

## 'Indianization' of Indonesia in an Historical Sketch

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### Abstract

*This Article gives some remarks on the history of Indianization in Indonesian archipelago in me remote history. The illustration includes bow this process of Indian influences grew and developed, both in the palaces and the societies. Given this remark the writer comes to the projection on how natural this process was. By reflecting the past the writer is sure that the plurality of religions and cultures in Indonesia is a kind of destiny to be faced peacefully in order to keep the harmony in the nation's social life. this article argues that, (1) In the process of Indianization, mostly there was pacific penetration like through cultural means and inter-marriage; (2) in the process of Indianization, mostly there was pacific penetration like through cultural means and inter-marriage.*

**Keywords:** *Indonesian history, Hinduism, Buddhism, history of Java*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, a state populated by more than 225 million souls, with three thousand islands, and a distance of some 3,400 miles (BPS, 2004), is the biggest state of archipelago in the world. This country is always open to outside thoughts and welcome to foreign cultures, so that although Islam, Christian, Catholic, Hinduism and Buddhism are not the original religion of Indonesians; those world religions are recognized in the very sole foundation of the country, the Pancasila (Rahardi in Nur Achmad ed., 2001). From circulated information, it is concluded that in origin Indonesian religious pattern was animistic. Then, in the first century, owing to trading contacts with India, Hindu-Buddhist culture penetrated Indonesia. The spread of Hinduism often connected with the developments of big kingdoms in Java. The fell of Majapahit and the emergence of a new kingdom, Mataram, colored by Islam at seventh century, ended those Hinduist kingdoms. Having dominated by Hinduism and Buddhism for about one millennium, Indonesian received Islamic culture. Gigantically, Islam entered Southeast Asia at eleven century, since then Islam dominated Indonesia until the coming of Western culture (Shihab, 1999).

The Netherlands came to Banten at 1596 and was involved in gaining fortune in me tropical archipelago with Portuguese, English, and Spanish. At the end, the Netherlands finally succeeded in mastering Indonesia and at the eighteenth century won the war with Muslim Mataram (Shihab, 1999). The coming of Europeans was also the coming of Christianity in Indonesian archipelago. Hereafter many religious faiths were adhered by Indonesian. In 2004 (BPS, 2004), the majority of the population was Muslims (85%). That leaves 15% for Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of a variety of cultic and animist religions.

### B. METHODOLOGY

This research uses literature study by examining a variety of journals and books related to antropology and history. Therefore, the method used in this study is analytic, in that this study will analyze the logic of ideas proposed by the figure under discussion and to elucidate the meaning of

his concepts (Peterson, 1991). The type of the research is descriptive and verificative, while the method used both descriptive and book survey or content analysis.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Pre-Indianization**

Most likely, the dominant religious pattern at the time Hinduism and Buddhism entered the Indonesian Archipelago-during the first millennium of Christ until the end of thirteenth century-was a mixture of pagan animism and mysticism. Animism found expression primarily in spirit worship, which acknowledged the existence of spirits in living persons, in the dead, and in inanimate objects. These spirits were believed to bring healthy, fertility, and welfare. In order to admire the good spirits and pacify the bad spirits, there were ritual ceremonies done at harvest, natal, married, and death.

As cultural artifacts, ruins of rock statute and ancient places of worship have been found in South Sumatera and West Java. There are many sculptures in Banten, West Java, called as living megalithic culture. The biggest of them is a statue called Area Domas. This monument is believed to be a symbol of the Only Batara as the creator of spirits, and to him all spirits are gone back (Michrob and Chudari, 1993). What left in Batak, North Sumatra, from animistic and ancestral worship is an ideology of kinship and adat law. Genealogical kinship (marga) is an honor of the ancestral source of life and adat is the ancestral law. It is only when the spirits of the ancestors rest easy can salvation being expected. For the Batak every moment and every aspect of life was a struggle between his own soul, called 'tondi', and countless hordes of spirits called 'begu (Parkin, 1978; Smith in Bruner and Becker, 1979).

During the ascendancy of Hinduism and Buddhism in the archipelago, between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, this animistic belief survived in a subdued form and exercised some considerable influence on these new religions (Federspiel, 1970). From the text of *Negarakeragama* (1365 AD.), Pigeaud (1962) found that the Javanese was the worshippers of ancestor (particularly the most magical one), of the powers ruling nature (such as the divine patroness of agriculture *Devi Shri*, the divine Patroness of the Southern Ocean and the realm of Death *Ratu Lara Kidul*, etc.), and of fetishism of Royal charters, etc. To Pigeaud (1962), this is 'a kind of adaptation of pristine belief to imported Indian religion'. It is noteworthy to quote Pigeaud (1962) saying that 'no matter whether attended by Shaivite and Buddhist priests or by Muslim divines, ancestor worship was the principal religious concern of bereaved Javanese.'

Animistic belief is still alive in Indonesia, since the government as Indonesian culture acknowledges it. It is under the control of Ministry of Education and Culture so that tribes such as Baduy, Tengger, Karo, Dani, Asmat, etc. still alive and regarded as along with Pancasila, which one of its pillars says: the Oneness of God. Because of its uniqueness, the government preserves animistic life of some Indonesian as a business of tourism. In business of entertainment, these local beliefs still influencing national cinema through mystical films (INIS Newsletter vol. XIV, Leiden, 1997).

### **2. Indianization Agents and Means**

Indians came to the Indonesian archipelago likely in the first years of Christ (Poerbatjaraka and Hadidjaja, 1952). Since then, Indian religions, particularly Shaivistic sect of Hinduism and Buddhism entered the archipelago through Indian and Malay trade exchange, though

intermarriage, political aggression, and religious mission. Parkin (1978) offers a complexity of activities by trading (Vaisya Theory), political conquest (Ksatriya Theory), and religious propagation (Brahman Theory) is all contributed to Indianization of Indonesia. He says that Netherlands's experts had advocated all of these theories. Kanchan (1990) even says that where was migration from India into Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. This migration was caused by many reasons: political, social, religious, and economic. Something unique in Kanchan's theory is that his conclusion of Migration is based on traditions, not by historical evidences like those used by his Netherlands's counterparts. What he means by tradition is a story, which is 'imprisoned in the heart of the people and passed down from generation to generation by word or mouth'. His study consist Indian outlooks on how their cultures and religions came into existence in Indonesian archipelago.

As a result of intensive and multi-level contacts, Java particularly, finally was being Hinduized. A clear picture how Hinduism established in Indonesia is the fact that there were Hindu kingdoms in West Java (Tarumanagara), that is, by the fact that mere were three Sanskrit inscriptions engraved on a rock at me foot of a hill south of Jakarta may be dated circa 450 A.D. or a little earlier. Two of them refer to the nearby footprints of Purnawarman, King of Taruma, of whom it is said, 'whose footsteps are like those of Vishnu'. Another of them mentions that Purnawarman fulfilled Brahmanic rites. The third is close to the footprints of the royal elephant and informs us that Purnawarman was engaged in building an irrigation system (Parkin, 1978). This was also happened in Central Java (Hindu Mataram) around fifth century (Damami, 2002).

So as Hinduism, Buddhism was also closed to kingdoms. Buddhist missionaries visited palaces in Indonesia, gave sermons, and invited rulers and their families to convert to their religion. Through this form of teaching they developed religious hierarchy. Furthermore, Indian preachers also arranged Indonesian converts to visit Buddhist viharas in India. When they came back to Indonesia, they became preachers with their own to promote Buddhist teachings and philosophy (Shihab, 1999).

### **3. Evidence of Indianization**

It is an easy way to think that there was Indianization in Indonesia. By Indianization, Harry Parkin (1978) means, 'the expansion of an organized culture that was founded upon the Indian conception of royalty, was characterized by Hindus or Buddhist cults, the mythology of the Puranas, and the observance of the Dharmasastras, and expressed itself in the Sanskrit language.' Indianization was not merely one episode in the history of Indonesia; rather it is the history of the archipelago during the first fifteen centuries of our era. It is the long formative period of Indonesian Culture between the late Neolithic civilization and the arrival of Islamization. Here some evident of Indianization from political, cultural, and religious life of Indonesian history.

#### **a. Political Force**

As mentioned before, one of Hindu-Buddhist influence in Indonesia is its emergence in political force. The most outstanding Indianized kingdom after Tarumanagara and Hindu Mataram was Mahayanan Buddhist Sriwijaya (650-1350 A.D.), in south Sumatra, now Palembang. Its position made that city strategically placed to control the maritime traffic and trade between the great powers of India and China. During the tenth and eleventh centuries Sriwijaya dominated the politics and trade of South-east Asia. It remained a power, although in decline, until the thirteenth century (Parkin, 1978).

Prior to the end of Indian period, the last Indianized kingdom, the Majapahit, represented Hinduism. Founded in 1294 by Prince Vijaya (Kertarajasa), this kingdom was a strong Hindu-Javanese civilization. By Gajah Mada who was 'patih' (prime minister) who operate the kingdom 1328-1350 and Hayam Wuruk (Rajasanagara) (1350-1389), mapahit expanded its power so that it ruled the whole archipelago (Parkin, 1978). Gradually, however, Majapahit disintegrated, weakened by the rise of Malacca as a commercial center and by the spread of Islam (Peacock, 1973). Throughout 1513-1528, Javanese Muslim kingdoms from north coastal areas such as Demak and Pajang attacked the kingdom (Damami, 2002). Its rulers ran to Bali Island. Until now Bali is predominated by Hindu (Shihab, 1999).

### **b. Culture**

The spread of Indian culture in Indonesia is easy to proof. We could not deny the fact that architectural legacy such as temples of Borobudur, Prambanan, Sewu, etc. and mystical life of Javanese show that influence. Besides, cultural effect of Indianization also demonstrates by the remaining concept of royalty in Javanese kingdoms. According to the poet of Majapahit, the king was a god: 'Shiva-Buddha is He, material-immaterial by nature'. 'Of Airlangga, prince of Mataram, it is said that he was an incarnation of Vishnu, and also incarnated as Shiva, an event celebrated by a volcanic eruption of his birth. Ken Angrok, incarnated as Vishnu, was also the adopted child of Shiva (Peacock, 1973). This concept of royalty bore the concept of aristocracy in Javanese society. This aristocracy, called priyayi, was still alive at the time of Geertz research (1960) so that he concludes that there was Indian legacy there.

Among the most expressive of Javanese perception of Hindu mythology is the shadow play, the wayang kulit Performed by a sacred puppeteer (dalang) who moved leather figures in front of an oil lamp to cast flickering shadows on a white screen, the wayang kulit was enjoyed and revered by Javanese even before the founding of Majapahit. Wayang kulit, a performance, which lasted all night, was a rite as well as a drama. Wayang worshipped the gods, placated the spirits, purified the soul, and harmonized the community as well as portraying tales of the Ramayana and Mahabharata (Peacock, 1973). The book of Mahabharata is known as created by Vyasa Oavanese: Abiyasa) tells a story of Pendava (good party) and Korava (bad party). The book of Ramayana is recognized as written by Valmiki, which is supposed as older than Mahabharata. Ramayana is identified as coming from Vishnuistic sect whereas Mahabharata is coming from Shivaistic sect (Poerbatjaraka and Hadidjaja, 1952). This wayang with epic themes of India was very popular in the villages, just before converted into Islamic themes.

Besides wayang, there are many things illustrating how strong Indian influence was in Indonesia. Such things are Javanese and Balinese dances, Indian motifs in traditional batik design, and Sanskrit-loan words.

### **c. Religion**

It should be noted that Indian period shows big change in history of religion in Indonesia. First Shivaistic Hinduism established in Tarumanagara and Mataram of Java and Minangkabau of Sumatra (Neumann, 1972). Then, Theravada Buddhism reached the country, and then substituted by Mahayana Buddhism in Sumatra and Java. Buddhists remained strong in Sumatra, but finally Hindu won Java and Kalimantan (Borneo) where Kutai and Daha were the strongest kingdoms (Wildan, 2000). In the religious field, Mahayana Buddhism (with Tantric association) and Hinduism (particularly Syaivism, but also Vishnuism) consider as spiritual practices dominantly in Indonesian society at the time of Indianization. Pigeaud (1962) concludes, that in the 14th century Vishnuism

seems to have had adherents in the Kadiri. The second Majapahit ruler, Jayanagara, who was a consecrated King of Kadiri, and King Hayam Wuruk's energetic uncle of Wengker, the representative of Kadiri interests at the Majapahit Court, were given Wishnuite last resting places. Furthermore, he says that Javanese vegetation myths of the couple Devi Sri (Goddess of agriculture) and Sadhana (Vishnu) form another connection between Wishnuism and spirit worship.

Although have the same interests, Hinduism and Buddhism have been syncretized each other. Buddhist-Syaivistic syncretism could be examined by a sacred Javanese script Smaradallana Hyang Kamahayanikan, which attempts to syncretize Hindu Trimurti gods with Mallayana Buddlust gods (Poerbatjaraka and Hadidjaja, 1952). King Dharmawangsa legally adapted this kind of syncretism (Damanli, 2002). Related to this, Pigeaud (1962) says that the amalgamation of Syiva and Buddha is a characteristic of Javanese religion. This kind of religious incorporation does not only belong to Java. It also found in Sumatra. Parkin (1978) notes that the oldest Sivaite document found, i.e. a 56 cm high stone Ganesha, in Batakland, Sumatra, a date of which marks 8th or 9th century. To him, 'this isolated evidence of Saivism close to a predominantly Mahaya Buddhist area prepares us to find traces of the Tantric syncretism of Buddhism with Saivism which was a vigorous feature of the Indianization of the archipelago.' In the modern Hindu Bali theology, moreover, Buddha is considered to be Syiva's brother (Shihab, 1999). It is most likely that during Indianization, there were religions living side-by- side, even there was an amalgamation of those religions. Negarakertagama indicates that in the 14th century Java there was an arrangement in accordance with the Indian triad Brahma-Shiwa-Vishnu, Brahma being replaced by Buddha. All these only pave the way to conclude that there was cluck Indianization in the Indonesian archipelago.

#### **4. Nature and Character of Indianization**

Indianization, both Hinduism and Buddhism, succeeded in large part because they incorporated and adapted to indigenous religious beliefs, i.e. animism. Like Indians, Indonesian society, especially Javanese, was also divided into class stratification although with the lack of Indonesian emphasis on pollution and purity (Peacock, 1973). Like Indians too, Indonesians have a Hinduistic mystical tradition. In remote schools (sagara), a community of learned scholars and holy men lived in 'huts' (pondok) like those later to form Muslim schools (pesantren) (Pigeaud, 1962). The traditional wayang shows and the gamelan orchestras, which developed their strong ties with mystical practices and Hindu mythology during this period, continued to reflect Javanese values and to mirror the Javanese outlook on life. The great Borobudur monument near Yogyakarta also shows considerable concern for ancestor worship and animism in its bas-relief and ornamentation, despite its many stupas and its claim to be a Buddhist shrine (Federspiel, 1970). This strong Indian influence covered a time of millennium, beginning from the early six century until the fifteenth century when Islam coming and play a role as a new influential culture. How Islamic culture substitutes Indian culture would be intriguing question to some intellectuals. To this, Al-Attas (in Shihab, 1999) says that during its domination, Hinduism was an exclusive cult that only involved by preachers and rulers. Hinduism was a superstructure defended especially by the ruling elite. The majority people never understood philosophical and theological dimension of Hinduism and Buddhism. They were only interested in its aesthetical aspects. Intellectual speculation and metaphysical dimension had never been popular. It is not surprising that there were no intellectuals and reformists of Hindu and Buddhist in this region. Legge (in Shihab, 1999) says, Hindu adherents, although inhabited in towns, 'still separated from its society.'

The influential Hindu-Buddhist culture was finally substituted by Islamic culture. This conversion of society is not without victim. Some wars were there in the archipelago. It is likely that Indonesian society massively converted into Islam because of their rulers' conversion. But before the conversion of the rulers, Islam had been there for such a long time, so that culturally penetrated into the heart of Indonesian society.

### **5. Post-Indianization**

As Hinduism and Buddhism reached the Indonesian archipelago from India, similarly did Islam arrive in force to the archipelago from India. It was India first which encompassed Islamization. It is marked by Alauddin's victory over Rai Karnadeva II and conquest of Gujarat in 1297. This triumph radically transformed Indian religious life into Islamic in character (Parkin, 1978). And then being Indianized, Indonesian easily converted to Islam. Parkin (1978) believes that 'perhaps the greatest effect of Indianization in the archipelago was the Islamization of its peoples.' It was the Indian Muslims from Gujarat who financed powerful missionaries from India to convert the people in Malaya, Java and Sumatra (Kanchan, 1990).

In Java, when Majapahit in the top triumph kingdom of Java, estimated there was several persons embraced Islam, coming from outside. Through the time Muslims became more and more in number. Still, they were lived in north-Javan coastal areas of trading enclaves such as Tuban, Sedayu, and Gresik. Muslim traders, instead of trading, also proselytized their own religion to the natives. This process finally Islamized the aristocrats, having influenced the lower people. The Majapahit meanwhile was in declining power (Poerbatjaraka and Hadidjaja, 1952). And by the campaigns against Majapahit by both kingdoms, the story of Indianization formally came to an end, except what was in Bali. In Aceh, to this period (around 13<sup>th</sup> Century), there was a small Islamic kingdom, the Samudera Pasai (Hasymi, 1981). And in the following century there was the Kingdom of Malacca, right to the Malaysian peninsula. Since then, the two kingdoms developed into the centers of merchandise and ports. It was to these kingdoms that people came and communicated each other, which in the end brought them to the new religion. Islam Returning to their homes, they spread Islam in their homelands. Through these streams of people Islam as a religion and culture widely spread into South Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Maluku. It was in this situation that many local kings and coastal princes embraced Islam. Among the examples are Demak (around 15<sup>th</sup> Century), Ternate (around 15<sup>th</sup> Century), Gowa (16<sup>th</sup> Century), and Banjar (16<sup>th</sup> Century) (Taylor, 2003). The interior lands of the archipelago, however, were lately Islamized. Inland Aceh and West Sumatera, for example, were Islamized by ways of political campaign around 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Poesponegoro, 2008).

It could be inferred, here, that Vaisya theory that religion brought by military ways was not happened in the Islamization of the archipelago. This fact is recognized by Vlekke (2003), saying that religious wars were hardly happened in the history of Java. Islamization of Java was mostly performed by ways of education and preaching (Feillard, 1999). There was possibility that pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools) took over pre-Islamic centers of religions.

### **D. CONCLUSION**

The above explanation restates that Indian influences were very rooted in Indonesian archipelago. This Indianization was brought by three major classes: the merchants, the rulers, and the religious preachers. The three classes showed how they interacted with people, that is, by economic, political, and religious means. Among the evidences of this Indianization were that politically there were Hindu kingdoms such as Sanjaya, Kutai, and Majapahit; and Buddhist kingdoms such as

Shailendra and Sriwijaya. In cultural field, the tradition of wayang (puppet) with Indian themes is very deeply rooted in the heart of Indonesian people, up till now. In the religious field, the temples show that Indonesian people are very religious; this was in its time dominated by Indian religions.

In the process of Indianization, mostly there was pacific penetration like through cultural means and inter-marriage. So pacific it was that religious differences were unnoticed for timelessly religious syncretism in practice. In addition, either before or after the process of Indianization there was cultural acculturation in the tradition of Indonesian people. To the original believes of the people such as animism and dynamism Indian culture penetrated freely and did some kinds of syncretism, so that the idea of spirits and ancestor worship was there in Hindu and Buddhist practical religions. It was also happened in the culture coming after the massif process of Indian culture, that is, the Islamic culture. Besides that Islam came through the land of India and brought by Indian people, it was also mediated by Indian culture such as *wayang* (shadow puppet).

In other words, in the history, India was a kind of 'elder brother' for Indonesian people. It is recognized that human movements were performed from the centers of civilization in the Middle East and Mediterranean people to India and China, and then to the periphery, either by land or by sea. All the journeys were of course brought 'cultural baggage' opening the eyes of those uncivilized people. Nevertheless, those periphery people could also build their own civilization at last. Javanese people were admitted by Sir Thomas Sanford Raffles as having their own civilization assigned by such monumental works as the Temples of Borobudur, Prambanan, etc. Here, then, Raffles mentioned Java as an independent, unified, and sovereign nation, as written in his book, *The History of Java*.

This additional remark here is to affix that even though there is a time gap of building civilization between India and Indonesia, it is to the nations to develop and to advance themselves at last. "No matter who the first, the important thing is who the endured," could be said here.

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