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Rethinking Javanese Islam. Towards new descriptions of Javanese traditions

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Citation

Boogert, J. W. P. van den. (2015, November 18). *Rethinking Javanese Islam. Towards new descriptions of Javanese traditions*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/36400>

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Issue Date: 2015-11-18

15. Propositions

Stellingen behorende bij het proefschrift
“Rethinking Javanese Islam.
Towards new descriptions of Javanese traditions.”
door Jochem van den Boogert

- I. The assumption of the universality of religion underlies the study of Javanese culture.
- II. Javanese Studies’ understanding of Javanese culture has been essentially informed by Christian (Protestant) theology. Both the conceptual reservoir with which Javanese traditions have been described and the way salient differences between Western and Javanese culture have been delineated are rooted in Christian theology. The creation of a Javanese religion is a case in point.
- III. The orientalist misrepresentation of Javanese Islam is not its reduction of Javanese Islam to a less than truly Islamic religion, but rather its concoction of a Javanese religion from (fragments of) Javanese traditions. It shares this misrepresentation with post-colonial scholarship.
- IV. Contemporary discussions within Javanese studies on the nature of Javanese Islam -e.g. Is it syncretist or Islamic?- merely repeat standpoints and arguments from the 19th century. The debate has not evolved in the last 150 years.
- V. The concept of syncretist Javanese Islam (a.k.a Javanism) did not have a Javanese equivalent prior to its introduction through the Western discourse on Javanese religion.

- VI. The concepts syncretist Javanese Islam and local Javanese Islam refer to two different phenomena.
- VII. It makes more sense to speak of (syncretist) Javanese Islam as an experiential entity in the experiential world of the West than as an entity in Javanese reality.
- VIII. Both the position that holds that Javanese Islam is a syncretist religion and the one that holds that Javanese Islam is a local or native form of Islam resort to arguments that are instances of *petitio principii*: they treat as evidence that what needs to be proven.
- IX. It makes little sense to think of the Enlightenment as a breaking away from theology. Most of Enlightenment thought is in fact secularised theology.
- X. Postcolonial scholarship all too often explains orientalist misrepresentations of non-Western cultures as tools of colonial hegemony. However, the fact that a concept has been used in colonial rhetoric is in itself not sufficient evidence for it originating from it. The postcolonial argument thus neither explains the origin, nor the specific shape and structure of orientalist misrepresentations.
- XI. Debunking someone's beliefs, opinions or knowledge is often mistaken for debunking the person who holds them.
- XII. "Of the desires, some are natural and necessary, some are natural but not necessary, and some are neither natural nor necessary, but owe their existence to vain imagination." (Epicurus) The desire to write a PhD dissertation appears to fall in the latter category.