Religious Diffusion and Modernization: a preliminary reflection on the spread of Islam in Indonesia and its impact on social change

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European Journal of Sociology / Volume 21 / Issue 01 / June 1980, pp 116 - 138 DOI: 10.1017/S0003975600003544, Published online: 28 July 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0003975600003544

How to cite this article:

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The transformative capacity of most religions to initiate modern, capitalistic societies has been extensively investigated (Bellah 1957 and 1965; Eisenstadt 1968; Geertz 1960 and 1968; Gellner 1969; Levenson 1968; Rodinson 1974; Sardar 1977; Soedjatmoko 1965; Turner 1974; Weber 1958a, 1958b, and 1964). However, most scholars have not been able to come to definite conclusions regarding the capacity of religions to legitimate modern development. This is because it is assumed that every 'big' religion contains the potential to legitimate different, even contradictory, patterns of social change. Thus, perhaps it would be useful, when studying a given religion, to analyze the conditions under which a certain pattern of social change is utilized, as well as the interests such a pattern serves.

Like the research concerning other religions, that referring to Islam provides differing viewpoints regarding the religion's legitimative power (Eisenstadt 1977; Werblowsky 1976, ch. iv). Some scholars have described Islam as neutral towards every pattern of ideology and social change (von Gruenebaum 1955; Hodgson 1979; Levi 1957; Lewis 1963; Rachman 1966). Others have described Islam (explicitly or implicitly) as a religion impeding modernization due to its primordial nature, collective orientations, fatalism, millenarian trends, unity of religion and state, and patrimonial nature (Rodinson 1974; Turner 1974). Still others claim that Islam in fact contains the most scientific elements of modernization (Sardar 1977).

Empirically, however, the response to Western influence within Islam seems to be more varied than the difference in response between Islam and other major religions. The broad spectrum of the Islamic phenomenon may persuade that, like other religions, it has a potential for almost every pattern of social change (Lewis 1954).

Indonesian Islam has also always been described in two ways, as 'pro' and 'con' modernization. Zainuddin (1968) characterized Indonesian Islam as based on extreme family-oriented particularism, impeding
modern development due to strong, mystical, transcendental elements, indirectness in the relationship between the believers and the divine power, based rather on a mediating link made by religious agents and full submission to religious authority in a ritualistic pattern of worship.

On the other hand, Indonesian Islam has been described as one of the major forces underlying commercial and urban development (Schrieke 1955, ch. iii; Wertheim 1956). Thus, there is no possibility of defining Islam in Indonesia as a one-sided religion. What is clear is that, as a newly diffused religion, Islam in Indonesia is a special 'copy' from the 'original' Islam which has to be analyzed in idiosyncratic terms.

I would like to test the hypothesis that the pattern in which Islam spread throughout Indonesia may explain its nature and that this very nature will, eventually, explain at least part of the Indonesian response to the impact of colonization and modernization.

The paper is divided into four sections: in the first section a general description of the introduction of Islam into Indonesia is discussed. The second section is devoted to an analysis of the explanations of why Islam spread into Indonesia. In the third section a more comprehensive explanation is offered. In the fourth section the impact of Islam in Indonesia is explored.

1. The introduction of Islam into Indonesia

The introduction of Islam into Indonesia is perhaps a good example in modern history of a religious diffusion and conversion of an entire society. A similar example, which is often discussed, is the mass conversion of the indigenous population of Latin America to Christianity from the fifteenth century (1). However, in contrast to Latin America, where conversion followed military and cultural conquests (Foster 1960), the spread of Islam in Indonesia was, for the most part, peaceful, with a minimal use of force. Furthermore, in Latin America, the conversion of the Indians occurred when no religious alternatives were offered (2). In contrast, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the population of Indonesia, especially that of Java, had some options:

(1) The spread of folk Christianity in the Philippines has also been described in the same way as in Latin America (Corpuz 1965).

(2) The conversion of some parts of the African population to Islam has also been widely investigated. It is possible that tribal society had few cultural and political institutions to fight back with. However, in Africa there has been no recent case in which a full social system has been converted (Levitzion 1968; Lewis 1966).
to remain committed to the old tradition, to convert to Islam or to convert to Christianity. The choice of the majority of the Indonesian islands’ inhabitants was to convert, at least nominally, to Islam. One should note that choice does not necessarily signify a rational, conscious decision but rather refers to the structural logic underlying a certain preference. Analysis of the phenomenon of conversion to Islam in Indonesia may reveal that the process was expedited during three separate periods of Indonesia’s history, and in each case it was adopted by different groups. First, with the decline of the Madjapahit empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; second, with the increasing impact of Dutch colonization at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century; and a third time at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the increase of Dutch economic and political liberalism. From the eleventh century or possibly even earlier, Islam had been diffused along the coasts of Java and Sumatra via Arab and Indian merchants. During the following centuries, the Abangan animistic religions of Java, combined with some Hindu and Buddhist elements, and Islam were mixed without excluding one another. It was not until Islam was well established at the end of the second phase that Islam negated the basic indigenous codes. In the first phase Muslim traders aimed only at transforming some of the local ‘little’ traditions. For example, the indigenous burial custom of leaving the corpse on the ground was replaced by the Islamic custom of underground burial; however, the ‘big’ traditional belief in life after death was not transformed (Simon 1912, pp. 12-15).

During the first stages of penetration, no specific institutions for conversion were established, but rather individual teachers were placed in some urban communities (Nicholson 1965; Simon 1912, p. 16). It was mainly at the end of the eighteenth century that Muslim scholars reached rural Indonesia and spread the elementary codes of Islam through small groups of religious activists (Santri) and institutions—the mosque, the Imam and the Pesentren (a school) (Geertz 1959 and 1965; Noer 1973).

Islam was not immediately accepted by the lowest levels of the village community. It was essentially practiced by small, active groups who officiated and performed their religious duties on behalf of the whole village population (Geertz 1960). Consequently, in many parts of Java, the majority of the peasants became only ‘nominal’ Muslims. Many peasants remained Abangan and considered the Santri culture as more or less alien.

At the end of the eighteenth century, however, the conversion to
Islam in the rural periphery was gradually expanded. The increasing penetration of Dutch colonialism, accompanied by the decline of the local kingdoms (Mataram and Bantam), accelerated the process of diffusion of Islam in Java and Sumatra and institutionalized its position as the major power to resist Western influence and to fill the cultural vacuum.

New colonial pressures at the beginning of the nineteenth century, i.e., the 'cultivation system', again accelerated the process of conversion. The liberalization of Dutch policy at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (the 'Ethical Policy') led to the flourishing of national Islamic movements (Sarakat Islam and the Muhammadijah movement) (Wertheim 1956 and 1974; Noer 1973).

Thus, on the basis of the major studies of Islam in Indonesia, one may conclude that Islam's spread into Indonesia was carried out first through the merchants in the coastal towns and then reached some parts of the rural periphery via the local rulers. For the trade centers on the coast, especially in northern Java, the conversion to Islam was first part of their struggle for independence from the Madjapahit kingdom (Zainuddin 1968). Next they used it against the Portuguese, who managed 'instrumental-oriented imperialism', i.e., were inclined to sacrifice any interests except those that brought an increase in their economic benefits from the colonies (Boxer 1969). This very instrumental approach turned the merchants against the Portuguese and pushed them to use Islam as a symbolic weapon for this purpose.

Regarding the indigenous ruling class, they discovered that they could use the new religion to reinforce their position. They interpreted Islam as a religion in which the ruler is considered to be the shadow of God upon earth and used animistic beliefs to support this thesis (Zainuddin 1968, p. 61). With such an interpretation they were interested in converting the peasants to Islam.

Islam spread gradually, reaching the majority of the population through religious teachers and institutions, to become later the dominant religion in Java. Regarding its content, Islam in Indonesia has been developed along three basic lines by which the emphasis on certain trends was changed. Thus, movement can be discerned from an instrumental, economic-oriented religion to an expressive, emotional one; from an elitist religion to a popular one; and last, from a pragmatical to a transcendental or even messianic religion (van der Kroef 1959).

With regard to the process described above, certain questions arise. Why has Islam been transformed in this way? What were the
conditions under which it changed its structure and content? How does this relate to the changing functions of Islam in Indonesia? In order to answer these questions, we shall have to determine why Islam penetrated into Indonesian society.

2. The limitations of the common explanations as to why Islam spread into Indonesia

In order to understand the scope and the boundaries of Indonesian Islam and its impact on social change (which is discussed in section 4), we shall explain why Islam was diffused throughout Indonesia and how this influenced its characteristics. For this purpose, we have tested and exposed the limitations of eight common hypotheses which attempted to explain Islam's diffusion into Indonesia (3).

1) Islam as the first conquering religion to reach Indonesia

It has been argued that Muslim merchants were the first during the modern period to penetrate Indonesia and to establish themselves both economically and politically among the indigenous population. By doing so, they limited other religious options (Fatimi 1963; da Franca 1970, pp. 12-13; Simon 1912; Vlekke 1960). The Portuguese who came later were very weak and incapable of conquering the country; therefore, they had to compromise with the Muslim traders. Furthermore, some sources (Boxer 1969a; da Franca 1970, pp. 12-13; Pigeaud 1962; Pires 1944) indirectly raised the argument that neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch in the sixteenth century were interested in religious conversion but only in economic profits. Their material interests brought them to sign a treaty with the Muslim rulers: the Sultan of Mataram, the Sultan of Bantam, the Sultan of Demak and the Prince of Sunda Kelapa (Djakarta). They preferred to cooperate economically with the local rulers, rather than to convert them. Hence, the arrival of the Europeans in Indonesia had little religious effect, except in some ‘outer’ islands (Hall 1968).

This argument may explain why Christianity did not spread into Indonesia but not why Islam was accepted. Furthermore, until the eighteenth century, the diffusion of Islam was so limited that

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it seems logical to assume that there was sufficient room for both religions. Why, then, did Islam become the major religion?

2) The simplicity of the Islamic tradition

It has been argued that Islam is 'as simple and easily marketable a religious package as has been prepared for export'. This argument, once raised by Christian scholars (Pires 1944; Simon 1912), although later rejected by others (e.g., Snouk Hurgronje 1906), is based on the assumption that there are inherent, simple, tribal elements in Islam, and that the presence of these elements facilitates its spread into simple societies, which possess uncomplicated beliefs and habits.

However, Islam also contains complex and sophisticated elements (von Gruenebaum 1955; Holt 1970; Levi 1957; Lewis 1963; Turner 1974). Hence, one has to prove that the Indonesian elite did, in fact, select only the simpler elements of Islam. The fact that Islam mostly spread in the relatively highly 'developed' areas of Indonesia, where the Hindu regimes (Srivajaya and Madjapahit) were located (Wolters 1967), increases the doubts concerning this explanation. What further reinforces these doubts is the fact that Islam did not spread over all 'simple' societies in the Indonesian archipelago. On the contrary, some of the most 'simple' tribal societies in Bali (4) and the Batak in Sumatra (5) were not converted to Islam. Some simple tribes, such as those in the Ambon Islands, converted to Christianity. It seems, therefore, that simplicity can hardly explain the conversion to Islam in Java.

3) Similarities between the indigenous religion and Islam

The argument that similarities between the ancient indigenous religion and the new religion facilitated the spread of the new ethos is in the Weberian tradition. It has recently been utilized to explain modernization processes in Japan (Bellah 1957), and other countries (Eisenstadt 1968). With regard to Indonesia, it has been argued that Sufi mysticism (Rachman 1966) and magic, which were part of Hindu civilization. Their rejection of Islam can be explained by both the influence of the Hindu cultural values and their kinship structure, which emphasized both vertical and horizontal relationships and alliances. This provided the Batak with an authority structure with which to reject Islam (Singarmbun 1975).

(4) For the Bali society see Geertz and Geertz (1975).
(5) The Batak was composed of various groups with different kinship and tribal organizations. Common to them was that all were influenced by Southern Hinduism until the penetration of Islam at the end of the 14th century. Afterwards they were isolated and had no contact with
Islam in Asia, were similar to the indigenous animistic and Hindu elements (6). Hence the adoption of Islam was facilitated (Anderson 1972; Geertz 1968; Nicholson 1965; Simon 1912, ch. xii). Indonesia’s ancient religion, a mixture of animistic Abangan and Hindu elements, has always been described as based on magical elements (Brandon 1970; Kartodirdjo 1966 and 1973; van der Kroef 1959; Resink 1968). Thus the acceptance of Sufi Islam was almost a ‘natural’ process and the costs of conversion were minimal.

There are two points which weaken this argument. First, if the two religions were so similar, why was there a necessity to convert to Islam? Although similarities can, perhaps, be used to explain the ease of conversion, they certainly cannot be identified as a motivating factor for conversion. Second, it has been conclusively shown that not only similar elements were adopted. Some central Islamic concepts, such as that of death and the hereafter, were completely foreign to the Javanese culture, yet were also adopted (Simon 1912, ch. vii). Thus the fact that both similar and dissimilar Islamic beliefs were accepted in Indonesia suggests that the criterion for selection and adoption was not merely similarity.

Furthermore, if we assume that Sufi and Javanese mysticism were similar, one has to explain why Sufism was in demand at all and what the interests were underlying the substitution of Sufism for Abanganism.

In this line of logic it may be hypothesized that the spread of mysticism in Indonesia was the result of socio-cultural developments rather than the cause of them.

4) The possible co-existence of the Javanese and Islamic religions

Another approach views the Javanese and Islamic religions as capable of mutual tolerance and co-existence (Legge 1965, p. 50). This explanation is quite doubtful if one takes into consideration that Islam has never legitimimized other beliefs and thus, at least for-
mally, could not accept the simultaneous existence of the Abangan or Hindu Buddhist religions. To prove this one may quote various reports of conflicts between the different religions and sects in Indonesia (Geertz 1960; Jay 1969). In any case, again the argument, if accepted, may explain for the most part why the spread of Islam was facilitated, but not the motive behind it. Thus we are still left with the question of what benefits the Indonesians gained by adopting Islam and/or why the ancient religion was given up.

5) The instrumental argument

Another argument contends that the Islamic religion was a useful tool for commercial relationships, development and exchange. Hence, it was in the interests of the merchants to convert to Islam (Schrieke 1955 and 1957). Later, Islam became both an important tool for aggregating wealth and a symbol of reference due to the prestige that was attributed to the rich merchants, which increased its attraction even for the peasants (7).

Regarding the indigenous traders, this argument certainly holds, especially if one takes into account that they used Islam as a means to counter Chinese and Western influences. With reference to the peasants, however, one may question whether they really appreciated prestige and wealth and had economic motives for conversion.

As Day observed (1904), the indigenous population on the whole had little motivation to produce, to sell or to buy, and to aggregate wealth for everyday life. In fact, this was one of the reasons for the Dutch enforcement of the ‘cultivation system’ of forced labor in the 1830s. Furthermore, in eighteenth century Indonesia there was no need for a modern type of economic motivation because at this period there was enough uncultivated free land in Java. Almost every man could get his own land and produce his family’s needs (Pelzer 1945). Hence, the above explanation may hold true for parts of the population in the coastal towns, but not for the entire society.

6) Tactics of penetration

It has been argued that Arab traders utilized peaceful channels to convert the Indonesians to Islam—a fact which explains their suc-

(7) One should note that we do not claim that Islam was adopted only because of its instrumental or functional value. Often it is the expressive and transcendental aspects of religious beliefs which make them attractive and acceptable. Because of this expressive value, the ruling class often used religious beliefs to legitimate various social goals as well as its positions and institutions.
cess (Fatimi 1963). A report of a Portuguese scholar in the fifteenth century (Pires 1944) shows that the earliest waves of Arab merchants who came to Indonesia and adjusted to the indigenous society married Indonesian women and also converted their servants to Islam. Later, Arab scholars arrived and diffused the new religious symbols through local agents and gradually established religious institutions (mosques and schools). In the final phase, after the conversion of a large number of people, they were able to operate by using social pressures in the communities to convince the rest of the population to follow the example of the powerful groups (Meilink-Roelofsz 1962; Nicholson 1965; Pires 1944). Essentially, however, it is clear that lacking a formal church organization through which they could enforce orthodoxy, the learned scholars of Islam had to manipulate a gradualist strategy of persuasion until the laws of Islam were officially accepted (Geertz 1960, p. 123).

This argument describes the tactics of penetration, but does not explain why the more organized pattern of penetration of the Christian missions was less successful. Moreover, this explanation does not indicate why Christian tactics were efficient in certain tribes (like the Batak in Sumatra) and not in Javanese society.

7) Islam as a counter-force to colonial interests and coercive methods

It has been argued that because the Indonesians objected to the coercive methods of the Europeans, they turned to Islam (Day 1904; Meilink-Roelofsz 1962, p. 33; Palmier 1962).

More specifically

in the 15th century the indigenous trading classes, among whom Islam had taken its firmest hold, were driven away by the Westerners from the international commerce toward domestic peddling [...] At the same time,

the highly Indicized native ruling classes were reduced to the status of civil servants, administering Dutch policies at the local level and the peasantry was drawn more and more into the orbit of a colonial export economy. For all these groups, Islam was used as a defensive mechanism (Legge 1965, p. 52).

The question, however, of why the Indonesian merchants, gentry and peasants particularly needed Islam as a counter force to Western domination remains open. What kind of ‘defense’ or legitimation could Islam offer which the Hindu-Buddhist religion was unable to provide? For that matter, why were Hindu Abangan religious systems and institutions insufficient to counter colonialism? Were the benefits
offered by Islam greater than those offered by Christianity and the colonial powers?

8) *The diffusion of Islam as a result of the cultural and institutional vacuum caused by the breakdown of the Indonesian centralized kingdoms*

The last suggested explanation connects the diffusion of Islam in Indonesia to the trade expansion there, the decline of the *Srivijaya* empire in the eleventh century (Wolters 1967), and the breakdown of the *Madjapahit* regime in the sixteenth century (van Leur 1955 and 1957; Meilink-Roelofsz 1962; Nicholson 1965; Peacock 1968; Schrieke 1955 and 1957). It has been argued that the old religious and institutional arrangements in the above kingdoms proved to be weak and inadequate in responding to commercial expansion. Islam, on the other hand, provided a new, flexible, more 'modern' means of accommodation to the new conditions and thus served as an efficient tool for the development of trade; hence, it was accepted.

Historically, it seems that as the overseas trade system expanded, the Madjapahit kingdom was unable to cope with the new conditions through its own cultural and institutional system. At the end of the fifteenth century, aristocratic families in the Madjapahit regime grew rich and powerful, but the 'regime' opened no new institutional channels for them to participate in the ruling process. Thus:

the antithesis between the aristocratic families and the central authority of Madjapahit, and the aspirations of the families to exercise their own supreme authority over state, made Islamization into a political instrument (van Leur 1955, p. 113).

In other words, the local nobility looked for new sources of legitimation in order to defeat the ruling center. Islam was used for this purpose. However, why Islam was specifically chosen and not Christianity, and why it succeeded in spreading throughout Indonesia, has not been explained. The weakness of the argument becomes even clearer if one takes into account the fact that the Muslim kingdom of Mataram, established after the fall of the Madjapahit, was crushed in the seventeenth century due to internal conflicts rather than to Dutch intervention (Graaf und Pigeaud 1976; Moertono 1968; Ricklefs 1974).

Let us specify the logic of this argument: (a) first, there was a political and economic expansion; (b) the old religious institutions could not absorb this expansion; (c) hence, there was a breakdown of the old kingdoms; (d) consequently, a cultural and political vacuum developed; (e) Islam was adopted to fill the vacancy. This argumen-
tation seems to be effective but still leaves open the question of why Islam, and more specifically a certain pattern of Islam, was adopted in Indonesia.

3. *A preliminary more comprehensive explanation*

In order to better understand why Islam was accepted in Indonesia, it is necessary to take into account both the basic religious symbols and the socio-political organization of pre-Islam Indonesia. Due to limited information regarding this period, such an analysis, by definition, is preliminary and may be perceived as an attempt to propose a hypothesis rather than provide an explanation (8).

From a religious point of view, Indonesia (particularly Java and Sumatra) can be viewed as a long transformative society. The animistic religion of the indigenous tribes became mixed or was partially replaced twice. The first time was in the seventh century, or even earlier, when the Hindu and Buddhist religions culturally conquered the Archipelago and contributed to the establishment of the so-called Hindu kingdoms. The second time was in the eleventh century, or even later, when Islam started to replace Hindu-Buddhist beliefs (Zainuddin 1968). What was the nature of the first replacement or mixture and to what extent did it influence the second conversion?

The Indonesian tribal, animistic religion was influenced by the Hindu-Buddhist religions in a very specific way (Chaterj and Chakravarti 1933; Chatterjee 1927; Sastri 1949; Wolters 1967). The introduction of the Indian religions into Java was a selective process in which only specific cultural elements penetrated or were chosen, to be synthesized with the ‘elementary forms’ of indigenous beliefs (9).

Due to the lack of clear evidence, one may speculate that Javanese society absorbed mainly the most mystical or metaphysical elements of Hinduism. These elements, in Hindu belief, however, were strongly connected to universal, non-tribal, political concepts of social order (Nakamura 1964, Part I, ch. II and IX). In fact, the Hindu-Buddhist religions provided the rulers with the tool to integrate the various tribes into a semi-kingdom regime.

The acceptance of the Hindu religion was mainly among the cen-
tral elites (Priyayi) and ruling classes, but had never fully infiltrated down to the rural periphery. Consequently, the infiltration of Hindu concepts widened the gap between center and periphery. In other words, belief did not provide the legitimacy needed by the Javanese ruling class, nor a strong basis to unify the various tribes or ethnic groups and increase their control.

However, the spread of the Indian religions gradually encouraged the creation of more universal regional or village based social units. These units were not based solely on kinship ties, but mixed particularistic and more universal patterns of organization such as the Desa, i.e., village. The Hindu central kingdoms were established on these combinations which had never been synthesized.

In the eighth century, the Mataram kingdom (King Sanjaya regime) flourished in central Java. It was later followed by the Buddhist Shailendra dynasty in Srivijaya (eighth to eleventh century) and the new Hindu kingdom of Mataram. These 'Hindu' kingdoms were based on an extensive trade system and, to a large extent, on a central administration mixed with 'tribal' agricultural-rural patterns. Thus, within these kingdoms, antagonism existed between the particularistic agricultural orientation of the periphery and the interests of the merchants and the universalistic orientation of the center. Indian universal values in their mystical Indonesian version were unable to abolish the local primordial units. The greater the commercial and the centripetal political development of the kingdoms, the wider was the gap between their center and the local units. Under these conditions, there increasingly developed a legitimacy gap between the center and the periphery (10).

The main indicator of this process was the gradual increase in clashes between aristocratic families, the local rulers and the central authorities (van Leur 1955). External invaders from China and India exploited these internal conflicts for their own benefit and contributed to the destruction of the empires. After the decline of these early Hindu kingdoms, the next attempt to unite tribal and local differences was made through the establishment of the Madjapahit kingdom in the thirteenth century. The kingdom flourished during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries when it included the larger parts of Java and the outer islands. The collapse of the Madjapahit in the first half of the sixteenth century is described as the consequence of the conversion to Islam of the major princes and the trading classes

(10) Almost the same explanation can be given for the decline of the ancient kingdoms (Eisenstadt 1963).
of the coastal towns in northern Java (Geertz 1968, p. 26). The question is, however, why did the princes and traders convert to Islam? Why was the kingdom unable to perpetuate and institutionalize its social systems? In other words, we shall view the conversion as the result of structural problems rather than their cause.

In the middle of the fourteenth century, the empire of the Madja-pahit included probably all the islands between Java and New Guinea, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, the Ambon Islands, West Molucca and most of the Malay peninsula. The empire was run by members of the royal family who ruled different parts of the kingdom and who appeared often at the central court to pay homage to the king. The chief ministers were mostly Shiva Brahmins or Buddhist priests, who were supposed to unify both the political and religious functions by operating an absolute divine concept of power (Anderson 1972). The existence of such a group and devices produced dual gaps: between the local and central rulers and between both these groups and the Abangan periphery. Hence, the centrifugal forces of the kingdom were much stronger than the centripetal ones.

After the death of King Wuruk, the regime collapsed when the local rulers tried to establish their independence (11). The last king of Madjapahit, Bra-Vijaya V, converted to Islam, probably in order to create new bonds for his declining kingdom. With this shift, the Shaiva Brahmins, who had been the chief ministers at court, lost their position and fled to Bali (Chatterjee 1927; Wolters 1967). With the lack of Hindu religious elites, the transfer to Islam became easier.

In order to understand why the Madjapahit kingdom was unable to legitimize its increasing expansion and complexity, one has to take into account, again, the nature of the Hindu-Buddhist tradition in Java. Both the transcendental universal codes of the Hindu tradition and the institutional arrangements of the caste system were never diffused in Java. It was primarily the 'pragmatical' and not the transcendent aspects of the Hindu tradition which had been disseminated in Java (12). Only among the Priyayi were the most universal aspects of Hinduism adopted. The Abangan version, which contained a combination of animism, mysticism and pragmatic Hinduism was transformed into daily habits and institutionalized through pro-

(11) See also Anderson (1972). What is essential is the fact that, after the death of a king, a Javanese kingdom was usually divided among his sons.

(12) For the definition of the pragmatical and transcendental aspects of Hinduism see Mandelbaum (1966).
cesses of ritualization. Thus, rituals and mysticism became part of the daily routine. This explains the importance of rituals, popular arts (especially the Wajong Shadow Plays), and mysticism in Indonesia (Brandon 1970; Geertz 1960; Peacock 1968 and 1971). In that sense the Indonesian can be described as *homo ritualicus*. Furthermore, while there was often a differentiation between the transcendental and the pragmatical aspects of religion in India, in Indonesia they were fused. One consequence of this synthesis was the identification of state and society and earth and the divine concept of power (Anderson 1972).

This pattern explains, to a large extent, why the very basis of legitimation and institutionalization was very weak in the Madjapahit kingdom. The decline of the Madjapahit in the sixteenth century was due to the king’s and ruling classes’ attempt to construct a legitimacy for their central kingdom on primordial, ritualistic, magic premises and arrangements, rather than on more rational concepts. This was the attempt of the nobility to close the symbolic gap between the center and the periphery which reduced the legitimacy of the Madjapahit kingdom. In other words, this was their attempt to reduce the differences between the Priyayi and the Abangan ethos (Geertz 1960, pp. 234-5) (13). The gap in the value patterns forced the Priyayi to use mystic and ritualistic devices in order to assure their control over the periphery (van Niel 1960; Palmier 1960). These very means were only adequate to legitimate small estates but not a large kingdom.

The decline of the Madjapahit was embodied in its very premises and institutional arrangements. This also explains why the ruling classes were willing to adopt Islam as a substitute for Hinduism. The decline of the Madjapahit can also be explained by another factor. The kingdom combined the agricultural strength of central Java with the commercial power of coastal towns. However, the mixture of Indo-Javanese values and institutions was not sufficiently flexible to support this combination, that is, the coexistence of the free-floating commercial groups and the rigid structure of the village.

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(13) According to B. R. Chatterjee, it was only at the beginning of the 12th century, with the crystallization of the political situation in Java, that the old Javanese poems were composed (Arjuna Vivaha and Virata-Parvan), and that only by chance, both the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were translated into Kawi (old Javanese language) during this period (1927, p. 58). "Later on, the Mahabharata episodes were adopted in such a way that the scene of the battle was shifted to Java and the heroes were transformed into Javanese princes" (Chatterjee 1927, p. 6). In general, the 'pure' Hindu or Buddhist traditions have never spread into the peripheral echelons of the Javanese population.
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communities. Hence, the Madjapahit kingdom gradually disintegrated.

Its decline left a cultural and structural vacuum which further facilitated commercial development including the penetration by both Arab traders and the Portuguese into Java in the fifteenth century. The commercial development increased the power of the coastal cities. The local chiefs and the heads of the desa were threatened with loss of power. They have to find a way to legitimize their positions in terms of values since they were not strong enough to establish themselves by force. Three hypothetical options were open to them: to remain committed to the old mixture of Indo-Javanese religion, to convert to Christianity or to convert to Islam.

The first option could not have been beneficial for them since it might have re-legitimized the position of the central nobility. Conversion to the universalistic-oriented Christian religion would have been dangerous since it represented Western city culture and commercial classes, which might have strengthened the dominance of the coastal towns. Islam, in a special version which included both tribal and universal elements, could be utilized as a compromise between the interests of the merchants and the local chiefs. In other words, at least some of the elements of Islam, especially in its Sufi nuance, were able to provide the local rulers with a new basis for their 'feudal' pattern of dominance, while at the same time providing a consensual basis for transactions with the merchants in the coastal towns. This coalition was dangerous in the beginning for the high priyayi nobility who were established near the courts of the Madjapahit kingdom. Consequently, their conversion was rather delayed, and limited in depth since they had no better choice (van Niel 1960; Palmier 1960).

Islamization was, for the merchants, a means to counter the central ruling classes of the Madjapahit kingdom as well as a way to co-operate with the local chiefs in the exploitation of peasants. Islam provided an optimal solution to the problem created by the increasing trade with the periphery by decreasing central interference and attempting to maintain the most traditional structure of the village, so as to enable the local chiefs to enjoy both their privileges and the fruits of expanding trade. Thus, to a large extent, the Islamization of Indonesia came as a result of a coalition between chiefs and traders who wanted to maximize their profits from the rural periphery without endangering their position. It was mainly the fusion of political and economic interests which enhanced the spread of Islam into Indonesia and not purely religious motives.

This explains why Islam was so easily accepted by the rich peas-
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...ants, the local rulers and merchants, but only nominally adopted by many of the poor peasants in rural society, who remained essentially committed to the old Abangan religion since it was not worthwhile for them to convert to Islam. Furthermore, the fact that Islam was often accepted just nominally, with fluctuating informal beliefs and habits, was due to instrumental criteria underlying the whole process of conversion. The adoption of Islam in Indonesia did not resolve the contradiction between universalistic and particularistic codes and social units but rather institutionalized them. One may bring a few facts to support this thesis. For example, Ricklefs (1972) examined three versions of the Javanese chronicle called Badad Tanah Ojaw, dealing with the story of the Madjapahit kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century (1478). When referring to the oldest version, he stated that it cannot be taken as an objective history, but it certainly represents the point of view of the ‘poets’ who wrote them and presumably also of the royal patrons in whose courts they were written (1974, p. 294). From this point of view, it is clear that writers did not look upon the fall of the Madjapahit as a consequence of the clash between Muslim and Hindu-Javanese traditions, but rather as a continuity of the two cultures. The lack of sufficient data to support this ‘subjective history’ does not change its importance. We may assume that in the eyes of some of the upper-class Javanese the introduction of Islam was not a ‘decisive break’ from the older Hindu-Buddhist culture. This view may have arisen from their interpretation of Islam as a compromise between primordial and universal ingredients. This can be supported by the fact that the isolated islands (like Bali) and the well-integrated tribes (like the Batak in Sumatra), were not converted to Islam (Pederson 1970). Their rulers did not face the tension between universalism and particularism until the late nineteenth century and had no need to solve problems of structural dissonance. To conclude, Indonesian Islam spread because it combined antagonistic orientations, enabling the various ‘big’ and ‘little’ traditions to coexist peacefully among the different layers of society. It was this dual nature of Indonesian Islam which made it an inefficient tool for promoting social change.

4. The transformative capacity of Indonesian Islam

The previous discussion brings us to the last question: to what extent does the nature of Islam in Indonesia explain its capacity to initiate or absorb modern patterns of political and economic change?
In order to answer this question, let us elaborate on the argument that it was according to the interests of both local rulers and merchants to adopt the Sufi version of Islam (including some of its mystical elements), and that this adopted pattern impeded modernization in Indonesia.

Sufism was developed in Asia after the invasion of the Mongols and the destruction of the Caliphate in 1258. In order to fill the political vacuum which developed after this event, the Sufi order (or sect) offered a doctrine which unified the ruler with transcendental elements. Consequently, spiritual, mystical elements were utilized to legitimize political authority in such a way that the latter had no meaning without the former (Atbar 1978).

The local rulers encountered in this pattern efficient means to enhance their position and legitimacy after the decline of the Majapahit empire. The merchants, and probably also the landlords, were interested in stabilizing the social order and accepted the Sufi version also as a useful device to achieve this goal. This approach enables us to understand why the mystic, transcendental version of absolute power was accepted in Indonesia (Anderson 1972), and not the patrimonial, traditional Islamic pattern of dominance (Turner 1974).

This approach also explains why large numbers of the poor peasants remained Abangans or became only 'nominal' Muslims. Their interests were different from those of the local rulers and merchants. Islam was adopted in different versions, among different groups in Indonesia (Geertz 1968, p. 13), because it served different interests. Thus, it was not utilized as an integrative factor but rather as a divisive one. In the very core of the society, however, the Sufi version was the dominant one. The acceptance of the Sufi pattern of ideology and organization explains to a large extent the millenarian response of the Indonesians to the problem of change and economic frustration (van der Kroef 1959; Peacock 1968). With the lack of stable, open symbols to face modern pressures, Indonesian society responded in a Utopian manner, exemplified in messianism or Sukarno's conspicuous slogans (Kahane 1973).

Islamic values, as they were adopted by the Indonesians, were not fully adequate to legitimize social systems beyond the primordial elements or the extended family level, nor could they legitimate a regime based on pure primordial elements. This explains why, when the ruler of the Mataram kingdom in central Java converted to Islam in order to legitimize his position in the seventeenth century, he was neither able to develop an adequate system to cope with the
Dutch administration, nor to establish a new 'feudal' regime (de Graaf and Pigeaud 1976; Moertono 1968).

The mystic-ritualistic nature of Indonesian Islam also partially explains why Islam provided the main basis for the peasants' revolts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Java, as well as their millenarian nature (Benda and Castles 1969; Giap 1967; Kartodirdjo 1966 and 1973; King 1973; Korver 1976; van der Kroef 1959). The only way to cope with the contradiction involved in Indonesia's Islam was to raise the belief to the spiritual-ritualistic level. In this way, Islam was able to fill the religious vacuum for the poor peasants.

The spread of Islam in Indonesia encouraged the 'dual' or 'plural' structure (14) based on a mixture of primordialism and universalism. Such a pattern provided a weak, anomic tool for meeting the conditions created by the Dutch. Thus the response to stress, which emerged under Dutch colonialism, to escape to millenarianism and a mystical, ritualistic, unreal world, was not randomly developed. Islam came as a substitute for the Hindu traditional centers in order to cope with the process of political expansion and commercialization. It institutionalized the contradictions in Indonesian society among the different orientations and groups without providing any bridging mechanisms between them. The connection of the different codes was through brokerage roles and institutions rather than mediatory mechanisms (Kahane 1976). This further increased the plural nature of the society.

Thus Indonesian Islam impeded the process of change until the very beginning of the twentieth century (Alisjahabana 1966). From this time on a new generation of educated Muslims, who had participated in the Dutch school system, were able, at least partially, to moderate or even transform the anomic impact of Islam. Various trends in Muslim parties such as the Muhammadijah, Sarakat Islam, Masjumi and even the Nahadatul Ulama had been perhaps the indicators of this phenomenon.

(14) Furnivall's definition of Indonesia as a 'plural society': 'on looking at a plural society in its political aspect one can distinguish three characteristic features: the society as a whole comprises separated racial sections; each section is an aggregate of individuals rather than a corporate or organic whole; and as individuals their social life is incomplete' (1956, p. 306). Economically, he defined plurality: 'Tensions between conflicting economic groups were reinforced by corresponding splits on racial lines. The various groups met only in the market as competitors or opponents. There was even an absence of common standards of conduct between the groups in the economic sphere, each group behaving according to standards particular to itself' (1956, p. 311).

For the definition of Indonesian dualism see Boeke (1953), Higgins (1956), and Sadli (1971).
Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to investigate to what extent the causes of and the pattern by which Islam spread into Indonesia can be employed to explain Indonesia’s amorphic and millenaristic response to Dutch colonialism and to modernization in general.

Islam’s limited modernizing power has been explained in terms of the nature of its basic ethic and patrimonial structure (Turner 1974; Rodinson 1974). However, such general explanations are insufficient to cope with the variations within the Muslim world. This paper has tested eight explanations of the spread of Islam into Indonesia, eliminating some and combining others in an attempt to reach a more comprehensive thesis.

Basically, we claim that the decline of the three major Hindu-based kingdoms in Indonesia during the eleventh and sixteenth centuries came about because of their symbolic and institutional inability to combine central bureaucratic frameworks, commercial interests and non-market-oriented agriculture. When these kingdoms declined, the Sufi version of Islam filled the cultural vacuum. It was accepted by a coalition of merchants and local rulers who wished to increase their political powers and economically exploit the peasants. Two methods were used for this purpose. First, Islam was practiced by a small group of religious activists (Santri) in the upper echelons of village society, while a large part of the peasantry remained nominal Muslims or ‘Abangans’. In this way the more egalitarian universal impact of Islam was avoided, and the local chiefs were able to maintain control over the peasants. Secondly, to serve the interests of the merchants, a large group of economic and judicial peddlars was utilized. They acted as brokers between the primordial social units and the cities. These brokers bartered with the peasants, thereby connecting them to the market, but isolating them from the market principle (15). In this way, commercial development in Indonesia

(15) Briefly, the middleman can be defined as an actor who is familiar with the cultural, institutional and linguistic codes of two or more distinct social systems or sectors. There are two types of middlemen. One can be defined as a broker or agent whose function is to transfer commodities from one sector to the other while keeping the sectors themselves separate. For example, the broker collects grain from the peasants and sells it in the market. With the money thus obtained he buys other basic products, which he uses to reimburse the peasants for their grain. In this way, although the peasants produce for the market, they neither understand nor participate in the modern principles of price mechanism and marketing.

The other type of middleman is a mediator—an agent whose job is to interpret to the people of one sector the terms of those of another. The linkage is formed by the fusion of the concepts of the two sectors. The broker separates the sectors by his
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reinforced the primordial units and non-market principles. Thus, in its Indonesian version, Islam legitimized structural duality, that is, the continuation of the primordial pattern of organization together with the provision of an extra-primordial base for the commercial classes. Dutch colonialism imposed Western arrangements such as modern bureaucracy, export-oriented agriculture, market systems, etc. While this imposition was mitigated to some extent by the Dutch ‘dual policy’ of land cultivation and the employment of local rulers as administrators, the overall impact was strong enough to pose a threat to traditional society.

Because of its dual nature in Indonesia, Islam was neither capable of absorbing colonial pressures nor capable of constructing alternatives to them. It rather reinforced the plural trends already existing in Indonesian society.*

* This paper is a part of a broader program undertaken at the Harry S. Truman Institute (the Unit of Research on Modernization and Development) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I would like to thank Professors S. N. Eisenstadt and N. Levtzion for their beneficial comments on an earlier version of this paper.

actions; the mediator joins them into one system. In the short run, the mediator would be more efficient than the broker in ensuring relative legitimation and economic profit to the colonialists. In the long run, however, it appeared that the colonial powers became far more dependent on the mediator than they would have been on the broker since the former is able to manipulate a redefined group as a quasi-modern political tool (Kahane 1976, p. 292).

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