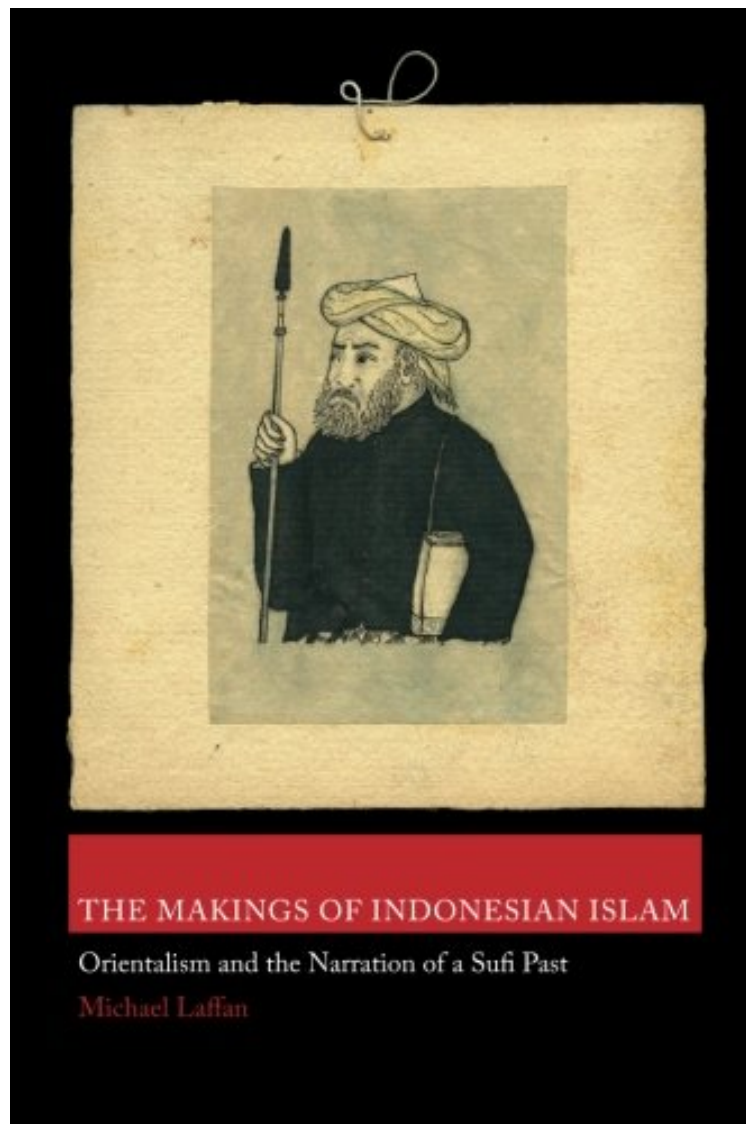


[PDF] The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics)

The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics)

Michael Laffan

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Michael Laffan : The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics):

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Dutch Orientalism examined post mortem By Prof. Dr. Karel Steenbrink According to my memory Ben Boland once wrote that there is no big theory, even not a true general history of Islam in Indonesia, written by a Dutch scholar. Commenting on a book by G.F. Pijper he once wrote that the only result we have to present the scholarly community is *Fragmenta Islamic*. I could not find the original place of the quote, but I several though about this remark when reading a very important new book by Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton University Press, 2011, 301 pages). The book wants to give two broad histories: 1) a history of Indonesian Islam according to the many written sources consulted by Laffan; 2) a history and critique of Western studies of Indonesian Islam. The book is not about independent Indonesia and not about Indonesian scholars (no Taufiq Abdullah, Deliar Noer, Alfian). It ends with the Dutch scholars of the 1930s, G.F. Pijper and Schrieke. It only has a few remarks about post/1945 giants like Clifford Geertz, not much about Anthony Johns and Merle Ricklefs who both in a very different way supported the thesis of a mystic character of the Islamic past of Indonesia. It is not a book for the beginning student of Islam in Indonesia. It is a long essay on many scholars, officials, missionaries who wrote about Islam and, of course, writes at length about the towering figure of Snouck Hurgronje. I have to admit that I found it very difficult to read: it is a very ideological or abstract theoretical discussion of rather down to earth and sober writing Dutch scholars who did not like too much theoretical discourse. Therefore it seems quite often very generalizing. From time to time, however, he has keen information about concrete facts as well. On p. 69 he criticizes a passage in my *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, p. 33/34 where I suggest that the Malay text of *Book of Thousand Questions* was not directly known to Van Eck and his informants in the archipelago. I have to check it with Valentijn, but I suppose that Laffan is right. Karel Steenbrink, Utrecht University

Indonesian Islam is often portrayed as being intrinsically moderate by virtue of the role that mystical Sufism played in shaping its traditions. According to Western observers--from Dutch colonial administrators and orientalist scholars to modern anthropologists such as the late Clifford Geertz--Indonesia's peaceful interpretation of Islam has been perpetually under threat from outside by more violent, intolerant Islamic traditions that were originally imposed by conquering Arab armies. *The Makings of Indonesian Islam* challenges this widely accepted narrative, offering a more balanced assessment of the intellectual and cultural history of the most populous Muslim nation on Earth. Michael Laffan traces how the popular image of Indonesian Islam was shaped by encounters between colonial Dutch scholars and reformist Islamic thinkers. He shows how Dutch religious preoccupations sometimes echoed Muslim concerns about the relationship between faith and the state, and how Dutch-Islamic discourse throughout the long centuries of European colonialism helped give rise to Indonesia's distinctive national and religious culture. *The Makings of Indonesian Islam* presents Islamic and colonial history as an integrated whole, revealing the ways our understanding of Indonesian Islam, both past and present, came to be.

"This well-written, deeply erudite history by Princeton historian Laffan, a prominent scholar of Islam in Southeast Asia, explores the development of Islamic learning in the islands of what is now Indonesia as well as how the faith came to be understood and explained by Dutch scholars during the colonial period. As such, the book offers a compelling parallel history of Indonesia, setting up an engaging new narrative separate from the one most commonly presented, wherein the imposition of colonial rule and later emergence of nationalist consciousness follows a more secular path. . . . The analysis of this intellectual life, along with the thorough understanding of local religious authorities' deeply felt faith, offers a new vision of Indonesian lives under colonial rule."--Choice "With its meticulous scholarship and its wealth of insights into European and Indonesian Muslim understandings of Islam, however, there can be no doubt that this is a path-breaking study. It is a book that should be welcomed and read by all scholars of Islam and all specialists of Indonesia."--Robert W. Hefner, *Indonesia* "The Makings of Indonesian Islam is an impressive and important scholarly contribution that provides a wealth of information and critical perspectives to scholars and students alike. A glossary, index, and eleven figures (including maps and photographs) enrich the text and are helpful resources for the reader. As an ethnomusicologist with research interests in Javanese arts and culture, I very much look forward to using this book in my own research projects and rereading this book with students in advanced seminars."--Christina Sunardi, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* "This book offers an original reflection on the factors that have contributed to the faces of Islam in Indonesia today. It is fascinating, and brilliant in the lines of argument and interplay of themes that it develops, and despite the liveliness, at times playfulness of style, is dense and closely argued in its texture. . . . [T]his is a wonderful book."--Anthony H. Johns, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* "Laffan's very rich account . . . [is] an original and richly detailed contribution to writing the history of an Indonesian Islam."--Carool Kersten, *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania* "Laffan displays great erudition throughout the volume. . . . The overriding impression left with the reader is that Laffan is right on top of all the relevant literature as well as diverse disciplines: history, theology, and mysticism in both Indonesia and the Arab world. This study will provide a benchmark for future scholarship for some time to come, and deservedly so."--Peter G. Riddell, *Journal of Islamic Studies* "Michael F. Laffan has written a dense, very

informative and very inspiring book that should be required reading for anyone who wants to deal with Islam in Indonesia and the Netherlands Orientalism."--Stephan Conermann, *Sehepunkte*"This dense historical narrative, providing a wealth of examples, will be of interest to scholars of Islam, Southeastern Asia, and Sufism. While primarily directed at well seasoned scholars, the volume would be palatable to graduate students as well."--Lavinia Stan, *European Legacy*"This book should be mandatory reading for anyone committed to nuanced reconstruction of the social history of Islamic movements and Christianity in insular Southeast Asia."--Christopher M. Joll, *Mission Studies*From the Back Cover"This book is a major contribution to our understanding of Indonesian Islam. Laffan's methodical and exhaustive research provides us with a well of information and insights that will be mined by scholars and students for years to come. *The Makings of Indonesian Islam* establishes a new benchmark for scholarship on the subject."--Barbara Watson Andaya, coauthor of *A History of Malaysia*"*The Makings of Indonesian Islam* is the best available overview of Islam in the Netherlands East Indies. Laffan offers an original and exciting way of studying the subject."--Nico Kaptein, coeditor of *Transcending Borders: Arabs, Politics, Trade, and Islam in Southeast Asia*About the AuthorMichael Laffan is professor of history at Princeton University. He is the author of *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia: The Umma Below the Winds*.