

**The SLAMETAN in a JAVANESE SOCIETY:
A comparative study of Clifford Geertz's *The Religion of Java* (1960) and Andrew Beatty's
Varieties of Javanese Religion (1999)**

Maulana

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: maulana@uinjkt.ac.id

ABSTRAK

Selamatan merupakan ritual penting dalam Masyarakat Jawa. Sehingga tidak heran dua Antropolog Barat Clifford Geertz dan Andrew Beatty tertarik untuk meneliti topic tersebut. Beberapa perbedaan bisa ditemukan dalam kajian mereka. Pertama, Clifford Geertz melakukan penelitiannya di Pare. Sedangkan Andrew Beatty melakukan riset di Kota Bayu. Kedua, Clifford Geertz menggali stratifikasi social masyarakat Jawa yang melahirkan tiga varian; santri, priyayi, dan abangan. Pada sisi lain Andrew Beatty lebih menitik beratkan pada keintiman hubungan sosial masyarakat Islam yang saleh, Islam mistik, hindu, dan kejawen. Sehingga titik tekan mereka pun berbeda dalam kaitannya dengan selamatan. Bagi Geertz, selamatan bukanlah ajaran Islam melainkan budaya Jawa. Sementara Beatty berpendapat bahwa Selamatan berfungsi sangat penting dalam menjalin solidaritas sosial masyarakat Islam Saleh, Islam Mistik, Kejawen dan Hindu.

Keyword: *Antropologi, Slametan, Javanes*

INTRODUCTION

Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty did their fieldwork in a Javanese society, East Java. However, the setting of their research is different. Geertz did his research in Modjokuto, pseudonym for Pare, while Beatty did his fieldwork in Bayu, a village in Banyuwangi. Modjokuto had 20.000 inhabitants at that time. It was a small town with five major occupational types, namely farmer, petty trader, independent artisan, manual laborer, and white-collar clerk. These five main occupations represented the Javanese population of Modjokuto. Bayu, on the contrary, was a village of 2.430 souls about six miles from the town. Agricultural settlement was a typical village of Bayu, such as other villages in Java. It means that farmer was a major occupation there.

However, people who did not have a land work as builder's labourers in Banyuwangi and its surrounding areas. Furthermore, there was

also a sprinkling of artisans, petty traders, and store-keepers. In fact, if we compare these two fieldworks, Modjokuto and Bayu, it can be assumed that Modjokuto was a larger area than Bayu. From its population and occupation, Modjokuto was a more complex region than Bayu. It seems that Bayu was a more 'traditional' society. It is clear that the setting of Clifford Geertz's research is not only in the village, but also in the town. Andrew Beatty, however, did his research only in the village .

Clifford Geertz conducted the fieldwork for his Ph.D research under supervision of Cora Dubois in Pare from May 1953 to September 1954. This study was submitted to the Harvard University in 1956 and published in 1960. He completed his research into four phases. The first phase, from September 1951 to July 1952, was an intensive preparation learning Indonesian language in Harvard University. July to October of 1952, he spent in the Netherlands interviewing Dutch scholars on Indonesia. The second

phase, from October 1952 to May 1953, was spent mainly in Jogjakarta. A month and a half was also spent in Jakarta. The third phase, from May 1953 to September 1954, comprised the fieldwork period and it was done in Modjokuto. The final phase, from October 1954 to August 1955, was the writing of the report. It is done when he was employed as a research assistant at the Center for International Studies, at the Massachusetts Institute of technology. Andrew Beatty, however, carried out his research over two periods. The first period is from December 1991 to June 1993. The second period is from April 1996 to April 1997. In fact, the research of his book, *varieties of Javanese religion*, derived mainly from his first period.

Clifford Geertz is a well-known anthropologist who did his fieldwork in the era of old order regime. The result of his research is a book called *The Religion of Java*. Shortly after its publication, this book has become a 'hot' debate both in Indonesia and Western countries. This book have inspired many scholars in doing their research in South-east Asian, particularly in Indonesia.

Andrew Beatty did his anthropological research in 1990s when the new order administration had a close relationship with Islam. It is different from Geertz's fieldwork, Beatty chose a village which there was a mutual connection between normative piety, mysticism, Javanism, and Hinduism. Therefore, his main aim is to give a description on how the diversity in a Javanese society 'coexisting in great intimacy within a single social framework'. On the contrary, the main theme of Clifford Geertz's book is the description of the ideological conflict between three variants, namely *abangan*, *santri* and *priyayi* in a Javanese society.

In this paper, I will discuss the work of these two anthropologists in order to know their ways in doing their anthropological research. First of all, I will compare these two books, particularly on Javanese Religion. After that, I will discuss their understanding on the subject of the *slametan*. In this case, I will try to relate their works with other articles concerning *slametan* to enrich this paper.

Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty on Javanese Religion

A Javanese society is always interesting object of research for many scholars. This is because a Javanese society is a complex society. Its language, for instance, has some levels, i.e. *ngoko*, *kromo*, etc. Therefore, it is understandable that Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty are also interested in doing their fieldworks in a Javanese society. However, both scholars were not interested in its language but they were interested in its religion.

In this case, Clifford Geertz is a well-known scholar who analyzed both the relation between religion and culture and the relation between the religion and politics. The relation between religion, particularly Islam, and culture, in this case Javanese culture, inspired many scholars to see the interconnection between them more deeply. One of them is Andrew Beatty. Andrew Beatty was doing the research about Javanese religion in a Javanese society because he was inspired by Clifford Geertz.. However, we will see whether the work of Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, and the work of Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion*, have the same idea or not. Although these two scholars focused on the same topic, namely Javanese Religion, I believe that both of these scholars have some basic differences in understanding Javanese Religion.

The first difference is on their methods and theoretical inside. Clifford Geertz's analysis was supported only by his fieldwork's result. He did not lean on written book as his reference. By asking villagers, men and women, participating and observing certain people in a certain community, Geertz then explaining a serious and inspirative attempt to write a social and cultural report of a Javanese society in Modjokuto. He admitted that the bulk of the period of research was not spent in the formal interviewing of specialized informants but in more participant observation activities. His theoretical analysis is merely ethnographic by using microscopic approach.

Andrew Beatty, however, started his writing by analysing and comparing theoretical, method, and approach of some Anthropologists, such as

Clifford Geertz and Mark W Woodward. He also used many references to complete his research. Furthermore, Andrew Beatty gave attention to the importance of historical analysis in his research. In the introduction, he explained a historical outline of his fieldwork based on some references written by scholars. In this sense, we can see that Clifford Geertz only used anthropological technique to complete his research. Andrew Beatty, however, combined the technique of anthropology and history to give a credible report.

The second difference is on the terminology or terms they used. According to Clifford Geertz, there are three variants in Javanese religion. They are *abangan*, *santri*, and *priyayi*. In this case, Andrew Beatty did not use such terms. He preferred to use some terms such as mystic Javanists, pious Muslims, and Hinduism Javanists instead of using such terms. Perhaps, he wanted to avoid critical comments since many scholars, such as Harsja W. Bahtiar, Ricklefs, Suparlan, Emmerson, and other scholars had criticized these three variants, particularly *priyayi* term. According to them, *priyayi* is not a religious variant, but it is a social group or a status class in a Javanese society.

This term is not comparable to the other two varieties, namely *abangan* and *santri*. In this case, Kartodirdjo proposed javanism or *kejawen* instead of using the term of *priyayi*. According to him, Javanism or *kejawen* is a proper term “implying an emphasis on the pre-Islamic inheritance, or at least on what is taken to be such.” Based on his idea, Javanism or *kejawen* could be opposed to the Islamic piety of the *santri*.¹ According to Mark W Woodward, most of scholars accept Clifford Geertz’s variants with only minor alterations. Emmerson and Suparlan, for instance, did not accept *priyayi* since it denotes a social class rather than a religious group. Mark W. Woodward also did not agree with Clifford Geertz’s typology. Following Suparlan, Mark W Woodward refers to the mystical variant of Javanese Islam (*priyayi* and *abangan*) as *Islam java* and to mystics as *kejawen*. Moreover, Mark W

Woodward proposed that “the complex of doctrine and ritual associated with the *santri* population will be referred to as normative Islam or normative piety.”²

The third difference is the main object of their research. It is clear that Clifford Geertz wanted to show that there is a tension in Javanese religion. This tension refers to the conflict between *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi*. It means that Javanese religion has social and ideological conflict. However, Andrew Beatty wanted to see the common perception of these Javanese religion variants. Andrew Beatty wanted to know “what keeps their passionately held differences from erupting in discord?”. Andrew Beatty did not emphasize on the tension among Javanese religion variants but he focused on the social harmony among Javanese religion variants.

It seems that Andrew Beatty discussed more variants than Clifford Geertz. It is clear that Clifford Geertz only discussed three variants on Javanese religion, namely *santri*, *abangan* and *priyayi*. Andrew Beatty, however, discussed mystic Javanists, pious Muslims, Javanese Animists, and Javanese Hindus as varieties of Javanese religion. In this sense, it seems that Andrew Beatty presented more complexity of Javanese religion.

However, it is important to know the definition of the three variants proposed by Clifford Geertz. This is because, to some extent, there are some similarities with Andrew Beatty’s discussion on his book. *Abangan* represents a group of Javanese people who emphasizes the animistic aspect of the Javanese syncretism and broadly related to the peasant element in the society. Basically, this variant can be identified as same as mystic and animistic Javanist in Beatty’s book. *Santri*, according to Clifford Geertz, is a group of Javanese people representing a stress in the Islamic aspects of the syncretism and it is related to the trading element in the population. In fact, this variant is similar with practical Islam or pious Muslim in Beatty’s book. *Priyayi* is a group of people in Javanese society who related to the bureaucratic element and the Hinduist

¹ Kartodirdjo, Religious Responses to Social Change in Indonesia : the case of Pangestu in *Modern Indonesia : Tradition and Transformation*. 3rd edition. (Yogyakarta:Gajah Mada University Press, 1991), p.267

² Mark W Woodward, *Islam in Java : Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Arizona : The University of Arizona Press, 1989), p. 2

aspects. This variant can be assumed as Javanese Hindus in Beatty's term.³

As we know, in Andrew Beatty's book, there is no specific terms such as three variants proposed by Clifford Geertz. According to Andrew Beatty, it is too simple to classify *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi* group in their religious practices since Andrew Beatty believed that there is still a something in between. It means that in Javanese society, there is a religious class which does not belong to *santri*, *priyayi*, or *abangan*. This religious class can be seen from the everyday religious practices in his fieldwork in Bayu.

However, both scholars have some similar ideas concerning Javanese religion. Both of these two scholars saw that the unifying factor in Javanese religion is Javanese culture. It is different from Mark Woodward's opinion. According to Woodward, the unifying factor in Javanese religion is Islam, not Javanese culture. Woodward said that Javanese religion, both in its popular and mystical aspects, "is basically an adaptation Sufism and therefore constitutes a local form (or forms) of Islam." Therefore, Mark Woodward claimed that Javanese religion is basically Islamic religion. It means that the dichotomy of *santri* and *kejawen* is thus refers to a division within Islam.⁴

The second similar idea between these two scholars is their approach in doing their research. Andrew Beatty claimed that his approach is same as Clifford Geertz. Both of them participate directly to the event. They did not merely lean on formal interview but informal interview, such as attending rituals, organizational meetings, and so on.

Furthermore, both of these two scholars started their research from the grass-root, not from the top. According to Andrew Beatty, the risks of such approach are easily identified. One of them is that the researcher will not focus on wider organizational patterns. The second risk is

that the researcher tend to "miss 'the figure on the carpet' from being too close."⁵

Another similar idea between Andrew Beatty and Clifford Geertz is their understanding about *slametan*. Both of them agreed that *slametan* is the starting point to understand Javanese religion. Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty proposed that the heart of Javanese religion is on the *slametan*.

The Slametan in the Geertz and Beatty's eyes

The *slametan* in Javanese religion is a core ritual implying a symbolic meaning, such as the mystic and social unity of those participating it. According to Clifford Geertz, the *slametan* which is the core ritual of Javanese religion "is rooted in peasant animist tradition".⁶ Therefore, according to him, the *slametan* is a product of Javanese culture, not Islamic culture. It is different from Mark Woodward idea understanding the *slametan* as the product of the interpretation of Islamic texts. According to Mark Woodward, the *slametan* is paralleled with Islamic society elsewhere in South-east Asia. Woodward claimed that the *slametan* is influenced by Sufism tradition⁷ In this sense, Woodward argued that the *slametan* is rooted from Islamic texts.

Clifford Geertz saw that *slametan* is a communal feast generally performed by *abangan* variant. According to him, there are four types of the *slametan*. The first kind of *slametan* is related to those centering around the crises of life, namely the death, circumcision, the birth, and marriage. The second form of the *slametan* is related to the Muslim ceremonial calendar. The third kind of the *slametan* is associated with the social integration of the village, the *bersih desa*. The fourth form of the *slametan* is related to irregular intervals and unusual occurrences, for example,

⁵ Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (Cambridge : Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 1999),p.187

⁶ Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (Cambridge :Cambridge University Press, 1999),p.30 And Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois:The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), p. 11

⁷ Mark Woodward, *The Slametan : Textual Knowledge and ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam in History of Religions* 28, 1988, p. 62 and p.85

³ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois : The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), pp.5-6

⁴ Mark W Woodward, *The Slametan : Textual Knowledge and ritual Performance in Central Javanese Islam in History of Religions* 28, 1988, p. 2.

departing for a long journey, illness, changing one's place residence and so on.⁸

Andrew Beatty was likely agree to Clifford Geertz's opinion concerning the *slametan*. According to Andrew Beatty, Clifford Geertz is the first scholar who described a detailed explanation on the *slametan* "which carries conviction as an eye-witness report". Andrew Beatty claimed that since Clifford Geertz's book, *Religion of Java*, appeared, many people know what the *slametan* is about.⁹ Therefore, Andrew Beatty admitted that his discussion on the *slametan* was inspired by Clifford Geertz. However, Andrew Beatty's discussion on the *slametan* in many ways is more compelling than Clifford Geertz's discussion on the same subject.

This is because Andrew Beatty captured the *slametan* in more detailed description than Clifford Geertz did. He offered different report because he directly participated in the process of the *slametan*. He also interpreted the *slametan* in a very convincing way. His discussion on the *slametan*, then, can be interpreted as the 'revised' edition for Clifford Geertz's discussion on the same subject.

Before discussing the *slametan*, Andrew Beatty looked at syncretism. Syncretism, according to Andrew Beatty, refers to a dynamic, recursive process, a constant reproduction, rather than to a settled outcome. Such processes are, of course, historically situated. However, their relation to the past, to some extent, is not clear. If history is not sufficient, Andrew Beatty proposed that one has to look at the present, the daily life.¹⁰ Therefore, he discussed the everyday religious practices rather than historical description about Javanese religious practices. One of these everyday religious practices is the *slametan*.

Clifford Geertz also looked at syncretism. According to him, syncretism is the basic of Javanese culture. There are animistic, Hinduistic, and Islamic elements which formed the Javanese religious culture. As his analysis, it is not only

peasants following syncretic tradition, but also many townsmen. Therefore, Clifford Geertz argued that syncretism tradition in Javanese religious culture is complex.¹¹ This complexity can be seen in the *slametan*.

Using a term 'syncretism' rather than using a term 'tolerance', according to James T. Siegel, is important and right. To tolerate means 'to endure' or 'to bear with'. It is likely that using tolerance is not proper since "it implies no necessary point to which these differences refer".¹² Syncretism, however, implies an integration or systematic interrelation from diverse traditions in the society.

The *slametan* for Andrew Beatty has interesting things. According to him, in the *slametan*, people are invited on basis of neighbourhood or kinship rather than religious relationship. Therefore, he claimed that in the *slametan* many varieties of Javanese religion appeared. In the *slametan*, Hinduism Javanists, pious Muslims, and mystic Javanists can sit and eat the meal together. For him, one also will find that all three Clifford Geertz's variants, *santri*, *abangan* and *priyayi*, present in the same event, namely in the *slametan*. Participants, however, place radically different interpretations on the *slametan*. These different interpretations make the *slametan* multivocal. Andrew Beatty said:

"the very adaptability of the slametan has made conversion from Islam to Hinduism and sometimes back again less troublesome than one might imagine. As a ritual frame adaptable to diverse faiths and ideologies, it remains at the heart of Javanese religion. As an example of religious syncretism, it shows how-and with what inventive grace-people can come to terms with their differences"¹³

A few participants, for instance, believe that the Qur'an was sent by God through Muhammad. A few others, on the contrary, believe that the Qur'an is made by people. In this

⁸ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois : The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960) p.30

⁹ Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (Cambridge : Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 1999), pp.29-30.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.3

¹¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois : The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960) p. 5

¹² James T. Siegel, Varieties of Javanese Violence in *Indonesia* 69, April 2000, p. 193

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), p.50

sense, the Qur'an is not God's words, but people's words. However, according to Andrew Beatty, each participant on the *slametan* can hold silently his own beliefs. Therefore, Andrew Beatty believed that the *slametan* is an example and vehicle of syncretism. This is because differences are buried in common ground which is common only in form, not in sense.

Since the beginning of the twentieth-century, the *slametan*, according to Clifford Geertz, have been considered as less efficient to be an integrating instrument and less satisfying as religious ritual for many Javanese people. However, Clifford Geertz claimed that *abangan* is the group of Javanese people that still consider the *slametan* as an important ritual:

“The altered form of twentieth-century urban and sub-urban life in Java makes it rather less efficient as an integrating mechanism and rather less satisfying as a religious experience for many people; but among the group here described as *abangan* – the more traditionalized peasants and their proletarianized comrades in the towns- the *slametan* still retains much of its original force and attraction.”¹⁴

This idea is criticized by Alice G. Dewey. According to him, the *slametan* is not only done by villagers. By observing an overseas Javanese community in Noumea, New Caledonia during 1963-1964, he assumed that the *slametan* as an reintegration instrument in a society may also play in an urbanised areas. The reluctant to believe that the *slametan* could survive in urban areas, according to him, because of a misinterpretation of the dual aspects of structure and function in the *slametan*. It is true that some types of *slametan* such as *bersih desa* or ritual cleansing of the village does not appear in urban areas.

However, the *slametan* which is related to an individual's life crisis, such as weddings and funerals, still survive in urban areas. According to him, there are two functions in the *slametan*, namely rites of passage and rites of intensification. If the function of the *slametan* is

mainly devoted to be a mechanism for social reintegration, it is called as a rite of intensification. Rites of passage means that the *slametan* is aimed to an individual that his or her role is changing. The *slametan* is a symbol of recognition and accomodation to the event of the wider society.¹⁵

The question is why, in his book, *the Religion of Java*, Clifford Geertz discussed the *slametan* in the *abangan* variant. In fact, there are three variants proposed by him. I assumed that, in this case, Clifford Geertz wanted to show us that, basically, the *slametan* belongs to *abangan* variant, not *santri* and *priyayi* variants. Moreover, he wanted to explain that the *slametan* does not originally come from Islamic teaching. It is from Javanese culture which regards animistic values as part of its religious practices.

Andrew Beatty, however, did not strictly attempt to limit the *slametan* as *abangan's* religious practice. It seems to me that he discussed the *slametan* in a wider anlysis since he did not try to limit it as Clifford Geertz did. He focused on the *slametan* as an important instrument of how syncretism works. It is related to the *slametan* as symbol of temporary 'coalition' among animistic, Hinduistic, mystic, and Islamic traditions. Therefore, he claimed that all of three Clifford Geertz's variants, *abangan*, *santri* and *priyayi*, come and sit together in the *slametan*.

According to James T. Siegel, there is a little different perception between Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty on the *slametan*. It is clear that Clifford Geertz's opinion concerning the *slametan* is :

“At the center of the whole of Javanese religious system lies a simple, formal, undramatic, almost furtive, little ritual: the *slametan* (also sometimes called a *kenduren*). The *slametan* is the Javanese version of what is perhaps the world's most common religious ritual, the communal feast, and, as almost everywhere, it

¹⁵ Alice G. Dewey, Ritual as a Mechanism for Urban Adaptation in *Man :the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* vol. 5 (New York: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1970) pp.438-439

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 11

symbolizes the mystic and social unity of those participating in it”¹⁶

Andrew Beatty did not dispute it. However Andrew Beatty thinks that it is odd. Andrew Beatty said:

“Participants see it as integral to their lives as social beings and to their sense of themselves as Javanese; they regard it as the epitome of local tradition. But its ‘totality’ is deceptive. The Slametan is a communal affair, but it defines no distinct community; it proceeds via a lengthy verbal exegesis to which all express their assent, but participants privately disagree about its meaning; and, while purporting to embody a shared perspective on mankind, God, and the world, it represents nobody’s view in particular”¹⁷

It is Clifford Geertz’s opinion that the *slametan* was the heart of Javanese religious systems. He did not discuss the plurality of understanding of participants on the *slametan*. Andrew Beatty, however, regarded that the *slametan* defines no distinct community. It means that the *slametan* is the original ritual of Javanese religious systems which have a plural understanding. Andrew Beatty proposed this idea by examining the process of the *slametan* itself. He saw that, in the process of the *slametan*, participants have different understanding concerning mankind, God, and the world.

Political Meaning on the Slametan

The *slametan* has a political meaning. Clifford Geertz proposed that the *slametan* “forms a kind of social universal joint, fitting the various aspects of social life and individual experience together in a way which minimizes uncertainty, tension, and conflict”¹⁸. The *slametan* denies conflict within a society. It is not strange that Andrew Beatty said that “instead of a consensus and symbolic concordance we find

compromise and provisional synthesis: a temporary truce among people of radically different orientation”¹⁹.

A term ‘truce’ in Andrew Beatty’s statement above, according to James T. Siegel, seems to him apt.²⁰ He argued that a ‘truce’ implies the differences remain continue eventhough there is the *slametan*. The differences are not defined as conflict, but they are defined as pluralism. It is understandable, then, that a political meeting might be started by a *slametan* as Clifford Geertz described.²¹ In this case, the *slametan* becomes an important instrument of political accomodation among different parties. The *slametan* is not only for religious purposes, but also it is for political purposes.

The *slametan* can be used by a political leader to unify the differences in a society. Therefore, it is very popular for some Indonesian leaders since the *slametan* can accommodate the differences among them. However, it is not discussed deeply by Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty concerning the political function of the *slametan*. Both of them focused on the *slametan* as a religious ritual which unifies the differences of interpretation in religious matters and unifies many varieties in Javanese religion. However, Clifford Geertz did not discuss in a detailed description since he preferred to look at the ideological conflict and tension in Javanese religious variants. It is Andrew Beatty who focused on the *slametan* as a unifying instrument in Javanese society.

Islamization of Slametan?

As we know, there is a different opinion between Mark W Woodward and Clifford Geertz concerning the *slametan*. Clifford Geertz strongly believed that the *slametan* is originally Javanese version. This is because Islam has never taken hold in Java. Mark W Woodward opposed this idea. He believed that the *slametan* is originally from Sufism tradition. It means that the *slametan* comes from Islamic tradition. Mark W

¹⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois : The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), p. 11

¹⁷ Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (Cambridge : Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 1999), p. 25

¹⁸ Geertz, *op.cit.*, p.11

¹⁹ Beatty, *op.cit.*, p. 25

²⁰ James T. Siegel, Varieties of Javanese Violence in *Indonesia* : 69 (April, 2000), p. 196

²¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois : The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960), p. 11

Woodward said that the *slametan* is a product of interpretation from Islamic text.

In this case, there is moderate position between both of scholars. This position is proposed by Andrew Beatty. He clearly distinguished between the *slametan* and *sedekah*. He proposed that the *slametan* can be anticipated as Javanese, while *sedekah* is Islamic. He argued that the *slametan* is “to create a state of well-being, security, and freedom from hindrances of both a practical and spritual kind- a state which is called *slamet*.”²²

The tone of the *Sedekah* is more explicitly Islamic. There is a longish sequence of prayers and chanting called *tablilan*. The word of *sedekah* itself is recognized as deriving from the Arabic. It is derived from *sadaka* meaning alms. In fact, there is no almsgiving. According to Andrew Beatty, *sedekah* is authorized by *hadith* or tradition of the Prophet.²³ Andrew Beatty also said that the *slametan* is a rite for the living, but the *sedekah* is rite for the dead.

Concerning the pattern of the *slametan*, Andrew Beatty said that “the selametan takes places just after the dark in the front room of the house...a dish containing five blobs of porridge in different colours, quids of betel, a dish of red porridge with a drop of white in the middle.”²⁴ In the *sedekah*, however, “apart from the cluster of offerings at the head of the mat there are no symbolic foods”²⁵ such as in the *slametan*. Participants in the *slametan* are different from those in the *sedekah*.

In the *slametan*, guests are invited from all the nearby houses. However, in the *sedekah*, “guests are senior relatives and respected elders and friends from all over the village instead of the usual circle of neighbours.”²⁶ From Andrew Beatty’s explanation above, it seems that *sedekah* is one of the result from the process of islamization in the *slametan*. Islamic values appear

more obvious rather that animistic and hindusitic values.

Nowadays, it is obvious that there is a process of islamization in the *slametan*. In some of Indonesian villages, the term of *slametan* was not known. In some Javanese societies in Sumatra, for instance, there is a religious ritual which looks like the *slametan* called *kenduri*, not *sedekah*. In the *kenduri*, guests are invited from close neighbours and relatives. However, most of guests are relatives.

There are no symbolic foods, red and white porridge, in the *kenduri*. Started by reciting *al-fatibah* or the first verse in the Qur’an, all of participants continue reciting a longish sequence of prayers and chanting called *tablilan*. It is similar with *sedakab*, the *kenduri* is rite for the dead. The pattern of the *kenduri* is not different from the pattern of *sedekah*. The *kenduri* is done in the first day, the third day, the seventh day, until the thousandth of the dead.

Besides the *kenduri*, there is a religius ritual called *berokobi* in a Javanese society in Sumatra. This ritual basically is similar with the *slametan*. This is because *berokobi* is rite for the living. Usually, it is done when there is a person wants to move to other regions. The pattern of *berokobi* is more simple than *kenduri*. Guests are the close neighbours. There are no relatives which are invited. Furthermore, participants are not as many as the *kenduri*. There are no symbolic foods such as red or white porridge like in the *slametan*.

Another religius ritual in a Javanese society in Sumatra is *yasinan*. This is a ritual devoted to the dead but it is done in every Friday night. This religious ritual is called *yasinan* since participants recite a verse in the Qur’an, namely *surah Yaasin*. There is no food in this ritual. There are only cakes and drinking. Reciting *Yaasin*’s verse is done after participants recite a longish of prayers and chanting or *tablilan*. After that, all participants, except the host, will eat cakes and drink tea. The host of this ritual will change every week.

The process of Islamization in the *slametan* is logical process. This is because the historical fact that Islam came to Java in order to penetrate and islamize a Javanese society. However, if we come back to Clifford Geertz and Andrew Beatty, it seems that only Andrew Beatty

²² Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology, 1999), p. 28

²³ *Ibid*, p.32

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 31

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 33

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 32

recognized this, particularly when he returned for another spell of fieldwork. Perhaps, this process was not apparent when Clifford Geertz did his fieldwork. It is different from Andrew Beatty who did his fieldwork currently when there are many educated people in a Javanese society. Religious education in all Indonesian school proposed by the New Order has influenced the *slametan* more Islamic.

Concluding Remarks

Clifford Geertz proposed that the *slametan* is a ritual which originally comes from Javanese culture. Therefore, he discussed the *slametan* in the *abangan* variant, not in the *santri* variant. In this case, Clifford Geertz wanted to explain that the *slametan* is a special characteristic of *abangan*. The *slametan* then becomes a distinguishing factor. Andrew Beatty said that the *slametan* also comes from Javanese culture. However, he claimed that all of three Geertz's variants, *santri*, *priyayi*, and *abangan* present on the event. It is clear that Andrew Beatty focused on the *slametan* as an important instrument of social harmony in a Javanese society.

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