

Performing Islamic Rituals in Non-Muslim Countries: Wedding Ceremony among Indonesian Muslims in The Netherlands

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Abstract

In the mid-twentieth century, a large number of Muslims from various Muslim countries emigrated to Europe for various reasons. Most of them came to Europe for economic purposes, while certain groups came for political and educational reasons. For many Indonesian Muslims living in the Netherlands, practicing religious rites was a challenge because of social-cultural differences between the Netherlands and their country of origin and lack of religious facilities such as mosques. One of these rites is performing a marriage ceremony. This article investigates wedding ceremonies among Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands. The required data were collected through interviews with participants who were involved in wedding ceremonies, attendance of wedding ceremonies, and watching the videos of participants' wedding ceremonies. This study shows that marriages among Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands were divided into two categories. First, marriages that conformed to the regulations stipulated by the embassy of Indonesia in the Netherlands. Second, those that conformed to the marriage regulations in Islamic law. Several weddings involved the conversion of brides or grooms into Islam. The pronouncement of the marriage contract used three languages: Indonesian, Dutch, and English. The wedding ceremonies among Indonesian Muslims appeared to conform to the Dutch social-cultural context.

Keywords

Islamic ritual, Indonesian Muslims, the Netherlands, wedding ceremony, marriage, immigrants, minority

Intisari

Pada pertengahan abad ke dua puluh, banyak Muslim dari beberapa negara Muslim datang ke Belanda termasuk dari Indonesia. Tujuan mereka beragam seperti karena ekonomi, politik dan pendidikan. Banyak tantangan hidup dialami oleh Muslim di negara non-Muslim

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ini seperti jarangya fasilitas ibadah dan perbedaan budaya dan gaya hidup. Hal ini menyebabkan pelaksanaan ritual keagamaan tidak dapat dilaksanakan sebagaimana di negara asalnya. Artikel ini mengkaji isu pelaksanaan ritual Islam di negara non-Muslim dengan memfokuskan bahasannya pada pelaksanaan upacara perkawinan di kalangan Muslim Indonesia di Belanda. Data untuk artikel ini diperoleh dengan melakukan wawancara dengan para pasangan yang melakukan pernikahan di Belanda dan juga dengan pihak-pihak terkait. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat dua model pelaksanaan upacara pernikahan bagi Muslim Indonesia di Belanda. Pertama, pernikahan yang mengikuti aturan yang ditetapkan oleh Kedutaan Besar Indonesia di Belanda. Kedua, pernikahan yang dilaksanakan secara agama Islam. Untuk pasangan campuran (salah satu pihak berasal dari Belanda) terkadang pernikahan diikuti dengan perpindahan agama terlebih dahulu. Ijab kabul dilakukan dengan menggunakan tiga bahasa: Indonesia, Belanda dan Inggris. Kebanyakan Muslim Indonesia menyelenggarakan upacara pernikahan beradaptasi dengan lingkungan setempat dan diadakan secara sederhana.

Katakunci

Ritual Islam, Muslim Indonesia, acara pernikahan, Belanda, imigran, minoritas, perkawinan

Introduction

From the 1950s to the 1970s, a large number of Muslims from various Muslim countries emigrated to Europe for various reasons. Most of them came to Europe from Morocco and Turkey for economic reasons as in that time European countries needed extra cheap labor forces. But, many Surinamese and Indonesians came to Europe for political reasons (Shadid and van Koningsveld 1991:2; Dasseto and Nonneman 1996:187; Shadid and van Koningsveld 1995:1).

In the case of Indonesian Muslims, they immigrated to the Netherlands after the proclamation of Indonesian independence. Within this community, three major groups can be identified: Moluccans, Surinamese Javanese, and Indonesian Muslims of other ethnicities of origin. The Moluccans, who originated from Moluccas Island, came to the Netherlands in 1951 as ex-KNIL (Koninklijk Netherlands Indisch Leger, i.e. the former Dutch colonial army) members for political asylum (der Hoek 1992:181-182). For the first time, the Moluccans Muslims lived in the camp in Wyldemerk, the province of Friesland. Nowadays they mostly live in Ridderkerk and Waalwijk. They built two mosques in those towns. The Muslims from Surinam are divided into two groups: Hindustani and Javanese. The Javanese Surinamese Muslims live throughout the Netherlands. Their centers of worship are not 'official' mosques, but mostly prayer-halls. Therefore, any religious organizations within this community are scarcely found

(Shadid dan van Koningsveld 1991:101). The last group of Indonesian Muslim community came from various regions in Indonesia. In the Netherlands, they live mostly in the province of Zuid Holland with one mosque coordinated by Persatuan Pemuda Muslim se-Eropa (PPME; Indonesian Young Muslims Association in Europe) (Shadid and van Koningsveld 1991:100).

For many Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands, practicing religious rites was not as easy as in the country of origin. The most serious problem facing this minority group, as suggested by M. Ali Kettani (1986:9), is social absorption by the majority. As a minority group, the Indonesian Muslim community in the Netherlands is challenged by Dutch lifestyles and a lack of religious facilities such as mosques. There is a small number of mosques, whose which some are difficult to be reached. This more or less influenced their religious senses and religious identities and resulted in what Dessing (2001:7) calls as loosening “their firm basis in a social and religious context”. For example, to perform a marriage in the Netherlands is different from the practice in the country of origin. There is less support from families, relatives, friends, and neighbors in organizing the marriage. Hence, many couples, in general, perform their marriages in modest and simple ways.

Some studies have analyzed the issues of marriage among Muslims in the Netherlands, including Nathal Dessing (2001) in her *Rituals of Birth, Circumcision, Marriage, and Death among Muslims in the Netherlands*. However, marriage within the Indonesian Muslims is excluded from her discussion, as she conducted the study among Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese Hindustani and Surinamese Javanese Muslims. Hence, it is necessary to understand more the Islamic rituals among Muslims in non-Muslim countries by focusing on the wedding ceremony among Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands. To do this, I interviewed participants who were involved in wedding ceremonies, such as couples, *imams*, and Indonesian embassy staff in the Netherlands. I also attended wedding ceremonies and watched videos of wedding ceremonies. I interviewed five couples who live in Leiden and The Hague. These interviewees were divided into three categories: first, couples both of whom are Indonesians; second, couples one of whom, the bride, is Indonesian, and the groom Dutch; third, couples one of whom, the groom, is Indonesian and the bride Dutch. This study aims to describe how marriage ceremony among Indonesian Muslims was performed in the Dutch context and to show how it was influenced by the new environment and how some rites had changed following the new situation.

Marriage in Islamic Law

In Islamic law, a marriage is a contract that legalizes intercourse between a man and a woman, which is usually represented by the woman’s guardian (al-Aqili 1990:15; Abu Zahra 1950:16). Because marriage is a contractual relationship, both parties (the bride and the groom) can stipulate it. Marriage is encouraged in Islam to safeguard chastity. Then it is highly recommended to every adult Muslim, who are capable mentally and financially, to do so because the Prophet said: “there

shall be no monasticism in Islam”(al-Naisaburi n.d.:1018.) Besides, marriage is considered not only as a social relation (*mu'amalah*) but also as worship (*ibadat*). Through marriage, a family is established, i.e. by way of procreation of the children and co-operation between the members of the family (Esposito 1982:16).

There are several requirements and obligations stipulated to perform a marriage in Islamic law. The first step is commonly called an engagement (*khitba*). *Khitba* is the precedent of marriage by a man to ask a woman to marry him (al-Aqili 1990:39; Abu Zahra 1950:26). In general, it is shown by the exchange of rings indicating that both of them are engaged with each other. But, this practice is not found in Islamic teachings; it is adopted by Muslims from various customs and traditions. The problem with this practice is Muslim men are prohibited to wear golden accessories including golden rings as stated in a prophetic tradition (al-Sadlan 1999). During the period of engagement, both parties could manage to know each other. According to some Maliki jurists, if the proposal is accepted the man can see the face and hands of his prospective wife. Other jurists even allow the man to talk to her frequently to manage some affairs such as negotiating the amount of *mahr* (bridal gift). However, a group of jurists do not allow the man to see her (ibn Rusyd 1994:2). A man can propose a woman only in three situations: the woman does not belong to the category into which it is forbidden to marry, the woman is not observing the *'idda*, a period after a divorce, and the woman is not engaged to someone else (al-Aqili 1990:42).

To consider a marriage valid, essential requirements must be fulfilled: *ijab* (offer) and *qabul* (acceptance). The *ijab* and *qabul* should use words that exactly refer to marriage using the two Arabic forms of tenses either past tense (*fi'l madi*) or present tense (*fi'l mudari'*) (al-Kasani n.d.: 1993; Abu Zahra 1950:39). Besides, the words of 'offer' and 'acceptance' should be declared clearly and directly, which means that there should no separation between these exchanges. Thus, the declaration should be taken at the same moment and place (al-Aqili 1990:54-6; al-Ghazali 1984:42).

Other requirements of a valid marriage include the presence of two witnesses, who are intelligent, mature, Muslim, competent, and just (al-Kasani n.d.:1377), the bride is not the woman who falls within a relationship category within which it is forbidden to marry, none of the parties are forced by another, the consent of the bride should be taken into account as many women are married by force of their guardians (al-Ghazali 1984:41), the marriage is not performed in the time of pilgrimage or *umra*, and none of the couples is ill condition (al-Aqili 1990:66-73).

Mahr (Bridal Gift)

One of the woman's rights from her husband is a bridal gift. In Islamic law, it is called *mahr*, *saddaq* or *nihlah*, but *mahr* is widely accepted term. It is a gift given to the woman by the virtue of the marriage contract. It is an essential aspect of marriage in the form of money or goods to please the woman and to honor her as a sign of love which is based on the Quranic verse IV: 4: "...and give the women (on marriage) their *mahr* as a gift..." *Mahr* belongs exclusively to the woman.

Therefore, none of her guardians or relatives can take it from her; she decides the amount of the *mahr* and she could spend it or use it for whatever she wants (Engineer 1992:111).

Muslim jurists determined the minimum amount of the *mahr*. In Egypt, the minimum amount is 10 dirham or 7 dinars according to Hanafite school and 4 dinars according to Maliki school (al-Kasani n.d.:1426). Meanwhile, the Shafi'ite jurists do not set the minimum amount of the *mahr*; they stated that anything which can be called wealth or property that provides profit can be used as a *mahr* (Abu Zahra 1950:167-168). They argued by the hadith: "seek something (to give her as *mahr*) even if it is an iron ring" (al-Nisaburi n.d.:1041). Even so, the jurists do not decide the maximum amount of the *mahr*. Nowadays, the amount and the form of *mahr* depend on the tradition and the culture appropriate to the homeland of every Muslim.

The woman has a right to get the entire *mahr* after marriage. It implies the sexual intercourse or sexual contact has already taken place. This becomes the sole property of the woman and she cannot be obliged to return it should her husband die. The woman still deserves half of the *mahr* if the husband divorced her after consummation and after the fixation of the *mahr*. However, if her husband divorced her after consummation, but before the fixation of the *mahr*, she deserves to get a proper gift from the husband.

Walima (Wedding Party)

Walima, a short for *walimat al-'urs*, is an Islamic term for a wedding party, which means banquet: serving a meal for the guests at a wedding party (al-Sabiq 1997:158). Generally, a wedding party is held after the wedding contract directly or a day after the wedding contract. According to the consensus of most Muslim jurists, a *walima* is recommended to announce the marriage and to avoid secret marriage based on the hadith: "Give the wedding banquet; even with a sheep" (al-Nisaburi n.d.: 1042).

Following the hadith above, announcing marriage is necessary to share happiness among relatives, friends, and neighborhoods. This happiness is shown by serving or offering food and drinks, dancing and singing songs. Islam allows this practice as long as there is no undue excess, such as offering forbidden foods or drinks or mixing between men and women (al-Sabiq 1997:155).

Marriage in Indonesian Law

The law of marriage differs from one country to another depending on cultures, traditions, and religions. Indonesia as a multi-ethnic nation has various customs of marriage according to regions and religions. Nevertheless, there is an official regulation (national law) on marriage, the Law of Republic of Indonesia No 1 of the year 1974, which applies to all ethnic groups and religions of Indonesia. However, in its practice, marriage is performed according to religious and customary laws. Since Indonesia is a multi-religion and ethnic country, various ethnic and religious-based marriage laws are valid as stated in the marriage

statute Article 2 (Law 1974:9). For Muslims, the Religious Law applied differs from the Customary Law (Koentjaraningrat 1976). Sometimes, the Religious Law and Customary Law coincide in considering marriage. Marriage regulation for Indonesian Muslims in Indonesia is law number 7 of the year 1989 on religious jurisdiction (The Compilation 1996/1997).

In many cases, marriage in Indonesia is parentally arranged, particularly in the lower and middle-class communities, and it often occurs at an early age. Accordingly, after marriage, the couple still lives either with the groom's parents or the bride's parents, and are economically supported by their parents (Koentjaraningrat 1976:25-28). New marriage law requires that the minimum age for marriage in Indonesia is 19 years both for the bride and groom. Compared to other cultures, the age for marriage in Indonesia ranks low for both men and women (Taj 1990:4-5). Nevertheless, within the upper-class community, delayed marriage is more common as they continue higher education or establish their working career (Taj 1990:25).

Wedding Party in Indonesia

Since Indonesia is a multi-ethnic nation, every ethnic group has its tradition and customary law of marriage. There are three systems of customary law in Indonesia. First, *pernikahan jujur*, which means the groom offers the proposal of marriage to the bride. After marriage, the wife should follow and stay in her husband's residence. This system is practiced in North Sumatra, Bali and other ethnic groups. Second, *pernikahan semanda*; the bride proposes to the groom and after marriage, the husband follows and stays in his wife's place. It is practiced among Minangkabau people in West Sumatra and Semendo in South Sumatra. Third, *pernikahan bebas*; the proposal of marriage made by the groom to the bride, and after marriage, both of them can decide where they live according to their agreement. This practice can be found in Java and has been adopted by modern couples in recent times (Hadikusuma 1995:9). These customary laws are regulated following the traditions of every place as long as they agree with the philosophy of Pancasila and 1945 Constitution.

A wedding party in Indonesia is not only an announcement of the contract but also a social identity and stratification (Taj 1990:24). The guests, the invitations cards, the food, the wedding venue, and the dress indicate how rich or not the bride's family or the groom's family is. These show not only the cost of the party but also the amount of the bridal gift. In rural areas, the amount of the bridal gift is less than Rp 5.000.000 compared to that of the middle class between Rp 5.000.000 and Rp 10.000.000. In the upper-class communities, it could be more than Rp 10.000.000 (Taj 1990:102). The amount of the bridal gift may increase following the increase of daily needs.

Every ethnic group has its tradition in the wedding celebration and party. In most cases, the wedding ceremony is held in the bride's house. The ceremony begins when the groom is picked up by the bride's family. Before entering the house, there is a ceremony of reciting *pantun* (traditional poetry), which is exchanged by

the two parties. Then, the groom enters the house to sign the marriage contract (Koentjaraningrat 1976:71; Surjadi 1974: 124). The *ijab* and *qabul* should be stated clearly and directly. After finishing the marriage contract, there are some other ceremonies until the bride and the groom sit on the dais, which is specially made for the bridal couple, and are flanked by their respective parents. Then, the guests start to congratulate and give them presents, which are usually in the form of money put in a special place provided by their family.

The wedding clothes used by couples are usually in bright colors. In Java, representing three main ethnic groups -Sundanese, Javanese, and Batavians- the wedding clothes are simpler than those in Sumatra, Kalimantan, or Sulawesi. In Java, the wedding dress called *kebaya*, nowadays popular as a national dress, usually white for the signing of the marriage contract and various colors for the wedding party with simple accessories. In Sumatra, the wedding dress is mostly in red or yellow with gold accessories on the dress and another worn on the head. The wedding background is colorful and full of shiny accessories. In Sumatra, to perform the wedding ceremony a traditional party is recommended to preserve the tradition (Radjilis 1995:6).

A few days before the marriage, the bride is asked to stay at home and not to see her prospective husband until the time of the wedding contract to prepare physically and mentally, which is called *berpingit*. During this time, the bride takes care of her beauty, face, and body. She is also prohibited from eating certain types of food, and sometimes, she should fast for a few days. Besides, she is taught the ethics of how to live with her husband, parents-in-law, and her husband's relatives (Radjilis 1995:18).

Dessing (1992:113) described in her research that there is usually a henna party on the night before the marriage for Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese brides. This practice is also found in Sumatra called *bainai*, which is conducted when the bride is given the nail color from henna on her hands. But, this is not common in Java (Radjilis 1995:20-21). However, modern Muslim couples in the city usually ignore such traditional scenes at their wedding and just abide by Islamic regulations; they even perform their wedding in a simple ceremony.

Indonesian Muslims' Wedding Ceremony in the Netherlands

The Indonesian law of marriage for Indonesians in overseas countries is issued in the regulation of marriage of Republic of Indonesia No. 1974, chapter twelve, second section, article 56:

- (1) A marriage performed outside Indonesia between two Indonesians or between an Indonesian and a foreigner shall be legitimated if it is carried out based on the laws in force within a state wherein the marriage has been performed and if insofar as the Indonesian is concerned, the marriage is not in contravention with the provisions of this law.
- (2) Within one year after the return of husband and wife to Indonesian territory, their certificate of marriage shall be registered with the office of the Marriage Registrar at their place of residence.

The regulation applies to Indonesians who decide to perform marriage outside Indonesia. The Indonesian embassy in the Netherlands is the only institution that arranges an official *imam* for marriage (*penghulu*) since 1975 for Indonesians living overseas. There are two kinds of procedures for Indonesian Muslims who want to do marriage in the Netherlands: first, the formal procedure which is determined by the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in the Netherlands, and second, the marriage procedure, which is set according to Islamic Law without following the stipulations made by the embassy.

For this paper, I tried to deal with both procedures of the wedding practice. Firstly, I contacted the embassy of Indonesia, especially the Minister Consular, who handled marriage cases, and the *imam penghulu*, who was appointed by the Indonesian government to lead the marriage ceremony for Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands. As he spoke both Indonesian and Dutch, he was often invited to lead the marriage ceremony not only among Indonesians but also among couples from other countries that live in the Netherlands such as Moroccans, Malaysians, and Turks.

For the first procedure, there were some regulations required for Indonesian Muslim couples who wish to get married in the Netherlands. The following regulations are the formal regulation stated by the embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in the Netherlands:

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in The Hague will only carry out Muslim marriage if the couple brings a letter requesting for marriage to the head of consular in the Embassy together with the following documents:

1. A letter from the bride's father or her father's representative requesting the embassy *penghulu* via the head of the consular section to conduct his daughter's marriage;
2. A letter from the couple stating their intention to get married;
3. A letter from *lurah* (head of the village) informing the identity of the woman and the man who will get married;
4. A copy of the birth certificate of both woman and man.
5. A copy of the passports and residence permit of the woman and the man in the Netherlands from the *Gemeente* (town hall); and
6. If the man and the woman are already resident in the Netherlands, a letter from the *Gemeente* in the Netherlands is required to inform the status of the man and the woman as single (each of them has not been married before) or the *Gemeente's* letter will inform the status of the woman and man as a widow or divorced.

According to the Indonesian embassy's regulations, there was no need to hold a civil marriage in the *Gemeente* for an Indonesian couple. Their marriage was valid according to Islamic regulations and the Indonesian embassy as well as Dutch law. In the case of mixed couples, one of whom Dutch nationality, they had to register their marriage to the *Gemeente*.

The second procedure of marriage performed by Indonesian Muslims was the marriage according to Islamic regulations. Generally, when a couple agreed to marry, they came to the *imam* of a mosque and the marriage contract was signed in a simple ceremony in the presence of the *imam*, witnesses and a few of their best friends. An *imam* only carried out a marriage contract if the couple showed a letter from the administrative office in their place residence, which informed that both of them had never been married before or informed the status of the woman and the man as widow or divorced, and the consent of the bride or the bride's father or guardian.

This second procedure of marriage was only recognized by the Indonesian embassy if the couple registered their marriage to the embassy afterward. In many cases, the couple who followed the second procedure did not feel like registering their marriage to the embassy. They argued that their Islamic way of was valid enough to make legal cohabitation.

Since there were mixed marriages, the marriage contract had to be declared in three languages: Indonesian, Dutch, and English. A couple could choose which language they wished. However, the *imam* used Arabic for *ijab* and *qabul* even when the groom and the bride knew nothing about Arabic. After that, he translated it into Dutch or Indonesian.

Many Indonesian Muslims got married to Dutch couples. I interviewed three categories of couples: first, a couple whose bride and groom were Indonesians; second, a couple whose bride was from Indonesia; and third, a couple whose groom was from Indonesia. Most of them chose the mosque to perform their marriage, besides their apartment or house. Some of them also did it in the Indonesian embassy in The Hague, but seldom did this happen. They usually performed it in a simple ceremony with limited guests and simple food. Five couples that I interviewed said that the important thing for them was their marriage was valid and recognized by laws. They prepared their wedding in a short time like one month or even less. When they desired and agreed to get married they did it to guard their chastity. The average ages of the couples who got married in the Netherlands were 27 years old or more. None of them got married at an early age. It seemed that education and working careers made them delay their marriage.

Based on my experience in attending wedding ceremonies, a wedding ceremony usually began with reciting the Quran verses, usually *sura al-Rum*, verse 21, which states that God created humans in pairs that they may dwell in tranquillity and love each other. Then, someone gave a marriage sermon, which was mostly short, advising about marriage. Then, an *imam* announced the marriage by calling the names of the bride and groom. After the declaration of *ijab* and *qabul*, the couple and the witnesses should sign the marriage document. In Indonesia, after that, the groom had to read *taklik talak*, which was written in the marriage document. It was a kind of promise read by the groom after an *'aqad*, in which he promised to observe his duties and responsibilities should he died, abandoned his wife or was missing. But, this *taklik talak* was not declared by the groom in the case of marriage in the Netherlands. The ceremony ended with a prayer

led by the *imam*. Then, the couple shook their parents' hands for the blessing of their marriage. The bride usually felt very emotional asking for the blessing of the parents as she was sad to leave them and was happy to start a new life. Then, the couple stood at the front where the guests congratulated them. The ceremony was simple and did not last long, no more than half an hour. In contrast, in Indonesia, the marriage ceremony would take at least two hours or more and the *imam* gave a long marriage sermon. To give money as a bridal gift appeared uncommon as I saw only flowers were given to the couple.

Two Indonesian Muslim couples got married according to an official regulation of the Indonesian embassy in The Hague. The first couple (female, 30 years old; male, 33 years old), both were students, followed the formal procedure as stated in the regulation of the embassy above. As they had a good relationship with the embassy official, they held their wedding in the house of the embassy staff, followed by a little party. The bride was from West Java and the groom was from Kalimantan. She wore *kebaya*, a Sundanese traditional wedding dress, lent by a friend who also helped with her make-up and the groom used a formal dress. The wedding ceremony began with reciting the Quranic verses. Then the marriage contract (*ijab* and *qabul*) was read and signed. It ended with a marriage sermon. After finishing the wedding ceremony, they provided guests, almost 100 guests, with Indonesian food and entertained them Islamic and Sundanese music. Their parents were absent, but at the time of the wedding ceremony, they were able to listen on the phone. When they went back to Indonesia, they registered their marriage in the local registration office of their residence. They also performed their wedding feast according to their community tradition when they went back to Indonesia.

Another Indonesian couple, the bride (25 years old) was a student and the groom (30 years old) was a teacher at the Indonesian school in the Netherlands, performed their marriage in Al-Hikmah Mosque with 100 guests and the presence of the bride's parents. She also wore *kebaya* as her wedding dress, which is bought by the groom, but she did not make-up her face, and the groom wore the formal dress. She told me that she met her husband at the Indonesian mosque in September and one month later in the same year they decided to get married.

Since they had to arrange their marriage by themselves, which meant it was without the presence of their families, the preparations for the marriage were simple and did not take much time. There was no time called *berpingit* since they had to communicate intensively discussing their marriage preparations. There was no time for body treatment in a beauty salon as they were busy searching for the wedding rings. As the price was high, there was no colorful invitation card, but simply invitations printed in white paper.

In general, the process of marriage runs as follows: A man and a woman agreed to marry; this was followed by a formal proposal from the man to the woman's parents by telephone or letter. The woman informed her parents about her plans to marry away from home and asked for their advice. Although the

parents felt sad about their child's choice, they respected her decisions and bless her. Then the couple's families in Indonesia made contact to discuss everything about their children. Some of them held a party in their neighborhood to inform relatives and peoples about their daughter's or son's marriage at the same time as the couple was getting married in the Netherlands. Alternatively, they held a party when the couple returned to Indonesia.

Another couple I interviewed was a mixed couple, the bride was Indonesian and the groom was a Dutch. Many couples fell into this category. It was difficult to find the couples in the opposite category, the bride was a Dutch and the groom was an Indonesia. Luckily, with the help of my colleagues, I met them in al-Hikmah Mosque.

An Indonesian woman (32 years old) came to the Netherlands to get married to a Dutchman (40 years old) after they had met in Indonesia. Her marriage was conducted in the Al-Hikmah Mosque in a simple ceremony with the presence of her brother. Since the religion of the groom was not Islam, the marriage began with the groom's conversion to Islam pronouncing the *shahadah* (the declaration of faith) and continued with the marriage ceremony. The *imam* normally guided the groom to recite *sura al-Fatiha* with its translation in Dutch and pronounce *Shahadat* with its translation in Dutch. Then, the *imam* guided the marriage step by step and concluded with the marriage contract. The marriage sermon was short and it was about the meaning of the marriage. The celebration of the marriage was held a day after the marriage contract.

In the cases of other mixed marriages, the Indonesian bride (29 years old) and Dutch groom (35 years old) decided to get married to avoid a religiously forbidden cohabitation. They performed their marriage in the bride's house and invited only their friends, most of whom were Dutch people, but not their parent's colleagues. They were eager to show their friends how an Islamic marriage was performed. The groom's parents came and wore an Indonesian dress, which had been borrowed from the bride's family. The ceremony was celebrated with respect as the bride cried holding her father because of the absence of her mother who died two years ago. The ceremony was held in Dutch. After the marriage contract was finished, the guests were served with Indonesian food ordered from a restaurant.

Another mixed couple, of whom the bride (38 years old) was Dutch and the groom (31 years old) was from Indonesia, married in al-Hikmah Mosque. She met her husband for the first time was when she came to Indonesia in 1996 for vacation. This short meeting continued and became a serious relationship when she invited him to come to the Netherlands in 1999. This intensive meeting made them talk to the more serious problem concerning marriage and her religion since she was a Catholic. She decided to convert to Islam in December 1999. She had a deep feeling about Islam as she said:

That was in Ramadan when I herd him pray aloud, and I imagine that I also pray with him to God. But then, I realized my self at that moment that something happened inside my heart that I wanted to be a Muslim. I

felt Islam is more direct; closer to God and it was a special experience... Then, I decided to marry him and at the same moment, I did *Shahadat* to be a Muslim. I preferred to do it at the same moment because for me it is the same thing belonging together at a very important moment in my life: getting married and being a Muslim.”

The couple got married at al-Hikmah Mosque without the presence of the bride's parents because they could not accept their daughter's conversion to Islam. The wedding ceremony was performed in the mosque with some guests who were served with Indonesian food. She wore a modern-western dress for her marriage and the groom wore sarong and batik, typical Indonesian dress.

Since the bride was a Dutch person, she had to get married in a town hall (Stadhuis). She and her husband had to inform the town hall of their plans to get married. Then, two weeks later they had to come to the town hall to talk with the civil servant or the official who handle marriage. They needed to fill some forms to receive a marriage book. They invited their friends and their parents, who at this time did not mind coming to the town hall. They also had guests at their home to celebrate their wedding and provided them with some food and drink.

The wedding ceremony that was performed by Indonesian Muslims in the Netherlands was simpler and easier than that in Indonesia. There was no bridal gift given to the bride since they preferred to share the financial burden of the marriage and there was no colorful wedding dress. The married couples got well documented in photographs or videos. Most Indonesian Muslims who performed marriage in the Netherlands put aside their country's traditions and customary law of marriage. The only sign of a typical Indonesian wedding tradition was seen in the dress worn by the bride: *kebaya*. Some married couples preferred to perform their marriage in the Netherlands to avoid Indonesian traditions of the wedding ceremony, which were very high in cost should they applied them in the Netherlands.

Conclusion

Many Muslims immigrated to or visited European countries for various reasons and they needed to adjust to a new environment of non-Muslim societies. Since the 1970s, the Dutch government was aware of the presence of the Muslim minorities in the Netherlands so that it protected the rights of minorities. It not only provided these minorities with financial support for prayer halls but also recognized their right to organize themselves. It seems that the Netherlands accepted the presence of multicultural society as seen in its governmental policy that guaranteed that minority groups had opportunities to have a proper living and preserve their culture and identity.

Muslim immigrants in Europe faced challenges when they came to perform Islamic rituals. This was particularly seen in the case of Muslim immigrants from Indonesia in the Netherlands. They needed to adjust Islamic rituals to the Dutch context. Many Indonesian Muslims came to the Netherlands for a short

or long stay. As they lived in a non-Muslim country, they faced challenges in performing their Islamic rituals such as performing a marriage ceremony. The ways Indonesian Muslims in this country performed marriages can be identified into two categories. First, the couples conformed to the regulations that were stipulated by the Indonesian Embassy in The Hague. Secondly, they conformed to the Islamic law of marriage. The Indonesian embassy accepted both practices although the first category was more complicated than the second one. Most of Indonesian Muslims took the second form of a marriage ceremony.

In the cases of mixed marriage in which one of the partners was a non-Muslim, the wedding ceremony began with the conversion of the bride or the groom into Islam and continued with the marriage contract. This made the *imams* pronounced the marriage contract in three languages: Indonesian, Dutch, and English. Thus, the 'new home' of non-Muslim countries made immigrant Muslims adapt to the local context in performing Islamic rituals as seen in the case of how Indonesian Muslims performed their wedding ceremony in the Netherlands.

Endnotes

Notes

- ¹ The Netherlands government gave the fund to build a mosque for this community in Ridderkerk and Waalwijk apart from other Indonesian mosques. Since 1976, the Netherlands' government provides minorities with financial support for building prayer halls (Shadid and van Koningsveld 1991; Dasseto and Noneman 1996).
- ² The Hadith stated that the Prophet used to wear a golden ring in his right hand. Then, his followers did the same. The Prophet discarded it and said: "I will never wear it" (Al-Nisaburi, n.d., Vol. III:1655).
- ³ The Qur'an, *sura al-Baqara*: 236-237.
- ⁴ In performing wedding ceremony, the Islamic law and the customary law were applied at the same time so that people sometimes could not differentiate between these two practices.
- ⁵ Interview with an official *imam* of marriage affairs (*penghulu*) November 1, 2002, The Hague.
- ⁶ The official *imam* appointed by the Indonesian embassy in the Hague was H. Sofyan Olong. He is a Moluccan Muslim who immigrated to Holland during the colonial times as KNIL member. After the independence of Indonesia he decided to stay in Holland and continued his study in Holland. He has been active as a preacher among Indonesian Muslims in the province of Zeeland since he came in 1951. Then, he worked at the embassy from 1956-1964 as a spokesman of Moluccans and also as an *imam*. In 1975, the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs, Alamsyah Ratu Perwira Negara, appointed him as an official *imam* responsible for the marriage ceremony (*penghulu*) in

- the Embassy of Republic of Indonesia in the Hague. Interview with Olong, November 1, 2002.
- ⁷ Interview with Dienne H. Moehario, the Representative of the Minister of Counsellor of the Indonesian Embassy in the Hague, November 14, 2001.
- ⁸ Interviewed with the Indonesian embassy's penghulu on April 27, 2003.
- ⁹ There were four leading *imams* in Mosque al-Hikma: H. Hambali, H. Danun and H. Naf'an and H. Khairan. H. Hambali and H. Naf'an were the *imams* who were appointed to lead the wedding ceremony. Both graduated from a Middle Eastern university, decided to stay in the Netherlands and founded the PPME (Interview on November 20, 2001 and November 2, 2002).
- ¹⁰ Every city had its own prayer hall purchased by Indonesian Muslims. The function of those prayer halls include as a place of prayers, community *iftar* in the fasting month, learning and reciting the Qur'an, discussion of religious topics and so on. The official mosque in the Netherlands for Indonesian Muslims is al-Hikma in The Hague founded in 1996 and opened officially by Indonesian government 1972.
- ¹¹ Observation of the wedding ceremony at al-Hikma mosque on November 2, 2002.
- ¹² Interview on August 14, 2002, Leiden.
- ¹³ Interview on November 22, 2001, The Hague.
- ¹⁴ Interview on November 22, 2001, The Hague.
- ¹⁵ Interview in Novemer 2001, The Hague.
- ¹⁶ Interview on September 10, 2002, The Hague.
- ¹⁷ Interview on November 2, 2002 at al-Hikma Mosque, The Hague.
- ¹⁸ Interview on November 2, 2002 at al-Hikma Mosque, The Hague.

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