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Between Empire and Revelation: Hoesein Djajadiningrat and the Politics of Islamic Knowledge in Dutch East Indies

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the intellectual genealogy of Hoesein Djajadiningrat from the perspective of postcolonial theory. This framework has significantly influenced scholarly discussions regarding Islamic politics and jurisprudence in colonial Indonesia. It responds to three main inquiries: First, how did Hoesein interact with Islamic political philosophy? Second, how did he determine the fundamentals of Islamic law? Third, how precisely did he reframe Persian theories of Islamization? Using historical methods like historiography, source criticism, interpretive analysis, and heuristic inquiry, this study analyzes Hoesein's published works and correspondence to provide the first comprehensive analysis of his intellectual growth. This study reveals a portrait of a thinker whose intellectual stance defies simple categorization. Hoesein actively challenged Western ways of thinking while promoting Islamic views deeply influenced by Persian Sufi ideas, local customs, and colonial laws. His works demonstrate both a conformity to and a defiance of the prevailing Orientalist frameworks. Rather than viewing Hoesein as merely a colonial mediator or nationalist critic, this study portrays him as a perceptive interpreter who skillfully navigated the overlapping influences of imperial power and local cultural expressions. His scholarly contributions are crucial to understanding the dynamics of the production of Islamic knowledge in the Dutch East Indies, particularly the conflicts and intersections between regional epistemic traditions and global Islamic thought.

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INTRODUCTION

Hoesein Djajadiningrat was a locally rooted intellectual influenced by a Western academic background. His works frequently reflect orientalist approaches (Razy et al., 2022), and his mentors significantly influenced his intellectual orientation. In this context, Orientalism recognizes Hoesein as an Eastern thinker who took Western ideas and used them to contemplate Islam, especially concerning the Indonesian archipelago. His scholarly work was essential because it represents a complex colonial discourse that defies easy categorization into dominance and resistance (Laffan, 2003). Therefore, the development of colonial intellectual identity at the crossroads of Eastern and Western cultural frameworks is reflected in Hoesein's scholarly contributions.

Hoesein was born into the Banten aristocracy in Kramatwatu on 8 December 1886. His father served as the Regent of Serang, while his mother descended from the Sultanate of Banten. In 1904, he received a scholarship to pursue higher education in the Netherlands. He enrolled in the Department of Oriental Studies at Leiden University, where he studied under renowned orientalist Snouck Hurgronje (Poeze, 2023). He earned his doctoral degree in 1913 with a dissertation titled *A Critical Overview of the History of Banten*, which explicitly employed orientalist frameworks to analyze the political practices of the Banten Sultanate (Honings, 2022). Regarding source selection and interpretative approach, Hoesein generally affirmed typical orientalist assumptions, positioning him as an Eastern scholar aligned with the Western orientalist tradition.

Islam in Indonesia has long captivated the interest of Orientalists. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Islam played a central role in various aspects of Indonesian society, including as a basis for anti-colonial resistance (Hongxuan, 2018; Laffan, 2002, 2022). However, intellectual discourse on Islam in the archipelago was primarily dominated by Western scholars. Local intellectual voices were rarely recognized as active participants in the academic discourse on Islam, creating a gap between lived socio-political Islamic practices and scholarly representations. Orientalist writings often criticized “popular” forms of Islam in the region, such as pilgrimage, mysticism, and the veneration of saints, as deviations from normative Islamic doctrine. Snouck Hurgronje, for example,

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considered Indonesian Islam a distorted version of the faith and argued that its political expressions deviated significantly from textual orthodoxy (Benda, 1965; Kloos, 2014). These views were echoed by Hoesein in his historical and political studies on Islam, particularly in his portrayal of tensions between local culture and Islamic politics. He also promoted the importance of modern education as a reformative force in Islamic learning, though, ironically, his conceptual lens remained grounded in Western paradigms.

To analyze Hoesein's position and intellectual contribution, this study applies postcolonial theory, drawing particularly from the works of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. In *Orientalism* (Said, 2012). Said critiques how the West constructed the East as inferior, irrational, and exotic, a framing frequently appearing in orientalist scholarship. Within this framework, Hoesein can be seen as a colonial subject who internalized orientalist discourse yet retained the potential to rearticulate that discourse from a local perspective.

Furthermore, Homi Bhabha introduces the concepts of ambivalence and mimicry, which help to explain the ambiguous position of colonial intellectuals like Hoesein, who were neither fully subordinate to colonial epistemologies nor entirely autonomous from them (Bhabha, 1994). Within this "in-between" space, the potential for subversion and reproduction of colonial discourse emerges. Meanwhile, Spivak challenges us to ask whether the subaltern can speak within colonial discursive structures that systematically silence third-world voices (Spivak, 1990). Thus, reading Hoesein demands attentiveness to the sites of articulation, where he said that, as an Eastern intellectual, he used the language and epistemic codes of colonial power.

This study is significant because it engages with a local intellectual at the crossroads of colonial and local discourses. In the context of Indonesian intellectual history, few studies have critically examined how figures like Hoesein were not only objects of epistemic colonization but also active agents in producing and legitimizing knowledge about Islam through academic tools inherited from colonial structures (Dijk, 2022). As such, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how knowledge was constructed during the colonial period and adds to the growing body of postcolonial studies in Indonesia. Amid contemporary efforts to decolonize education and knowledge production, it is crucial to revisit how colonial legacies continue to operate in narratives about history and religion.

This research does not stand in isolation. Previous studies on Hoesein have been conducted, including G.F. Pijper's article Professor Dr. Pangeran Ario Hoesein Djajadiningrat: 8 December 1886–12 November 1960, which focuses primarily on his biography and professional career (Pijper, 1961). Another notable contribution comes from Mohammad Refi Omar Ar Razy, Kunto Sofianto, and Gani A. Jaelani, who explore Hoesein's orientalist vision and intellectual engagement with Islamic and historical discourses. They also analyze Hoesein's engagement with the Persian theory as an attempt to reinterpret the origins of Islam in the archipelago from philological and political-cultural perspectives (Razy et al., 2022, 2023). While these studies offer valuable insights into Hoesein's thought, they largely remain descriptive and focus on singular aspects of his discourse. This study presents a novel approach by providing a critical and intertextual reading of Hoesein's intellectual legacy through a postcolonial lens, particularly within the frameworks that Said, Bhabha, and Spivak developed. Thus, the analysis goes beyond the surface content of Hoesein's writings to interrogate his epistemic position as a colonial intellectual, negotiating between representation and resistance to orientalist discourse.

Moreover, the originality of this study lies in its use of discourse analysis and ambivalent positioning within historical narratives, especially to Islam, colonialism, and local culture in early twentieth-century Indonesia. This research is expected to expand Indonesian intellectual historiography through a critical methodology that remains underutilized in studying figures like Hoesein. Based on the above background, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: How did Hoesein formulate his ideas on Islamic politics and culture in his works? How did he conceptualize and represent Islamic law through an orientalist lens? And to what extent can his perspective on Persian theory be understood within the broader framework of Islam, power, and local culture in Indonesia? These questions provide the foundation for exploring Hoesein's ambivalent position as a colonial intellectual and re-examining the dynamics of Islamic knowledge production during the colonial era.

This article is particularly significant for the historiography of intellectual history in Indonesia because it highlights the complex positionality of local scholars like Hoesein, who negotiated colonial structures while simultaneously producing knowledge about Islam, politics, and identity. Unlike conventional nationalist or colonial binaries, Hoesein's intellectual trajectory illuminates the hybrid spaces where colonial knowledge was not merely imposed but also appropriated, contested, and transformed. By placing Hoesein in the broader framework of

postcolonial discourse, this study proposes a reconfiguration of Indonesian intellectual history that foregrounds local agency, epistemic hybridity, and the dialogic evolution of Islamic thought. This expands the scope of historiographical analysis by showing how figures like Hoesein were key in mediating colonial perspectives on Islam and shaping postcolonial discussions about religious authority, cultural authenticity, and intellectual autonomy.

METHOD

Through Hoesein Djajadiningrat's significant contributions to philology, historiography, and lexicography, this study analyzes his thoughts about Islam. Hoesein viewed Islam as a complex cultural and political phenomenon. His intellectual orientation, the reformulation of Islamic legal thought, and the differentiation of syncretic practices from normative Islam are all influenced by his dedication to modern education. It reflects the synthesis of Orientalist epistemology and reformist Islamic theology taught by his mentors at Leiden University. This research methodology is based on historiographical approaches, which involve heuristics, source criticism, interpretive analysis, and narrative historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 1994; Lubis, 2020; Renier, 1997; Sjamsuddin, 2012). It looks at Hoesein's ideological position concerning the colonial lexicographic tradition and how it broadly affects Islamic discourse. Multiple types of primary sources, including letters, manuscripts, and archival documents, that were extracted from different historical archives and are essential to this inquiry provide insight into how his knowledge of Islam influenced his academic pursuits, especially in making dictionaries and documenting cultural practices.

Islam is portrayed in Hoesein's corpus as a logical, dynamic cultural endeavor that requires reform in reaction to colonial circumstances rather than just as a religious system. This knowledge served as the foundation for his participation in educational and cultural preservation projects and his contributions to the historical account of Islamic political life (Ankersmit, 1987). A close textual analysis of his major works reveals the intricacy of his intellectual interaction with Islamic tradition in the face of conflicting demands of colonial modernity. The first section of this article analyzes Hoesein's fundamental writings, which influenced Islamic thought within the framework of colonial epistemology. His letters and private annotations are given special consideration since they show how his ideological beliefs permeated his scholarly works. Among these are manuscripts and private letters that have been kept in different archives and support Hoesein's belief that Islam is a vibrant, culturally based tradition that needs to be revitalized in the face of colonial change.

This study examines official colonial archives, research reports, and correspondence related to the study of Islam in the Dutch East Indies, in addition to private documents. The institutional influences that shaped Islamic intellectual production during the colonial era can be found in documents preserved at the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia and the Leiden University Library. Hoesein's major works, *Critische Beschouwing van Sadjarah Banten* (1913), *De Mohammedaansche Wet en Het Geestleven der Indonesische Mohammedanen* (1925), and *Islam in Indonesia* (1958), are essential to this examination as the primary sources utilized to reconstruct his position in colonial discourse.

This study reveals that Hoesein's ideas were greatly influenced and developed within the Orientalist paradigm by connecting those works with academic and official documents from that period. It also shows how his intellectual interventions, which were influenced by indigenous and colonial contexts, contributed to shaping Islamic knowledge in the Dutch East Indies. Ultimately, this methodological approach highlights the enduring significance of Hoesein's intellectual legacy in colonial and postcolonial Islamic discourses and provides a nuanced understanding of the ideological currents that shaped his scholarship.

DISCUSSION

Hoesein Views on Islamic Politics

Fundamentally, Orientalism is a way of producing knowledge that reinterprets and reconstructs Eastern intellectual traditions. Islam is one of its main subjects of study, and it is commonly analyzed using a variety of interpretational frameworks influenced by Orientalist paradigms (Kaptein, 2014). Orientalist academics frequently hide their ideological prejudices behind scientific procedures and an outwardly secular attitude, creating an academic tradition that seems impartial but is firmly rooted in secularized epistemological frameworks. These scholarly practices were collectively reinforced and reproduced within closed but influential academic discourses. As Edward Said noted, modern Orientalist praxis should not be understood as a sudden attainment of objective knowledge about the East

but rather as a set of inherited structures from the past secularized, reorganized, and reshaped by disciplines such as philology, which in turn became naturalized and simplified replacements or versions of that knowledge (Said, 2012).

Building on this theoretical foundation, this study explores Hoesein Djajadiningrat's interpretation of Islamic politics. His views on Islam are deeply reflected in his historical vision, particularly in his recognition of the influence of non-Arab Islamic traditions, especially those from the Iranian world (Hurgronje, 2003, 2007). Rather than adopting the dominant narrative of Arabization, Hoesein emphasized that cultural and intellectual currents from Persia profoundly shaped local expressions of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. A clear manifestation of this influence appears in rituals commemorating the tragedy of Karbala, particularly the deaths of Hasan and Husayn, the grandsons of the Prophet Muhammad, figures of immense symbolic value in Shi'a spirituality (Guillot, 2020). In the Indonesian context, the legacy of Orientalist reconstructions is discernible in localized cultural practices. One is the *Tabut* ceremony in West Sumatra, a ritualized funeral procession that culminates in the symbolic immersion of a coffin into the river. Persian influence is also noticeable in linguistic domains, especially in adopting Persian-derived vocabulary and scripts in Arabic instruction and pronunciation. This reflects the multi-layered hybridity of Islamic educational traditions (Djajadiningrat, 1958).

Hoesein further highlighted how the Islamic political cosmology of Persia shaped ideas about governance and leadership in the Islamic polities of the Indonesian archipelago. Established ideas from Persian Sufi metaphysics, such as *Wahdat al-Wujūd* (Unity of Being), *Insān Kāmil* (Perfect Man), and *Khalīfatullāh fī al-Arḍ* (God's Vicegerent on Earth), were appropriated by local rulers as theological frameworks to justify their political power (Djajadiningrat, 1913). These notions were further localized in the interpretive traditions of individuals such as Syekh Siti Jenar, leading to expressions like *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*, a mystical formulation of divine union that provided the foundation for royal legitimacy (Berg, 1985).



Figure 1. Hoesein (center) with two colleagues at the Governor-General's Palace in Buitenzorg, 1938.
Source: Leiden University Libraries, Hoesein Djajadiningrat tijdens een ontvangst in het paleis van de gouverneur-generaal te Buitenzorg, KITLV 408217. This digital image retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:781399. The rights status of this resource is public domain. Reproduction of this public domain image is permitted.

According to Hoesein, these authority models were accepted by society because they blended in with the mystical elements already present in Indigenous cosmologies (Djajadiningrat, 1913). Because these beliefs were consistent with pre-Islamic ideas like the Hindu-Buddhist Devaraja (god-king) tradition, they continued to sway Indonesia's Islamic political systems. For Hoesein, Indonesian Islam was not a reproduction of Arab Islam but a creatively adapted synthesis that absorbed Persian political and spiritual ideologies into local cultural frameworks (Djajadiningrat, personal communication, 2 May 1914). A concrete example of this is the political legitimacy of the Banten Sultanate. Its first sultan, Maulana Hasanuddin, ascended the throne as the son of Sunan Gunung Jati, a revered *wali* (saint) believed to possess supernatural powers. His directives on the location and design of the royal palace and city were seen as divine commands further legitimized by miracle narratives, including claims that he and his son performed pilgrimages to Mecca without physical transport (Djajadiningrat, 1913).

A similar pattern is evident in the Aceh Sultanate, where kings adopted titles like *Insān Kāmil*, and figures such as Sultan Iskandar Muda were known as *Meukuta Alam* (Crown of the Universe) (Djajadiningrat, 1911). In the *Hikayat Aceh*, he was portrayed alongside King Solomon and Alexander the Great as a divinely chosen ruler. However, Hoesein challenged such hagiographic portrayals by consulting Portuguese and other Western sources, which depicted Iskandar Muda as a cruel and authoritarian ruler who allegedly attempted to kill his mother and child. These critiques reveal the dissonance between local narratives and colonial accounts (Burhanudin, 2021; Chambert-Loir, 2017).

Hoesein's criticisms echoed those of Orientalists like Snouck Hurgronje, who described Acehnese rulers as weak, self-serving, and interested primarily in controlling trade routes and port cities. In their view, Islamic legitimacy was instrumentalized as a political justification, especially in Islamic kingdoms like Aceh (McFate, 2019; Reid, 2010). According to such observers, these traits contributed to the decline of Muslim political power in the archipelago. However, local voices like Hasan Mustopa, Chief Qadi of Aceh in the late 19th century, offered counter-narratives (Razy et al., 2024).

Hoesein contended that Acehnese monarchs were devout and deeply revered, a perception reinforced by local historiography and oral traditions that cast these rulers as sacred protectors, divinely appointed to shield their subjects from colonial encroachment. Yet, in alignment with prevailing Orientalist scholarship, Hoesein ultimately rejected the idealized portrayal of Muslim rulers as "divine representatives" or embodiments of the *insān kāmil* (perfect being). He maintained that these theological ideas were usually out of step with the practical demands of political life. This criticism is a component of a larger colonial strategy meant to undermine new reformist movements and discredit Islamic leadership. To portray their governance as more logical and practical than what they portrayed as the mystical absolutism of Muslim sultanates, colonial authorities reframed Islamic political philosophy and critically examined Islamic jurisprudence.

However, discussions about Islamic political power persisted and changed, especially in postcolonial Indonesia, where legal reform and religious governance issues continued to be crucial. The complex processes by which religious legitimacy was negotiated in the colonial setting are illuminated by Hoesein's analysis, particularly his focus on the influence of Persian cosmological and mystical doctrines. His work shows that political authority in Islamic Indonesia was a complex synthesis created at the nexus of colonial critique, Islamic metaphysics, and indigenous traditions rather than simply transplantation of foreign models.

Hoesein's research exposed the intricate connection between theology and power by critically examining colonial discourses, Islamic theological constructs, and local belief systems. By doing this, he challenged the legitimacy of both indigenous and colonial political systems. He emphasized the need to view Islamic political philosophy in the archipelago as a historically situated and culturally influenced discourse influenced by local cosmologies, transregional currents, and imperial epistemological pressures.

The Position of Islamic Law in the Colonial Period

As was previously mentioned, Hoesein Djajadiningrat was instrumental in forming Islamic political narratives by fusing transregional currents like Persian cosmology, indigenous cultural frameworks, and historical interpretation. However, his intellectual impact went far beyond political theory to include the contentious field of Islamic jurisprudence, where colonial power, local authority, and orientalist scholarship all intersected in intricate and frequently contradictory ways.

A confluence of regional and global changes significantly impacted the status of Islamic law in the Dutch East Indies (Hurgronje, 1911). The Ottoman Empire's dissolution in 1924 was the most significant, as it signaled the end of a central Islamic legal authority that had long represented legal unity for the Muslim community worldwide. Following this institutional breakdown, colonial governments attempted to establish control over Islamic law by incorporating it into frameworks governed by state laws, especially in Southeast Asia. Simultaneously, internal fissures within the Muslim scholarly tradition, including sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shiʿa, as well as divergences among various legal schools, further contributed to the fragmentation and reconfiguration of Islamic jurisprudence (Huda, 2008; Rifqi, 2021).

Seizing the opportunity presented by the Ottoman collapse, Dutch colonial authorities established their apparatus for Islamic legal administration. Key figures such as Sayyid Utsman and Snouck Hurgronje (writing

pseudonymously as Abdul al-Ghaffar) were appointed as state-endorsed muftis tasked with issuing legal opinions in alignment with colonial interests (Witkam, 2022). Though not a cleric in the traditional sense, Snouck's scholarly training in Mecca and cultivated Muslim persona granted him symbolic legitimacy in the eyes of certain local elites. These colonial muftis issued fatwas on various legal matters, worship, commercial transactions, inheritance, marriage, criminal cases, and manumission across the western archipelago and the broader Malay world (Laffan, 2002). The absence of a singular legal authority often led to inconsistencies and confusion. Hoesein observed that "Disputes may arise due to differences in interpretation, often continuing over extended periods and becoming difficult to follow in practice" (Djajadiningrat, 1925).

Amid this legal pluralism, Hoesein engaged with orientalist scholars to examine efforts to systematize and rationalize Islamic law, an endeavor inseparable from broader colonial ambitions. Central to these debates was the tension between *sharīʿa* and *adat* (customary law) (Kern & Djajadiningrat, 1973). How marital property division, or *gono-gini* as it is known locally, is handled is one example of these legal conflicts. Conventional *adat* traditions frequently supported a more equitable distribution between spouses, whereas classical Islamic jurisprudence favored the husband (Kern & Djajadiningrat, 1973). Hoesein Djajadiningrat's observations highlight this discrepancy: *adat* law fostered egalitarian results in different regions, which contrasted with the gendered bias present in traditional Islamic rulings (Djajadiningrat, 1927a).

This legal tension became especially noticeable during discussions involving Sayyid Abdallah bin Umar, a well-known Hadrami scholar who regularly traveled between Sumatra and Java. Influential people like Sayyid Utsman and Snouck Hurgronje criticized Abdallah's stance, which argued that Islamic law should take precedence over regional customs. In contrast to this strict legalism, Snouck advocated a model of coexistence between Islamic and customary law, which Hoesein would later support. Thus, the *gono-gini* dispute exemplifies the larger conflict between *adat* jurisprudence, which emphasizes social balance and communal justice, and Islamic legal orthodoxy, which frequently produces patriarchal results (Djajadiningrat, 1954).

Hoesein's academic position at Batavia Law School (*Rechthoogeschool*) further solidified his views on Islamic jurisprudence. He used classic orientalist texts like Ignaz Goldziher's *Vorlesungen über den Islam* (Asbeck, 1949), Snouck Hurgronje's *Der Islam*, and Th. W. Juynboll's *Handleiding tot de Kennis van de Mohammedaansche Wet* to lecture on Islamic law. This pedagogical framework demonstrates how, during Dutch colonial rule, colonial epistemologies shaped Islamic legal discourse and became ingrained in legal education. As a tool of colonial control, the push to "straighten" or reform Islamic law, ostensibly in the name of legal modernization, systematically reshaped Islamic jurisprudence to suit imperial interests (Kooria & Ravensbergen, 2021). These reforms effectively marginalized alternative legal traditions and silenced indigenous voices even though they were frequently expressed in neutral, technocratic language. The legal education system became a pivotal location for the epistemic restructuring of Islamic law by giving preference to viewpoints that fit the colonial narrative.

Nonetheless, this project faced strong resistance from Islamic reformers such as Ahmad Dahlan and Hasyim Asyʿari. For them, the plurality of madhhabs (e.g., Ḥanafī, Shāfiʿī, Mālikī, Ḥanbalī) was not a flaw but a marker of the intellectual vitality and richness of Islamic jurisprudence. They viewed colonial efforts to homogenize Islamic law as reductive and potentially destructive to its organic development (Kooria, 2022). Ahmad Dahlan rejected such reforms as methodologically flawed, while Hasyim Asyʿari warned that they threatened to suppress the dynamic evolution of Islamic legal reasoning (Hadi, 2019; Kim, 2010). Legal pluralism represented not chaos but a discourse to be embraced, reflecting intellectual strength and cultural depth. Thus, the colonial discourse on Islamic law cannot be divorced from larger questions concerning power, knowledge, and tradition. Hoesein stood at the crossroads of colonial rationalism and Islamic legal plurality, contributing to a legal discourse shaped by orientalist frameworks yet embedded in the socio-cultural fabric of the Indonesian Muslim world. His writings reflect the intellectual negotiations of a scholar navigating between reform, tradition, and the ideological imperatives of empire.

The Persian Theory

Hoesein Djajadiningrat's broader Islamic vision is reflected in the Persian theory regarding Islamization. Azyumardi Azra pointed out that the three main determinants of the debate over the spread of Islam in the archipelago are the missionaries' place of origin, identity, and arrival time (Azra, 2013). The discussion is complicated and unresolved because previous theories frequently concentrated on one of these factors while ignoring the others. This limitation is made worse by the paucity of historical data (Burhanuddin, 2017).

Hoesein highlighted the intellectual and cultural similarities between Indonesian and Persian forms of Islam and suggested that Islam arrived in Indonesia through Persia. His reasoning is influenced by the teachings of *Ana al-Ḥaqq* ("I am the Truth") and the Persian mystic *al-Hallāj*. As noted by Hoesein:

> "The striking similarity between the mysticism of Syekh Siti Jenar and the Iranian Al-Hallaj may not alone be considered conclusive evidence that Islam arrived in Java through Iran, but it forms a substantial part of the proof that Islam as known in Java came through Iran, via western India and Sumatra" (Djajadiningrat, 1958).

He further supported this claim with cultural and linguistic evidence, including the Ashura commemorations for Ḥusayn found in Aceh and West Sumatra, where symbolic rituals such as parading a coffin and casting it into the river persist. Persian linguistic traces are also found in Qur'anic phonetics instruction (*e.g., jabar-jabar, jer-zer-er, p'es-py'es*). Nonetheless, Hoesein acknowledged that Persian Islam reached Indonesia indirectly, passing through India, particularly Gujarat, before arriving in Sumatra. This aligns with archaeological evidence, such as the gravestones of Malik al-Ṣālih in Pasai and Maulana Malik Ibrahim in Gresik. Thus, Hoesein's Persian theory is intrinsically linked to the Gujarat hypothesis (Razy et al., 2023).

Debates over the origin of Islam in Indonesia intensified in the 1950s–60s amid ideological contests surrounding Guided Democracy and Nasakom (Chisaan, 2012). Before this, the prevailing theories were those of Dutch orientalists like J. Pijnappel and Snouck Hurgronje, who posited Gujarat as the entry point of Islam (Hurgronje, 1911; Pijnappel, 1872). Pijnappel based his view on the prevalence of the Shāfiʿī madhhab in both Indonesia and India's Malabar coast. At the same time, Snouck emphasized the role of Indian Muslim traders from the Deccan region as conduits for Arab missionary expansion (Drewes, 2008).

These views influenced subsequent scholars such as Clifford Geertz and Harry J. Benda (Benda, 1983; Geertz, 2013). In 1958, however, Hamka contested the orientalist position during a speech at PTAIN Yogyakarta, arguing that the Shāfiʿī school arrived directly from Mecca and that Gujarat functioned merely as a transit zone akin to Egypt. He asserted that Islam had arrived in Indonesia as early as the 7th century, citing the presence of Muslim settlements and Islamic political structures by the 12th century as evidence (Hamka, 1950, 2002).

Alternative theories also emerged, notably the Chinese theory advocated by Slamet Muljana, H.J. de Graaf, and Denys Lombard (Lombard, 1991; Muljana, 2013; Pigeaud & de Graaf, 1976). Muljana proposed that members of the Walisongo, such as Sunan Ampel and Raden Fatah, had Chinese ancestry. De Graaf supported this through Javanese–Malay literature. At the same time, Lombard highlighted Chinese influences in the Indonesian language, cuisine, architecture, and ritual customs as indirect evidence of religious transmission (Djajadiningrat, 1927b). Although Hoesein offered a culturally embedded and nuanced theory, his emphasis on the Persian–Indian corridor inadvertently reinforced the Gujarat theory advanced by earlier orientalists such as Snouck and J.P. Moquette. This placed his view in sharp contrast with that of Hamka, who foregrounded the Arab–Meccan origin of Islam. Hoesein explicitly rejected Hamka's position:

> "Another strong indication of ties to Western India is the adoption of the Shāfiʿī school by Indonesian Muslims, which is also dominant in Malabar. The evidence cited here is typical of the clues leading historians to accept the theory that Islam entered Indonesia through Iran and the western coast of India" (Djajadiningrat, 1958).

Hamka, in response, contended that "Malabar" should not be interpreted as a point of origin but rather as "Ma'bar," meaning a crossing or transit point. For him, Malabar was a corridor, not a source. Furthermore, Hoesein's dismissal of Hamka may reflect his perception of Hamka primarily as a religious scholar lacking formal historical training. Notably, Hoesein did not mention the Chinese theory, perhaps due to the scholarly stature of its proponents, such as de Graaf and Lombard, both respected for their rigorous methodological approaches. Hoesein might have been reluctant to criticize academics of the same or higher status, while Hamka, who had no academic historiography credentials, was an easier target. Hoesein's interaction with Persian theory demonstrates his dual role as an Orientalist critic and participant, situating him within a complex and multifaceted intellectual framework. His analysis represents a larger trend in his work: one that is grounded in careful historical research but is also warily aware of the prevailing scholarly paradigms of the colonial era. This way of thinking is consistent with his more comprehensive examinations of Islamic political power and law, in which he consistently managed the conflicts between native customs and orientalist epistemological frameworks.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Hoesein Djajadiningrat's intellectual legacy embodies a substantial synthesis of Indonesian Islamic traditions and European philosophy viewed through a postcolonial perspective. His novel methodology, which synthesizes Persian cosmology, indigenous practices, and Sufi metaphysics, criticizes Orientalist narratives while highlighting local contributions to Indonesian Islam. Despite the intrinsic conflicts in his work, as he engaged with colonial texts while contesting colonial epistemologies, Hoesein's contributions underscore the intricacies of Islamic political power and the diverse legal realities of his day. His intentional involvement in the formation of colonial knowledge and his dismissal of reductive narratives highlight his endeavors to formulate a modern Islamic epistemology grounded in regional contexts. Hoesein's work enhances the historiography of Indonesian Islamic thinking and emphasizes the continuous discourse between Islamic identity and colonial legacies, establishing him as a crucial character in the development of Islamic intellectual history in Southeast Asia.

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