

A. Kristiadji Rahardjo, MA

BOOK REVIEW:

**“THE CRESCENT BEHIND THE THOUSAND HOLY TEMPLES:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE MINORITY MUSLIMS OF
PEGAYAMAN, NORTH BALI”**

(Author: Erni Budiwanti)

In this interesting book, Erni describes about the efforts or strategies developed by the Muslims of Pegayaman, North Bali to maintain their religious tradition and identities among the Hindu Balinese people. The minority Muslims of Pegayaman have succeeded in maintaining their own cultural identity amidst the majority of population that has the different socio-religious norms. This book focuses on two areas of her field research, that are 1) the Muslims' defense mechanisms vis-à-vis external challenges to their collective integrity; and 2) the degree to which the Muslims interact with the Hindu population.

The Muslims in Bali have a quite unique situation in the Indonesian context because they are a religious minority in Bali but of the religious majority in Indonesia as a whole. It has brought social dilemma both to themselves and to the Hindu-Balinese dominated regional government. So, the research on the Muslim of Pegayaman, Sukasada, Buleleng regency is quite important in preserving cultural integrity as well as heterogeneity (or plurality) of the respective religious groups in accordance with the needs of Indonesia's nation building (p. 2).

The socio-religious life of the Muslims of the Pegayaman shows that it illustrates the “ethnic continuum” (Cohen's concept) since they maintain their internal boundary and identity in order to prevent from losing their cultural integrity. In the interaction with the Hindu-Balinese they form defensive

mechanisms well adapted to controlling the strain of such social interaction. The Muslim community in Pegayaman holds tight their cultural integrity and resists the incursion of external influences of the major religious group into their religious life. This resistance takes the form of defensive actions to curb expansive influences at their outer boundary without inciting a direct and open conflict with the Hindu Balinese.

The maintenance of cultural integrity occurs along the continuum of accommodation, integration and conflict that happen in some aspects of life, i.e. education, social, economy and politics. Religious education as the most important element for maintaining the community's bounded identity, is performed by the key institutions: family, mosque and *santren*. In the social context, the writer see the interplay between adapt (custom) and Islam, in which adapt as being reciprocally strengthened by Islam. It is manifest in the Islamic rituals that are highly formulaic and structured, and closely tied to the rhythms of village life. In the socio-economic conditions, the relationship between the Pegayaman Muslims and the Hindu-Balinese is marked by cooperation and conflict over scarce economic resources. Primordial sentiments often intensify these disputes leading to malicious and physical conflict. It also influences the dynamic of political relationships that occur along a continuum of integration and conflict. The instability of the political situation is due to the cleavages between the official rulers and certain groups in the community.

In this book, Budiwanti presents the complexity, strength and weakness of the process and institutions which have successfully maintained the cultural-religious solidarity of the Pegayaman Muslims over such a long period. Their socio-cultural integrity is still in process along with the development of Indonesia's rapid modernization and national integration.

The approach and the paradigm

In approaching the Muslim community in Pegayaman, Budiwanti tries to apply some concepts or paradigms as the main tools of her analyses. There are some basic foundations upon which ethnic identity and its persistence depend on. She uses Anthony Smith's concept of foundations of ethnic identity that can help the ethnic or religious group to maintain a discrete culturally and geographically area, so that they can strengthen its scope for upholding conformity to its beliefs and practices. She also refers to Talcot Parson's concept of 'trans-generational tradition' whereby the continuity of tradition rests on the attempt to pass on elements of culture successively. She will discuss how religious aspects of belief, custom and practices that derive from within and outside the community shape the communal identity. She believes that religious performances are likely to manifest slightly different expressions in distinct social groups. Moreover, the socio-cultural surroundings in which the Pegayaman Muslims live, gives a strong reason for the use of syncretic or assimilation approach (p. 5).

There are two main approaches worth noting in ethnic analysis, that are 1) ascribed ethnicity (stresses ethnicity on its ascribe values or a set of cultural symbols), and 2) situational ethnicity (signifies a rational choice and judgement made by an individual or a group to apply specific attribute of identity which is suitable for particular circumstances). The approach of this book is an eclectic and empirically grounded, directed towards the synthesis of a better understanding of these issues, a task which is regrettably beyond the scope of the present study (p. 9). The main argument presented in this book reflects the complimentary approach taken with this Balinese analysis used by Anthropologists and others. Such approach is taken because she found none of various theories from the perspective on her fieldwork are wholly satisfactory as an explanatory framework. Therefore, some elements of those theories, particularly Geertz (the 'ascription' or the 'givenness' of ethnicity) and Barth (the significance of 'boundaries and maintenance'), resonate strongly in the discourse and practices of the people of Pegayaman. She has been guided by

her experience among them to confirm elements emphasized by different authors.

The method of research

Budiwanti conducted the fieldwork research by living at Des, particularly at Banjar Barat Jalan for the 4 months, and at Banjar Timur Jalan for another 4 months. She chose Desa because it is the centre of institutional activities. She stayed with one of families in that village and involved in many activities. It is advantage that she is a Muslims, so that she was accepted as a member of the community and their relationship between she and the villager become more informal. The main problem she faced during fieldwork was sexual segregation or the restriction of women and the villager's belief in magic.

Based on the participant observation in Pegayaman and supported by the villagers' accounts, she gives the ethnographic description in this book. She did not collect the census data of her own because the limited time she had and the geographical situation of the village. She got the statistical data provided at the village office, sub-district office, KUA.

Conclusion and comments

The ethnographic study of the minority Muslims of Pegayaman affirms the utility of Cohen's concept of an 'ethnic continuum'. The Pegayaman Muslims successfully maintain their internal boundary and identity or the cultural-religious integrity over a long period. In dialing with external relationships they form defensive social mechanisms well-adapted to controlling the strain of such social interaction. The external relationship tends to become a complete pluralism than full assimilation, so that the relationship between Muslims and Hindus is coloured by the superficial or relative harmony.

Based on the argument of the 'situational identity' and 'rational choice' theory that states a group's social boundary can be blurred or change according to a specific contextual setting, the socio-cultural integrity of the Pegayaman Muslims will change. Influenced by the external forces of the new economic development, modernization and national integration or political control, etc., the communal solidarity of Pegayaman Muslims will be confronted by a gamut socio-cultural forces and outlooks. So, the further research that will be conducted can provide a very illuminating extension to the present study in and tell us much about the process of social change in contemporary Indonesia.

I have some comments on this book: first, the ethnographic study that Budiwanti conducted on the Minority Muslims of Pegayaman is very interesting and quite unique. This book exposes the different view of Bali which contains more complete understanding of the religious life of Bali and the understanding of relations between minority Muslims and majority Hindu-Balinese. This book is very systematic and has an explication of the purpose, issues, concepts of its analysis, approach and method of research. I do agree with the eclectic or complimentary and empirically grounded approach that is used in this book. This approach can avoids the reductionism, so that it can results a more comprehensive view of the main issues.

Second, I think there are still some important problems in Pegayaman Muslim community that can be observed and studied further. It requires a more time and area of study so that we can get more complete understanding of them. The author realizes the limitation of her capability, the period of time and area of this study, so that she encourages more researchers to conduct further research on the other topics and study areas. Finally, I think this book is helpful for everyone who has an interest in the ethnographic study.