Commerce, Knowledge, and Faith
Islamization of the Modern Indonesian and Han-speaking Muslim Ummahs
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商業、知識與信仰：現代印尼與漢語穆斯林社群之伊斯蘭化

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Articulations of Islam and Muslim Subjectivity : Fundamental Debates in the Anthropology of Islam

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Introduction

Over the last few decades the idea of anthropology of Islam has been stimulated an animated discussion among the anthropologists of religion. Scholars in this field have put forward various articulations of Islam as an anthropological category. There are at least two major concerns evolving among the anthropologists. First and foremost, it examines diverse efforts on essentializing Islam and links its debate to Orientalist bias in representing Islam. Furthermore, it scrutinises methods to observe Islam as a monotheistic tradition in various local contexts and explores its compatibility with modernity.

After 9/11 anthropological discourse of Islam and Muslim society starts to pay its attention to a broad range of topics from transnational Islam, globalisation and politics of piety. In contrast to previous consideration in the anthropology of Islam, the new context has made anthropologists switch to investigate and examine the meaning of being Muslim in a globalised and secularised world. The central problem that they attempt to understand is how Muslims grapple with existential uncertainty and aspiration in their daily life by referring to Islam as primary source of reference.

This article offers an overview of academic discussions and debates on Islam and Muslim subjectivity in the anthropology of Islam. It does not intend to cover every publication related to study of Islam and Muslim, but highlights the issue of modernity and religious agency. This article consists as follows: first it starts to overview the anthropological studies of Islam and Muslim by a particular attention to methodological consideration defining Islam. The second part focuses on illuminating the discussion on subjectivity and religious subjectivity in anthropology. Finally, it elaborates ongoing examination about 'Muslim subjectivity' in anthropology of Islam by inquiring recent scholarly topics in the

field. This article demonstrates a shift of direction in the discourse of anthropology of Islam from defining Islam to investigating Muslim. This change is shaped by a varying context of Muslim society and academic exercises in anthropological research.

Questioning Islam, Muslim and modernity

Classical arguments on Islam and modernity have been overshadowed by Max Weber's notion (1864-1920) that Islam is not compatible with modernity. Instead of being ascetic, Weber argued that Muslim tradition is overlaid with pleasure to luxurious life from attire, perfume, and appearance. Furthermore, he identified that the ultimate elements of its economic ethic were purely feudal.[1] Hence, he regarded Islam as the polar opposite of Puritanism which is rational, individual, ascetic and conducive with capitalism[2]. Weber's illustration of Islam here is contrasted to his argument on Protestant ethic that is friendly with capitalism and modernity. Protestant ethic through its notion of 'calling' inspires their adherents to become productive, active and also ascetic in worldly affairs as a way for salvation.[3]

In their overview on the development of anthropological study of Islam and Muslim, Benjamin Soares and Filippo Osella[4] show that Weber's perception on Muslim and modernity afterward has significantly influenced some scholars who draw their attention to study Muslim culture. They demonstrate that two famous initial studies in anthropology as well as sociology of Islam, namely Clifford Geertz's *Islam Observed* (1968) and Ernest Gellner's *Muslim Society* (1981), are significantly shaped by Weber's argument on religion and modernity. Instead of affirming Weber, however the two studies have gone beyond and maintained that Islam especially high Islam (Gellner) or scriptural Islam (Geertz) is compatible with modernity.

Geertz offers a comparative study of Islam in Morocco and Indonesia and suggests that in two societies, Islam could be identified in two categories namely

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[1] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, London: Beacon Press, 1966, pp. 262-263; Reinhardt Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1977, p. 371.

[2] Bryan Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study*, London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 13.

[3] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976, p. 80.

[4] Benjamin Soares and Filippo Osella, "Islam, Politics, Anthropology," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15 (supplement 2009), pp. 1-23.

scriptural and mystical Islam.[5] Meanwhile, Gellner has divided two categories of Islamic tradition namely high Islam and 'low Islam.' Both 'high' and 'scriptural' Islam refer to the religious scholars and educated people who could directly access to religious texts and live in urban area. Their religious orientation is characterised by puritanism and scripturalism. Meanwhile, low and mystical Islam denote to the followers, who are uneducated and predominantly living in rural area. Their religious preference associated with saint cult tradition.[6] In fact, Geertz's study reverberated among the American anthropologists studying Islam and Gellner's work influenced the British anthropologists.[7]

Varisco[8] reveals that division of Islam as mentioned above is basically adopted from Robert Redfield's description on Mexican peasants. Redfield differentiates the peasants into two traditions, namely "great tradition" that is advocated by 'reflective few' and "little tradition" that is inhabited by 'unreflective many.' According to Varisco, Redfield's model of society is subsequently adopted by Gustave von Grunebaum in religious studies, especially in history of Islam. As a result, this model has become popular among scholars in religious and Islamic studies.

Most of scholars working in Muslim society indicate that Gellner and Geertz provide a significant contribution to anthropological study of Islam. Both of them deliberately entitle their book by Islam and Muslim and suggest a different perspective to anthropological study of religion since the majority of anthropologists are interested in observing "primitive culture" rather than monotheistic tradition[9]. However, those scholars demonstrate that Gellner and Geertz were still trapped in essensialising Islam. They locate Islam as a cultural system or a blueprint of social order rather than represent what Muslims perceive about it.

The most substantial review was suggested by Muslim anthropologist Hamid el-Zein. In his critical overview on five ethnographic studies including Geertz, Crapanzano, Gilsenan, Eickelman and Bujra's works on Islam and Muslim culture,

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[5] Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp. 24, 60.

[6] Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, pp. 9-11; Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia*, pp. 24, 60. See also Sami Zubaida, "Is There a Muslim Society? Ernest Gellner's Sociology of Islam," *Economy and Society* 24: 2 (1995), pp. 151-88.

[7] Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam*, Oxford: Berg, 2008, pp. 35-38.

[8] Daniel Martin Varisco, *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 4-5.

[9] See Jens Kreinath, "Toward the Anthropology of Islam," in Jens Kreinath ed., *The Anthropology of Islam Reader*, New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 1-41; Daniel Martin Varisco, *Islam Obscured: The Rhetoric of Anthropological Representation,* pp. 135-162; Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam*, pp. 31-35.

el-Zein[10] found that they have been situated within the dichotomy of folk Islam versus elite Islam or scriptural Islam versus 'mystical Islam.' According to el-Zein this dichotomy was based on such assumptions that there is a truth Islam which is universal as represented in the elites as well as scriptures. Consequently, it is unhelpful to understand complexities of Muslim engagement and interpretation to Islamic doctrines.

El-Zein proposes a substantial idea to understand Islam through the native's model or what Muslims believe and think about it. He suggests:

> **But what if each analysis of Islam treated here were to begin from the assumption that 'Islam,' 'economy,' 'history,' 'religion' and so on do not exist as things or entities with meaning inherent in them, but rather as articulations of structural relations, and are the outcome of these relations and not simply as set of positive terms from which we start our studies? In this case we have to start from the 'native's' model of 'Islam' and analyse the relations which produce its meaning.[11]**

El-Zein's scheme was progressive at that time due to the fact that the study of Islam and Muslim culture and society was overlaid by the orientalist biases.[12] Moreover, he located anthropology as a scientific analysis to Muslim everyday life through the scrutiny of various interpretation of Islam[13]. Unfortunately, el-Zein's initial idea in the methodology of anthropology of Islam discontinued due to his sudden death two years after the publication of his article.[14]

Another anthropologist who suggests a similar argument was Michael Gilsenan. In his *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World,* Gilsenan offers an anthropological perspective to study Muslim society in order to avoid essentialism. As similar to el-Zein, he suggests to understand Islam as "a word that identifies varying relations of practice, representation, symbol, concept, and worldview within the same society and between different societies." [15] According to Marranci, Gilsenan's work has reversed Gellner's Eurocentric view of Muslim

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[10] Abdul Hamid el-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: the Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977), pp. 227-254.

[11] Abdul Hamid el-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology," p. 251.

[12] Dale F. Eickelman, "A Search for the Anthropology of Islam: Abdul Hamid El-Zein," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981), pp. 361-365.

[13] Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam*, p. 40.

[14] Michael Blim and others, "Abdul Hamid El-Zein, 1934-1979," *American Anthropologist* 82: 4 (1980), pp. 847-848; Eickelman, "A Search for the Anthropology of Islam: Abdul Hamid El-Zein," pp. 361-365.

[15] Michael Gilsenan, *Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World,* New York: Pantheon Books, 1982, p. 19.

societies, and provides a paradigm for understanding Islam as a discourse within society. [16]

Eight years later Talal Asad[17] begins to engage with the existing studies about the methodology of anthropology of Islam including its particular emphasis on the significant location of Muslim native's point of view. Asad starts his article by providing an essential question regarding to the discussion of anthropology of Islam namely "what exactly is anthropology of Islam? What is its object of investigation?" Although Asad clearly states that the object study in anthropology of Islam is obviously Islam itself, he argues that to theorise Islam as an anthropological object of study is not a simple matter but to investigate how Islam itself is being defined."[18]

Asad disputes el-Zein and Gilsenan's arguments that Islam is what Muslims perceive and think about. This argument, according to Asad, is not sufficient to explain the reality of Muslims in many regions and places who consider that the other Muslim practices are not real Islam at all. He also argues that Gellner and Geertz's division of Islam as great Islam or scriptural Islam vis a vis little Islam and mystical Islam are covered by Orientalist biases. In order to fill the gap, Asad proposes to observe and examine Islam in anthropological research as a discursive tradition. By adopting and combining Alasdair MacIntyre's notion on tradition and Foucault's idea on discourse, Asad explains:

> **An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions on the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present.[19]**

One of Asad's pivotal concepts in understanding Islam as discursive tradition

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[16] Gabriele Marranci, *The Anthropology of Islam,* pp. 37-38.

[17] Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, Washington D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986.

[18] In relation to the way of defining of religion, Asad has been complicated the universal claim of Geertz's definition on religion as cultural system. He argues that Geertz's definition tends to make a universal definition of religion. Asad maintains that there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because it is historically specific but also its definition itself is a historical product of discursive processes. Asad suggests to analyse and diagnose power relations which make the concept is arising. See Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflection on Geertz," *Man* 18: 12 (1983), pp. 237-259.

[19] Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam,* p. 14 Asad also describes Islamic discursive tradition as "the space in which verbal, emotional, and bodily resources are made available to Muslim as Muslims, to be taught, criticised, defended, and reformulated in relation to founding texts". See Talal Asad, "Explaining the Global Religious Revival: the Egyptian Case," in Gerrie Ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka eds., *Religion and Society: An Agenda for 21th Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, p. 92; Ovamir Anjum, "Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27: 3 (2007), pp. 656-672.

is orthodoxy. If el-Zein wants to deny the particular location of orthodoxy, Asad lays the orthodoxy down as a crucial to all Islamic tradition. However, orthodoxy for Asad is not similar as understood by orientalists as given or essential but it is shaped by power relation. He argues "Wherever Muslims have power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy."[20] In short, Asad's argument on the diagnosis of power relation in religious discursive tradition resonates in his later works related to religion and secularism which will be shown in the following description[21].

Moreover, Asad's scheme on discursive tradition seems to following up Dale F. Eickelman's idea about "middle ground." In his article entitled "The Study of Islam in the Local Contexts" Eickelman addresses the diminution of division between 'high' and 'folk' Islam. In order to cope with this problem he suggests the notion of "middle ground" referring to "how the universalistic elements of Islam are practically communicated and how modes of communication affect religious "universal."[22] Asad conveys that Eickelman's proposal was useful to bridge the extreme divide of universal and local Islam, but unfortunately he does not formulate any theoretical considerations. In other words, Asad's concept of 'discursive tradition' could be situated as an attempt to fill the gap of theoretical contribution in anthropology of Islam.

Methodological discussion on Islam and Muslim culture and society seems to have also resonated beyond the Middle East studies, especially among scholars who study Southeast Asian Islam.[23] Instead of reiterating Clifford Geertz's formulation of 'scriptural' and 'mystical' Islam, those scholars try to find a proper formula to overcome the diminution of extreme divide and argumentation on nature of syncretic Islam. Robert Hefner[24] puts forward the notion of "creative tension" between the

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[20] Talal Asad, The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam, p. 15.

[21] Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993; Talal Asad, Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.

[22] Dale F. Eickelman, "The Study of Islam in Local Contexts," *Contributions to Asian Studies* 17 (1) 1982, pp. 1-16.

[23] See William R. Roff, "Islam Obscured? Some Reflections on Studies of Islam and Society in Southeast Asia," *Archipel* 29, 1985:7-34; Ronald A Lukens-Bull, "Between Text and Practice: Considerations in the Anthropological Study of Islam," *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4 (2) 1999: 1-21.

[24] Robert W Hefner, "Islam in an era on Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia," in Robert W Hefner and Patricia Horvatich eds., *Islam in An Era on Nation-States: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. 7.

two divisions of Islam, and others grapple with finding a new conceptualisation. For instance, Mark Woodward[25] suggests that practice of Slametan among the Javanese Muslim in Yogyakarta which is previously understood by Clifford Geertz[26] as a syncretic form of Islam is a unique of Javanese Islam. He argues that Slametan ritual is a product of bricolage in which textual knowledge of Islam intersects with Javanese local culture. Meanwhile, John R Bowen's study of Gayo Muslim explicitly transforms Asad's concept of discursive tradition.[27] Their engagement to theoretical discussion has significantly enriched anthropological consideration of Islam and Muslim society.

Current social and political context of Muslim countries has also contributed to the shift of scholarly attention. After the Iranian Revolution in late of 1970s the discussion about Islam and modernity centres on topics of Islamism including the notion of establishing Islamic state, implementing Sharia (Islamic law) and Jihad doctrine.[28] Afterward, the advanced developments in studies of Muslim culture draw the attention to investigate how Muslims meet and perceive modernity, especially in investigating the Muslims' ways in producing themselves as modern.[29]

Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori's work *Muslim Politics* indicates a new perspective of elaborating Islam and modernity in a changing social and cultural context of Muslim countries. They claim that Muslims in many parts of Muslim countries have experienced modernity through what they call as 'objectification of religion.' It refers to 'the process by which basic questions come to the fore in consciousness of believers: "What is my religion?", "Why is it important to my life?", and "how do my beliefs guide my conducts?" They illuminate three facets of objectifications namely printing, the multiplicity of religious authority and reconfiguration of symbolic production of Muslim politics.[30]

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[25] Mark Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989; Mark Woodward, *Java, Indonesia and Islam*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2011, p. 135.

[26] Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 11-15.

[27] John R Bowen, *Muslim through Discourse*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

[28] Soares and Osella, "Islam, Politics, Anthropology," p. 54.

[29] Lara Deeb writes "despite a plethora of literature about Islamism and modernity, less has been written about how Islamist and pious Muslims themselves grapple with what it means to be modern, without assuming the nature of the links between modern-ness and the West." See Lara Deeb, *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi'i Lebanon*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 15 and Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

[30] Dale F Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 38-43. The discussion on the multiplicity of religious authority afterwards leads to the notion of Public Islam. Public Islam is significantly influenced by the works of Habermas on Public Sphere.

Arguing subjectivity and religious subjectivity

Despite the shift of scholarly attention from studying Islam to Muslim, Anthropologist Talal Asad[31] points out that specialists of Islam and Muslim society are mostly interested in representing Muslim as an Ummah*,* an imagined community of Islam that express their cultural and religious identity in their predicaments and expectations. As an Ummah, Muslim is situated in the context of global religious revival rather than focused on micro practices of Muslim. The Islamic revival is generally associated with the act of terror, violence and religious expression of Muslim in public sphere such as veiling and so on. He argues that the explanation is built on and taken from Muslim intellectual assumptions in reflecting their community rather than what ordinary Muslims think and do in their daily life. Instead of locating Muslim as Ummah, Asad suggests to focus on religious subjectivity and religious agency to analyse "the subtle and dynamic ways that intention, action, and ownership of action are brought together in religious life."[32]

Subjectivity has become an important subject in humanities and social sciences of the 20th century.[33] Sherry B Ortner[34] reasons that it is because subjectivity is regarded as "a major dimension of human existence" and associated with the basis of agency. The term agency refers to "conscious intention, self-empowerment, the will of intentionality, autonomy and freedom as an opposite of structuralist assumption about non-autonomous subject and determining structure."[35] However, the Neo-Marxian perspectives have problematized agency and subjectivity as never

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See Armando Salvatore and Dale F Eickelman (eds), *Public Islam and the Common Good*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004, pp. xi-xxv. In addition, Eickelman and Piscatori in their introduction to the second edition of *Muslim Politics* have also emphasised a correlation between "objectification of religion" with the emergence of public Islam. See Dale F Eickelman and James Piscatori, *Muslim Politics*, pp. ix-xvi.

31 Talal Asad, "Explaining the Global Religious Revival: the Egyptian Case," p. 87.

32 Talal Asad, "Explaining the Global Religious Revival: the Egyptian Case," p. 91.

33 Sherry B. Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26 (1984), pp. 126-166; Sherry B. Ortner, "Subjectivity and Cultural Critique," *Anthropological Theory* 5 (2005), pp. 31-52; T. M. Luhrmann, "Subjectivity," *Anthropological Theory* 6 (2006), pp. 345-361; João Biehl, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman, "Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity," in João Biehl, Byron Good, and Arthur Kleinman eds., *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007, pp. 1-23.

34 Sherry B. Ortner, "Subjectivity and Cultural Critique," *Anthropological Theory* 5 (2005), pp. 31-52.

35 Talal Asad, "Agency and Pain: An Exploration," *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 1: 1 (2000), pp. 29-60; Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties," pp. 126-166 ; Amira Mittermaier, "Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities beyond the Trope of Self-cultivation," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (2012), pp. 247-265.

autonomous. Subjects are shaped by material condition, power and language.[36]

The various standpoints of representing subjectivity and agency in social science consequently produce different definitions. Luhrmann[37] reveals that anthropologists use subjectivity in loosely term from "the shared inner life of the subject, to the way subject feel, respond, and experience." Meanwhile, in order to facilitate the different views to understand subjectivity, Ortner puts forward: "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organise, and provoke those modes of affect, thought and so on."[38] Ortner's definition on subjectivity seems to link a debate over the subject as mentioned above. She represents the subject with an intention and choice, and at the same time emphasises that the subject's intention and choice are shaped by its circumstances.

Despite a vivid scholarly attention to scrutinise and elaborate the notion of subjectivity in modern social science, in fact most of the anthropological and sociological studies dealing with Islam and Muslim cultures and societies have ignored to channel the discussion of subjectivity to religion and religious subject. The lack of adequate attention to religious subjectivity, according to some scholar,[39] is significantly linked to the representation of the foundational scholarship in social sciences that conceives 'religious subjectivity' as the antithesis of 'modern subjectivity.'

Modern subject is illustrated as rational, responsible and sensible; meanwhile religious subject is conversely represented as irrational, unreflective and superstitious. Weber has coined the situation as disenchantment of the world where science becomes an ultimate value replacing faith and myth.[40] In short, this view has consequently generated a general assumption in social science which claims that

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[36] Lisa Blackman and others, "Creating Subjectivities," *Subjectivity* 22: 1 (2008), pp. 1-27; Mittermaier, "Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities beyond the Trope of Self-cultivation," pp. 247-265.

[37] Luhrmann, "Subjectivity," pp. 345-361.

[38] Ortner, "Subjectivity and Cultural Critique," pp. 31-52.

[39] John R. Bowen, "Modern Intentions: Reshaping Subjectivities in an Indonesian Muslim Society," in Robert W. Hefner and Patricia Horvatich eds., *Islam in an Era of Nation-State: Politics and Religious Renewal in Muslim Southeast Asia*, Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 1997, pp. 157-181; Talal Asad, "Explaining the Global Religious Revival: the Egyptian Case," in Gerrie Ter Haar and Yoshio Tsuruoka eds., *Religion and Society: An Agenda for 21th Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, pp. 83-103; Sherine Hafez, *An Islam of Her Own: Reconsidering Religion and Secularism in Women's Islamic Movements*, New York and London: New York University Press, 2011, p. 27.

[40] Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," *Daedalus* 87: 1 (1958), pp. 111-134.

being a religious subject does not go hand in hand with becoming a modern.[41]

In order to investigate religious subjectivity especially Muslim subjectivity, Asad suggests 'Islamic discursive tradition' as above explained. He claims that this framework enables the examination of the ordinary Muslim practices, articulations, sensibilities and efforts to live as a Muslim in their daily life. He maintains that Islamic discursive tradition has made ordinary Muslims coped with some existential or Who am I? questions:[42]

> **Since I am a Muslim, how should I behave in accordance with God's commands? Since I live among Muslims, how should we behave towards one another? To which Islamic authority should I turn to find an answer to these and other similar questions?[43]**

Asad differentiates subjectivity and identity. For him, the question 'who am I?' that ordinary Muslims cope in their daily life as mentioned above is an existential question. Meanwhile, identity elaborates the question "Who are you?" which is attached to modern state to control and identify similarity rather than uniqueness. It is associated with administrative and political rather than existential question.

In addition, Asad also proposes to pay attention to the secular as an epistemic category. Asad differentiates secularism and the secular. For him secularism means a doctrine which requires the distinction between private reason and public principle, and meanwhile the secular is "a concept that brings together certain behaviours, knowledges and sensibilities in modern life".[44] By investigating the secular he argues that it could facilitate us to understand how Muslim subjectivity is defined, constructed and imagined in the modern public sphere.[45]

In line with Asad's claim about the gap between what Muslim intellectuals articulate about Muslim and what Muslims define themselves, Dietrich Jung, Marie Juul and Sara Lei Sparre[46] in their recent publication has looked at various discourses of modern Muslim subjectivity between what Muslim intellectuals

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[41] John R Bowen, "Modern Intentions: Reshaping Subjectivities in an Indonesian Muslim Society," p. 157.

[42] 'Who am I' is considered as an existential question in which philosophers always problematize it. See Donald E. Hall, *Subjectivity*, New York and London: Routledge, 2004, p. 1.

[43] Talal Asad, "Explaining the Global Religious Revival: the Egyptian Case," p. 92.

[44] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 25.

[45] Talal Asad, "Thinking about the Secular Body, Pain and Liberal Politics," *Cultural Anthropology* 26: 4 (2011), pp. 657-675.

[46] Dietrich Jung, Marie Juul Petersen, and Sara Lei Sparre, *Politics of Modern Muslim Subjectivities: Islam, Youth, and Social Activism in the Middle East*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 41-46.

articulate and project about modern Muslim subject and what the ordinary Muslims express and say about their Muslim-ness. They explain that Muslim forms of modern subjectivity are initially dominated by Muslim intellectual projection about modern Muslim subject. They trace the notion from Afghani, Abduh to Hassan Al-Banna. Abduh defines modern Muslim as an autonomous subject with discipline to work, education and religious commitment. Meanwhile, Hassan al-Banna, the founder of Muslim Brotherhood, projects modern Muslim as manly, virtuous, industrious, temperate, clean, punctual, self-confident, modest, polite, physically active, productive and spiritual Muslim firmly embedded in community life.[47] These ideals are projected to be disseminated through Muslim communities and state. In addition, instead of referring to these ideals, Dietrich Jung and others have also pointed out that recently Muslims have produced their subjectivity by their own without following any prescription from the Muslim intellectuals.

Concluding remarks: Muslim subjectivity in the anthropology of Islam

Anthropological considerations on idea of being Muslim could be identified into at least two major topics. Firstly, it focuses on cultivating an ethical self in relation to Islamic doctrine and secondly it brings together multiple forms of personhood in religious practice.[48] The following description elaborates these two anthropological directions through analysing their argumentations.

Talal Asad has inspired his students Saba Mahmood and Charles Hirschkind. Mahmood[49] examines Muslim women activists in three mosques with different environment from the lower to upper class backgrounds in Egypt. Against the existing views which seeing religious Muslim women as being oppressed by or resisted to the Islamic tenets, she argues that the women efforts to self-cultivation to become a good and pious Muslim through their rehearsal to Islamic rituals point out

[47] Dietrich Jung, Marie Juul Petersen, and Sara Lei Sparre, Politics of Modern Muslim Subjectivities: Islam, Youth, and Social Activism in the Middle East, p. 44.

[48] Magnus Marsden and Konstantinos Retsikas (eds), *Articulating Islam: Anthropological Approaches to Muslim Worlds*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2013, pp. 6-7.

[49] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival, *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001), pp. 202-236; Saba Mahmood, "Rehearsed Spontaneity and the Conventionality of Ritual: Disciplines of *Salat*," *American Ethnologist* 28: 4 (2001), pp. 827-853; Saba Mahmood, "Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt," *Social Research* 70: 3 (2003), pp. 837-866; Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.

that the idea of submission to God as a kind of agency in relation to secularising society in Egypt. Meanwhile Hirschkind[50] investigates a circulation of Islamic cassette sermon in Egypt and reveals that it has facilitated a deliberative moment for Muslim to discuss ethical conduct and religious reason in everyday life which he calls it as Islamic counter-publics.

One of the significant contributions of Mahmood and Hirschkind is on their reflection about Islamic fundamentalism and Islamism. Draw on Asad's concept of 'the secular' they argue that stigmatic labels which are addressed to Islamic movement are generally coming from the basic assumption about 'the secular.' The secular here is understood as an epistemic category which could define what is religious and non-religious in public life. Mahmood exemplifies it with the recent French law banning on veil in public in which indicates how secular state has come to define what religious and non-religious attire in public domain.[51]

In addition, Hirschkind argues that Islamic activism does not always involve capturing the state to establish an Islamic state. He claims that the majority of Islamic movements involve preaching and other Da'wah (preaching) activities, alms-giving, providing medical care, mosque building, publishing and generally promoting what is considered as a public virtue through the community action. However, all of these movements could be considered as a political because they compete with state or state-supported institutions that promote secular models of family, worship, leisure, social responsibility etc.[52] In other words, the expression of Muslim piety in public is actually simply as piety acts, but it will be considered as a political one due to the public sphere has been defining in secular notion.[53] Accordingly they suggest the expression of Muslim piety in the secular publics as politics of piety and the stigmatic labels of Muslim as fundamentalist or Islamist are based on the epistemic problem about the secular.

Some scholars who are dealing with anthropology of Islam including Samuli Schielke and Amira Mittermaier evaluate 'the politics of piety' as too over emphases on committed Muslim who strive to become pious rather than paying attention to ordinary Muslim. Moreover, they convey that 'self-improvement or cultivation'

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[50] Charles Hirskind, "Civic Virtue and Religious Reason: an Islamic Counter public," *Cultural Anthropology* 16: 1 (2001), pp. 3-34; Charles Hirschkind, "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt," *American Ethnologist* 28: 3 (2001), pp. 623-649; Charles Hirschkind, *The Ethical Soundscapes: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counter publics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

[51] Saba Mahmood, "Secularism, Hermeneutics and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation," *Public Culture* 18: 2 (2006), pp. 323-347.

[52] Charles Hirschkind, "What is Political Islam?" *Middle East Report* 205 (1997), pp. 12-14.

[53] Charles Hirschkind, "Is there a Secular Body," *Cultural Anthropology* 26: 4 (2011), pp. 633-647.

ignores the possibility of other modes of religiosity and Muslim subjectivity. In fact, according to Samuli Schielke "the practice of piety is not a linear, stable process but rather it is open subjectivity." He maintains that not all Muslims are having a commitment to become a pious. Yet most of ordinary Muslims carry out their religion in ambiguities, fractures and double standards. Instead of situating Muslims with the pious intention, Schielke suggests to focus on ordinary Muslims and to examine the moments of ambiguity, fractures and double standards of their subjectivity. [54] This new standpoint has significantly contributed to understand various articulations of being Muslim.[55]

In addition, Sindre Bangstad addresses that self-improvement argument remains to focus on binary opposition between religious and secular or piety and secular, and to discuss secularism from the state-centred approach. [56] Bangstad argues that Muslim's aspirations and dreams are neither religious nor secular. He mentions that binary opposition to understand Muslim living in Western secular contexts is no longer sufficient to be implemented.

In order to extend piety-minded, some scholars including Bangstad[57], Benjamin Soares, Rene Otayek [58]and Fillipo Osella[59] suggest Islam Mondain a notion that refers to the ways of being Muslim in secularizing societies and sphere without necessarily being secular as an alternative approach to understand the multiple ways

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[54] Samuli Schielke, "Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15 (supplement 2009), pp. 24-40; Samuli Schielke. "Second Thought about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Scheme in Everyday Life," *ZMO Working Paper* 2 (2010), pp. 1-16.

[55] Magnus Marsden and Kontantinos Retsikas, "Introduction," in Magnus Marsden and Kontantinos Retsikas eds., *Articulating Islam: Anthropological Approaches to Muslim Worlds*, New York and London: Springer, 2013, p. 6.

[56] Sindre Bangstad, "Contesting Secularism: Secularism and Islam in the Work of Talal Asad," *Anthropological Theory* 9 (2009): 188-207, Sindre Bangstad, "Saba Mahmood and Anthropological Feminism after Virtue," *Theory, Culture and Society* 28, no 3 (2011): 28-54. See also Christopher Craig Brittain, "The Secular as A Tragic Category: On Talal Asad, Religion and Representation," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 17 (2005): 149-165. The binary opposition of Asad's analysis in examining secularism could not be separated from his position as a one prominent in post-colonial theorist particularly in anthropology. See Talal Asad ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, London: Ithaca Press, 1975. See also David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, "Introduction: The Anthropological Scepticism of Talal Asad" in David Scott and Charles Hirschkind eds., *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, pp. 1-11.

[57] Bangstad, "Contesting Secularism: Secularism and Islam in the Work of Talal Asad."

[58] Rene Otayek and Benjamin Soares, "Introduction: Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa," in Benjamin Soares and Rene Otayek eds., *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa*, New Yorks: Macmillan: Palgarave 2007, pp. 1-24. See also Soares and Osella, "Islam, Politics, Anthropology."

[59] Ibid.

of being Muslim in a modern and secular world.

In contrast to the previous notion on ambiguous and hybrid Muslim subjectivity, Amira Mittermaier[60] proposes to extend self-improvement theory by recognising the various modes of religious subjectivity. She argues that 'self-improvement' theory of Mahmood and Hirschkind has contributed to understand the practice of veiling and attending Islamic sermon that happen among the reformist. However, it is not sufficed to understand the different axis of religiosity such as her research on dreams among the Sufi order community.

The previous description shows that Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood and Charles Hirschkind have significantly contributed to locate the religious subjectivity within the intense discussion on subjectivity in social science that has been previously disregarded religious subject. However, their explorations of religious subjectivity seem to ignore the non-religious sensibilities that shape Muslim subjectivities.[61] Other scholars including Samuli Schielke contend that examining Muslim lives in globalised world cannot isolate them from non-religious references. The dilemmas, possibilities, and hopes that are being discussed among the community of Muslim and desires to have a good live have been significantly influenced the modern Muslim subjectivity today.[62]

Globalisation has significantly shaped our daily life including our religious sensibilities. Examining Muslim lives is not sufficient only by focusing on Islamic discursive tradition; however, we need also to investigate their aspirations for having a good life in which, according to Dahlgren and Schielke, 'surrounded by various uncertainties, ambiguities and complexities of today's world.'[63] In line with this argument, Marsden and Retsikas also highlight the importance to locate[64] Islam and being Muslim in the trope of "De-exceptionalising Islam." It refers to an idea of

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[60] Mittermaier, "Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities beyond the Trope of Self-cultivation."

[61] Samuli Schielke, "Second Thought about the Anthropology of Islam, or How to Make Sense of Grand Scheme in Everyday Life," Susanne Dahlgren and Samuli Schielke, "Introduction: Moral Ambiguities and Muslim Lives," *Contemporary Islam* 7: 1 (2013), pp. 1-13; Mittermaier, "Dreams from Elsewhere: Muslim Subjectivities beyond the Trope of Self-cultivation." 247-265.

[62] Kenneth George mentions "I have learned that being Muslim means seeing one's way through one's political, cultural, and historical circumstances with reference not just to the Qur'an or Hadist, but also to the ideas, debates, aspirations, dispositions, and images that have found expression in a community of believers…Islam is not a "ready-made." It is a lived religion: lived, re-imagined, and remade through the intermingling of believers' life-worlds with all their predicament, contradictions and contingencies." See Kenneth M. George, *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 135-136.

[63] Susanne Dahlgren and Samuli Schielke, "Introduction: Moral Ambiguities and Muslim Lives."

[64] Magnus Marsden and Kontantinos Retsikas, "Introduction," in Magnus Marsden and Kontantinos Retsikas eds., *Articulating Islam: Anthropological Approaches to Muslim Worlds*, New York and London: Springer, 2013, p. 1.

situating Islam and being Muslim as similar as other religious traditions in order to avoid an unchanging dimension of the worlds of Muslim background.

To conclude the remarks, I will refer to recent proposal by Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando.[65] They attempt to bridge the anthropological divisions in articulating Muslim subjectivity as above mentioned. Instead of ignoring what Talal Asad, Saba Mahmood and Charles Hirschkind have sounded in understanding Islam and Muslim subjectivity, they suggest that 'piety-minded' remain significant as tools of analysis, especially to study Muslim who deals with ethical self-improvement in their daily life such as Salafists. Meanwhile, they also argue that everyday Muslims are also diverse. Some of them have attempted to become consistently pious and others have experienced ambivalence as well as fracture in pursuing the idea to become a good Muslim.

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[65] Nadia Fadil and Mayanthi Fernando, "Rediscovering the "everyday" Muslim: Notes on an Anthropological Divide," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5: 2 (2015), pp. 59-88.

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Commerce, Knowledge, and Faith: Islamization of the Modern Indonesian and Han-speaking Muslim Ummahs

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