. When someone says: "*Aku wis Islam* (I have been 'Islamized')", it means that he has been circumcized.³¹ This is perhaps because before circumcision is performed, the *Kaum* teaches the boy to proclaim *shahāda*, and advises him that he should practice *salat*, pay *zakat*, and go on pilgrimage (*hajj*) should this be possible. All these are the pillars of Islam (*arkān al-Islām*).

It seems that for the WKP being Muslim is no more than being circumcized. In the interview with Pak Misran and Pak Senen this impression emerged very strongly. When I asked them about Islam, they talked about circumcision. "We also follow the Islamic way," said Pak Misran, "because we are circumcized. Circumcision itself is Islam." This identification between circumcision and Islam may have been a method used by the early preachers to call the Javanese people into Islam.

According to the WKP, the Javanese people in the past were not circumcized,³² because the Javanese people in the past were the adherents of Buddhism, not of Islam. In their view, the original Javanese people, before the coming of the Arabs were like those who live now in Bali.³³

³¹ Cf. Elinor Clark Horne, *Javanese-English Dictionary*. New Haven: EASP, Yale University, 1974, 244; Th. Pigeaud, *Javaans-Nederlands Woordenboek*. Dordrecht-Holland/Providence-USA: Foris Publication, 1989, 155; P. Jansz, *Practisch Javaansch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek*. Semarang etc: N.V. Boekhandel en Drukkerij v/h G.C.T. van Dorp & Co, [1932], 338. This is also the case in Indonesian language. 'Circumcize' in Indonesian means '*menyunat, mengkhitan, mengislamkan*'. *Mengislamkan* means 'to Islamize'. John M. Echols and Hassan Shadily, *Kamus Inggris Indonesia*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1996, 114.

³² Circumcision in fact existed before the coming of Islam in Java and other places in Indonesia, such as *Incisio* (Javanese: *supit belek, tetak, bango, turih*), *subincisio dorsalis* (Javanese: *condet*), and *praeciao* (Javanese: *tetak timbal, pagas, kethokan, tetesan, disudut, digres, supitan*). See G.A. Wilken, "De Besnijdenis bij de Volken van den Indischen Archipel", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkunde*, 34 (1885), 165-206; Rachmat Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia*. Jakarta: Sinar Harapan and Yayasan Cipta loka Caraka, 1981, 161-162; Nico Kaptein, "Circumcision in Indonesia Muslim or Not?" in Jan Platvoet and Karel van der Toorn (eds), *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour*. Leiden etc: E.J. Brill, 1995, 285-302.

³³ Most of the Baliness people are, in fact, Hindus, not Buddhist. But it is quite understandable as the Javanese also call the Hindu-Buddhist period 'Jaman Budha'

Unlike the WKP, the EKP view Islam as more than just circumcision. Being circumcized is not enough to be considered Muslim. It is only a small part of Islamic teachings, but an incontrovertible one. One of the members of Rukun Islam criticized the Javanist's opinions about circumcision. But he also realized that this was because of their limited understanding of Islam.

Two of the members of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah, Pak Djiman and his son, are doctors of the Foundation of Islamic Circumcision "Al-Gitaan" Rotterdam. This institution, formerly located in the office of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah, is authorized to conduct hygienic circumcision on the bases of Islamic tenets.

d. Devotion (*Ibāda*) and Javanese Ethics

Javanese ethics, which imbued, in one way or another, with Sufism, are very important to the WKP, even more important than observing 'official' religious devotions, such as *salāt*. The most important thing for a human being is purifying heart and 'tongue' (refraining from hurting and offending others). One should purify his or her heart and behaviour from any dirty or evil desires and attitudes. They believe that if these impurities remain, all good things, even all devotion, are regarded as nothing.

In Javanese ethics, there are two threats to leading the right life: the passions (*hawa nepsu*) and egoism (*pamrih*). Anyone who wants to lead a righteous life must control his or her emotions and abjure egoism. That is why most of the WKP do not perform Islamic religious devotions. They honestly admit that they still incapable of purifying themselves of all kinds of passions, egoism, and other impure deeds. They are afraid of being considered liars by God, other people, and they themselves. They expect that their devotions will be in vain, as they feel that they are not in a fit state to avail themselves of this honour.

By contrast, there is no contradiction between devotion and Javanese ethics in the view of the EKP. The EKP understand religious devotion as part of a process. Devotion is an obligation which Muslims should perform and has nothing to do with the purification of the heart. For Pak Jajo Martosuwondo, the leader of Al-Jami'atul Hasanah, devotion is a process by which a person learns to become a real Muslim. Javanese ethics is important, in the view of Pak Haji Harun from Rukun Islam, but

(Buddhist era). See Robert R. Jay, *Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java*. New Haven: EASP, Yale Univerity, 1963, 8.

it should not contradict with Islamic tenets and not bring Muslims to abandoning Islamic devotions.

e. Views on Javanese Culture

The view of the WKP is that the Javanese should preserve their *adat Kejawen* (Javanese culture and tradition) wherever they are. This *adat* has been passed down over generations more often by means of oral tradition than by written accounts. This *adatis* connected mostly to the circle of life: prenatal (*mbobot*), birth (*babaran*), circumcision (*khitanan*), marriage (*mantenan*), and death (*kematian*). To commemorate these events they organize *slametan* at which they burn *menyan* and provide *sajen*. *Slametan* and *sajen* are very important in their life. *Slametan* is also conducted to commemorate certain sacred days, such as *Besaran*, *Muludan*, *Suran*, and *Bersih Desoh*. Most of these days are related to the Islamic-Javanese calendar.³⁴

Slametan is a ritual in which the host holds a meeting at which a meal is offered to the guests and *sajen* to the spirits.³⁵ This also contains some religious elements. It is in this activity that Islamic and old Javanese elements come together, but the Javanese elements predominate over the Islamic ones. Pak *Kaum* plays an important role in this meeting, from arranging various kinds of food to leading the meeting and reading prayers. The prayers are usually in Javanese, but some are in Arabic.

The dominant feature among the WKP is that they have very strong commitment to Javanese culture and tradition (*nguri-uri kabudayan Jawa*). They try to maintain some *tari-tarian* (Javanese dances), *terbangan*, *gending* (Javanese music), and so forth. In doing so, they maintain a link with Java. The dance teacher of Pitutur Islam was trained in Java. Pak Hugo, a member of this organization, has visited Java quite often to buy some dance accessories and make contact with some Javanese organizations.

³⁴ The most important figure in integrating the Islamic calendar with Javanese calendar (*tahun Saka*) was Sultan Agung Hanyokrokusumo, the greatest king of Java (reigned 1613-1646), on Friday July 8th, 1633. See H.J. De Graaf, De Regering van Sultan Agung, *Vorst van Mataram 1613-1645 en dei van zijn Voorgagen Panembahan Seda-ing-Krapyak 1601-1613*. 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958, 204.

³⁵ On *Slametan*, see, for example, Mark Woodward, "The *Slametan*: Textual Knowledge and Ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam", *History of Religions*, 28:1 (1988), 54-89.

In contrast to this, the EKP differentiate between culture and belief. Both moderate-reformist and reformist Muslims agree that burning *menyan*, providing *sajen*, and other animistic practices are part of Javanese belief, not of Javanese culture. This belief must be replaced by Islamic belief. But, the other elements of Javanese culture, such as *tari-tarian*, *tembang*, *wayang*, are regarded as the culture of the WKP. Because of this rationale, most members of this group do not take part in any cultural activities. All their activities are organized within the framework of religion: *salat*, *pengajian*, *mushāwarah*, *tahlīl*, and the like.

Slametan is also still performed by both moderate-reformist and reformist Muslims, but the term is changed to *hajatan* or *sodaqohan* (from Arabic: *hāja* and *sadaqa*). But, unlike the WKP, they do not provide *sajen* and *menyan* for the spirits. Moreover, while the WKP regard the food and blessing as the most important parts of the ritual, the EKP refer to the Qur'an recitations, the prayers, and the distribution of food as alms (*sadaqa*) as the core of the ritual.³⁶ The EKP focus their activities on religion, rather than on culture. In their eyes, religion is a collective matter and culture is a private and individual matter.

***Keblat*: Islam, Javanese Identity and Diasporic Experience**

The discussion of *keblat* is, in fact, not new for the Javanese. The foundation of the first mosque in Demak, Central Java, was marked by a long debate about *keblat*.³⁷ Florida suggests that this event should be read as a detour sign meant to highlight the historicity of the conversion in Java.

That the Mosque would not immediately *ngeblat* [obey] indicates the process of negotiation that surely marked the historical conversion, a process that would have been determined in part by how the new Javanese Muslims negotiate their understanding of obedience, or submission.³⁸

³⁶ The same thing is found in Java. See Mark Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. Tuscon, 1989, 66-81; Idem, "The Slametan", 54-89.

³⁷ This debate is recorded in some *Babad* literature. *Babad Jaka Tingkir*, for instance, devotes 108 lines to the matter of *qibla* as compared to the "Major *Babad*"s 49, *Serat Manikmaya*'s 43, *Babad Demak I*'s 26, and *Babad Segaluh*'s 24 lines. See Nancy K. Florida, *Writing*, 334 (footnote 25); *Babad Madjapahit, Demak, Padjang Dumugi Mentawis*, by R.Ng. Pantja Redjasa (unpublished transcript preserved in KITLV Leiden, undated) devotes 71 lines.

³⁸ Nancy K. Florida, *Writing*, 333.

The negotiation of the reception of *keblat* was related to the problem of Arabization. Already almost from the beginning of Islam in Java, there had been attempts to reject the centrality of Mecca and the Arabization of the Javanese. Islam was seen by certain circles as the religion of the Arabs (*agama Arab*) which came to Arabize the Javanese Java.³⁹

Demak and its ancient mosque are highly respected by the Muslims of Java. According to certain popular belief, seven pilgrimages to Demak on the *Haji* month are equal to one to Mecca.⁴⁰ A quite similar case is found, in the beginning of this century, among the people of Kuningan, West Java, who believed that going on pilgrimage to Ciremai mountain in the *Haji* month had also the same benefit as that of a pilgrimage to Mecca.⁴¹ Nevertheless, according to Van Bruinessen, compared to Mecca, not one of these places is regarded by Javanese Muslims as better. They still believe that Mecca has a higher cosmic position.⁴²

This attitude which deviates from 'official' Islam has built up in diasporic experience in Surinam and then the Netherlands. The *keblat* in the Netherlands is still the core problem among them, although the discussion is not as vehement as that in Surinam. This is partly because the WKP no longer regard the mosque as a central part of their life. The absence from the mosque has reduced the discussion of *keblat*. But, on the other hand, it keeps the WKP away from religious activities. Moreover, in contrast to those in Java, they honour Java (*negari Jawi*) more than Mecca.

The problem of *keblat* and its 'derivative' problems have created tension between the WKP and EKP in the Netherlands, like that in Surinam. Rukun Islam in The Hague, for instance, had prevailed before some of its members separated and

³⁹ De Graaf, *De Regering*, 84,88; Vredenburg, "The Haddj, Some of its Features and Functions in Indonesia", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde* 118 (1962), 107.

⁴⁰ Jacob Vredenburg, "The Haddj", 107-108, and the sources referred to there.

⁴¹ In Madura, some people still believe that for the poor people visiting Batu Ampar gives also the same benefit as making the *haji*. In South Celebes (Sulawesi), there was a mystical group which promulgated a teaching that climbing Bawakaraeng mountain gives the same benefit as making the *haji*. See Martin van Bruinessen, "Mencari Ilmu dan Pahala di Tanah Suci: Orang Nusantara Naik Haji", in Dick Douwes and Nico Kaptein, *Indonesia dan Haji*. Jakarta: INIS, 1997, 123-124.

⁴² Martin van Bruinessen, "Mencari", 124.

founded other organizations. When Pak Ahmad Muslih Mardi taught Islam in Rukun Islam during 1986-1988, they had not yet separated. Rukun Islam had 'officially' faced east, although some of its members still maintain west *keblat* in their homes. At that moment in time, Pak Muslih tolerated some Javanist practices, such as burning *menyan* and providing *sajen*. Pak Muslih said in his letter (1998) that this was his method of bringing them gradually towards 'real' Islam. He did not directly prohibit these practices. The process of puritanization after Pak Muslih went back to Surinam in 1988 led the Javanist wing of Rukun Islam to separate and found another organization, Pitutur Islam. But, because of the internal conflict within Pitutur Islam, some of its members founded yet another organization in 1993, led by Pak Tawar Resodikromo, namely the Stichting PARI.

The ethical principles of *rukun* (harmony) and *gotong-royong* (togetherness) have undergone a shift in meaning becoming limited to within the context of a group or related groups. *Rukun* is reduced to the concept of 'avoiding conflict', or harmony within a group, not between or among groups. If the WKP have a funeral, for example, they do not invite the other group, but they invite members of the same group from other cities instead.⁴³ Also, if they are invited to come to an other group's *slametan* or *hajatan*, they usually do not attend. Nevertheless, no physical conflict has been reported. Therefore in a roundabout way, they are still capable of maintaining the 'distorted' ethical principles of *rukun* and *gotong-royong*. They said that, however different, they have the same binding knot, that is Javanese origin: "*Nunggal bangsa Jawa aja sampek congkraham* (Having same Javanese 'nation', we should not be in conflict)."

The impact of the afore-mentioned condition is very serious. The Surinamese Javanese do not have an umbrella organization in the Netherlands. They are divided. Most of them do not even recognize the other Surinamese Javanese organizations in other cities. This is, of course, unfortunate for their future, as they have to compete with other ethnic groups in the country.

Epilogue

The discourse on *keblat* among the Surinamese Javanese Muslims in the Netherlands is unique, as it is not only related to the Islamic devotion like *salat* and

⁴³ Jan Sariman states that it is in the burial ritual that the Surinam Javanese show their *rukun* and *gotong-royong*. Idem, "Overlijdensrituelen bij Javaanse Surinamers", *OSO* 9, no. 2 (1998), 50. Based on my finding, the opposite statement is also right that it is in this burial ritual that the Surinam Javanese show their disharmony.

haji, but expresses their diasporic experience and identity. The different perceptions of *keblat* bring about their different understanding of Islam on the one hand, and of Javanese identity on the other hand.

Keblat has become problematic because of some factors. Firstly, *Keblat* for the Surinamese Javanese means also the way of life (*Weltanschauung*); changing from one *keblat* to another means changing the way of perceiving the world and values. Secondly, *keblat* for the WKP represents power and domination, as it has been regarded as obedience to the non-Javanese authority, the Arabs. Consequently, *keblat* has been seen as a symbol of Arabization and Arab occupation of Java. Conversely, for the EKP facing *keblat* symbolizes an pure obedience to Allah, not to the Arabs, and *keblat* is part of Islam as a religion. Thirdly, the WKP interpret Javanese identity as that inherited from their ancestors in Java, and, in this respect, the first generation of the Javanese immigrants, most of which were *Kejawen* Muslims, have been seen as 'models' of the original Javanese (*Jawa Tus, Jawa Asli*). *Kejawen* is regarded by the WKP as an alternative model of Islam which honours the old Javanese beliefs, including Hindu-Buddhist elements. On the contrary, for the EKP, Javanese identity is that of being born as a Javanese. Moreover, the first generation of Javanese immigrants, who faced west, has been seen as those who were in ignorance about Islam. The new generations who know better about *keblat* and Islam should not follow them. Furthermore, Muhammad is the only 'model' for humankind, including Javanese, and not the first Javanese immigrants. In the above mentioned cases, the reformists take a very firm position, whereas the moderate-reformists take the 'softer' stance, but not a compromise.

The discourse on *keblat*

These two different stances (facing west-*keblat* and east-*keblat*) play represent two claims: Islam and 'Javaneseness'. EKP claim more-Islamic, and blaim WKP less Islamic, un-Islamic. This claim is answered by WKP although the EKP observves Islamic devotion regarded nothing as they cannot purify their heart and 'tongue' from offending others. The WKP claim also Islam but preserv javanese identity. The Latter claim more Javanese and blaims EKP losing their Javanese identity and adopting Arab identity. To the EKP, they do not lose their Javanese identity, because they were born Javanese. Being Muslim is different from being Arabized.

The WKP obey (Javanese: *ngeblat*) the popular Islam (*Kejawen*) and believe in the centrality of Java, whereas the EKP obey 'official' Islam and believe in the centrality of Mecca. There has been continuous struggle between the claims of being "more Javanese" on the one hand, and being "more Islamic" on the other hand.

Nevertheless, certain Islamic and Javanese elements, however limited, exist in the WKP and EKP respectively.

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