Piety, Politics, and Everyday Ethics in Southeast Asian Islam

Beautiful Behavior

Edited by
Robert Rozehnal

contributors assert an important interpretation of the Islamic world of Southeast Asia, yet also suggest the possibility for a shift in the Western perspective of Islam more generally. This book creatively lays the groundwork for what must become a fresh beginning in Islamic studies."
Mark Mancall, Emeritus Professor of Modern World History, Stanford University, USA

"This is a timely and important collection on a theme that is under-discussed in Southeast Asian studies on Islam."
Eric Tagliacozzo, Professor of History, Cornell University, USA

"This book brings together works of an interdisciplinary nature that look at how the ethical-religious concept of *adab* has been creatively translated and (re)constructed in the Indonesian and Malaysian contexts."
Moch Nur Ichwan, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Indonesia

This book explores the diversity and dynamism of Islam in Southeast Asia through the concept of *adab*, or beautiful behavior. Amid the complexity of Islamic civilization, *adab* provides Muslims with a shared sense of sacred history, identity, and morality. In the context of Islamic ethics, *adab* defines the rules of personal and public etiquette: good manners, proper conduct, civility, and humaneness.

Featuring the interdisciplinary research of nine prominent scholars of Islam, this book offers new perspectives on *adab*'s multiple meanings and its myriad of applications for Muslim communities in Malaysia and Indonesia. The chapters examine a wide range of texts, spotlighting the writings of prominent Muslim thinkers, as well as contexts, focusing on the everyday experiences of lay Muslims. Drawing on a variety of theoretical and methodological lenses, the essays reveal how beautiful behavior impacts local institutions, cultural practices, and religious imaginations via politics and law, spirituality and piety, and ethics and experience.

With its careful textual analysis, detailed case studies, and attention to historical continuities and disjunctures, *Piety, Politics, and Everyday Ethics in Southeast Asian Islam* is essential reading for students and scholars interested in global Islam and the lived, local dynamics of Muslim Southeast Asia.

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This book is dedicated to the memory of our colleague, collaborator, and friend,
Professor Jeffrey Hadler (1968–2017)

and to

Neneng Syahdati Rosmy (1975–2018),
the beloved wife of our friend (and contributor to this volume),
Professor Muhamad Ali.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un
"To Allah we belong, and to Him is our return"
Qur'an (2:156)

Contents

Illustrations

1

The Interplay between *Adab* and Local Ethics and Etiquette in Indonesian and Malaysian Literature

Muhamad Ali

Introduction

The concept of *adab* is a fundamental and pervasive code of behavior in Muslim societies. It is "a deeply embedded cultural/religious value flexibly and situationally determining the best form of action based in an ontological refinement and found in the Islamic and Islamicate cultural arena."[1] Even though *adab* does not exist in the primary scripture of Islam, the Qur'an, the term has become not only a pervasive concept but also a historically persistent norm, intersecting with cultural and ethicoreligious concepts in many Islamicate societies around the world. In Southeast Asia, the prevalence of *adab* and its meanings are shaped by both scriptural and cultural factors, as well as by Arabic and non-Arabic sources of knowledge and practice. Determining the best form of action, *adab* is framed within the fundamental Qur'anic concepts of *akhlaq* (*akhlaq karima* and *husn al-khulq*, or good morality), the English/Dutch word "etiquette/*etiket*," and the Arabic and Sanskrit localized concepts of custom known as *adat* or *adat istiadat*.

In the Islamicate societies in Southeast Asia, the modern Arabic-English dictionary's description of *adab* as culture, refinement, good breeding, good manners, decency, propriety, humaneness, the humanities, literature, civility, and civilization intersects with a wide variety of localized terminology. This includes Sanskrit and old Javanese words such as *sopan santun* (politeness), *budi pekerti* (good character), *tata krama* (manners), *unggah-unggah* (manners); localized English words such as *etiket*, *moralitas*, and *etika*; as well as the equally wide variety of meanings of the Arabic terms *akhlaq* (disposition, nature,

character, temper, ethics, morals, or manner) and *adat* (custom, habit, tradition, culture). In short, there is both interchangeability and distinction between *adab* and other concepts that define good manners, morality, and tradition. Together, the appropriation and localization of Arabic, Sanskrit, Dutch, and English terminology illuminates how codes of behavior operate in Malay and Indonesian Muslim societies. In this process, Arabic-Islamic and Western epistemologies intertwine within local ethnic, nationalistic, and Islamic works on ethics and etiquette. This complex interplay between Arabic, Western, and local taxonomies is evident in the various texts we will discuss in this essay.

Adab and *Adat* in Indonesian Local and Nationalist Literature

In Indonesia, when *adab* is used in particular local traditions (*adat*), the term can mean ethics, etiquette, and sometimes literature. A volume entitled *Beberapa Etika dan Etiket Jawa* (Some Literature on Javanese Ethics and Etiquettes) contains a variety of *serat* literature (a *serat* means a text made of fiber and other materials) from the old eras of Javanese kingdoms which signifies the conflation of ethics and tradition. In the volume, a *serat* text entitled *Serat Panitisastra* (Manual of Wisdom), composed by different court authors during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, blends Javanese morality with some reference to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. In this work, the Javanese word *unggah-ungguh* signifies manners in language and custom according to an individual's place in society. The text contains ethical rules for the ruler and ruled, the aristocracy and the ordinary people, the students and teachers, and the parents and children.

Another *serat* literary text that blends local Javanese moral values with the Islamic ideas of divinity, spirituality, and ethics is *Serat Wulang Reh* (Advice About the Way to Attain a Goal), composed by the Surakarta Muslim King Pakubuwana IV (1768–1820). This poetic text emphasizes the importance of *adat* (local custom) and *tata krama* (good manners) in both culturally Javanese and religiously Islamic terms. The book was meant to teach the court and the wider Islamized Javanese society about moral values to attain a harmonious life in this world and a contented life in the hereafter. A passage in the text, for example, says, "knowledge (*ngelmu,* from Arabic *'ilm*) can be understood and mastered by the path; the path to attain it is a special one; it is by fostering character; the strong character leads one away from anger."[2]

According to the text, abstaining from eating in excess, remembering one God (*Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*, a Sanskrit phrase which means "The One and Almighty

God"), and the performance of the Five Pillars of Islam (proclamation of faith, prayer, fasting, charity, and the pilgrimage) are the prerequisites for living a good life in the world and success in the afterlife. An action is appropriate if it is considerate, thoughtful, and wise. A pious Muslim has to avoid any action that only benefits himself and harms others. He should avoid saying untrustworthy words (*lunyu*), keeping secrets, or being a hypocrite. Proper social relationships are shaped on the basis of age, position, and kinship. Parents, parents-in-laws, older brothers, teachers, and rulers each deserves respect and honor. Toward God, the believer has to serve Him and put trust (*pasrah*) in Him while obeying His commands and the Prophet Muhammad. All these principles are based on reciprocity, solidarity, obedience toward elders, the power of the heart, and trust in one's fate.[3] Blending local Javanese with Islamic messages, this text focuses on inner spiritual development as the prerequisite for living in multiple layers of relationship to attain a successful life in this world and the afterlife.

Another *adab* text which accommodates *adat* in an Indonesian language using an Arabic script (*jawi*) is *Kitab Adab Al-Insan* (Book of Good Manners of Human Being), authored by a prominent scholar of Arab descent, Sayyid Uthman of Batavia (1882–1914), and published in 1900. Uthman was born in Batavia, the capital of the Netherlands East Indies (the present-day Indonesia). He later moved to and studied in Mecca and Hadhamaut, Yemen, and traveled to parts of Arabia. He then returned to Batavia and cooperated with Christian Snouck Hurgronje (1889–1906), the advisor for the colonial government on Arabic and Islamic affairs and a scholar of Islam and Islam in the Archipelago. Sayyid Uthman wrote and published multiple works on Islamic belief, ritual, law, and ethics, including the one mentioned earlier on good manners.[4] Sayyid Uthman states the context and purpose for writing such a manual: many people in the Netherlands East Indies do not know and do not follow rules (*aturan*) and customary manners (*adat kelakuan*) and therefore are inclined toward bad behavior, both private and public. As a result, he feels the need to write an accessible pocket book one could carry while working and traveling. To that end, Sayyid Uthman chooses to use a low, vernacular Malay language (*bahasa Melayu rendah*) written in the Arabic script (*jawi*) so that the ordinary people who know *jawi* could understand.

In this text, goodness and wisdom are believed to produce four benefits: wealth, health, spiritual satisfaction, and good reputation. In his view, it is vitally important for Muslims not to contravene *agama* (religion) and *adat negeri* (customs of the country) and not to be harmful so as not to be harmed. In his formulation, *adab* takes various forms: the *adab* of humans toward Allah (to know Allah, the God

of mankind, and His attributes, such as the All-Knowing, All-Seeing, and All-Hearing) and the *adab* of children toward their parents, reflecting the Qur'anic verse, "And serve Allah and do not associate Him with anything, and be kind to your parents" (Chapter 4, Al-Nisa, 36). Sayyid Uthman interprets this verse as an instruction for Muslims to listen to and show respect for their parents, to say no harsh or loud words against them, to show no unpleasant face to them, and to help them when they are in need. This is articulated in his detailed descriptions concerning the *adab* of children toward their parents. The other sections of the book address the proper *adab* between siblings; the *adab* between husbands and wives; the *adab* between neighbors; the *adab* between students and teachers; the *adab* of learning; and the *adab* of teaching. Sayyid Uthman asserts that wisdom (*hikmah*), which is beyond discursive, book knowledge (*ilm*), is of paramount value. In his view, a wise Muslim knows when to stop speaking, what to learn, how to teach, what knowledge is appropriate for particular audiences, and when and how to give greetings.[5] This *adab* text in *jawi* indicates that proper behavior toward God and other human beings in accordance with the religious–cultural codes results in both material and spiritual gains.

Beyond these religious–cultural texts, there are also "nationalistic-religious" texts that describe proper etiquette beyond particular ethnic and religious groups. Numerous local authors have written about an Indonesian etiquette that contrasts with foreign customs. These authors are typically concerned with nation building, which they feel needs clearer orientation and focused renewal in the face of crises and social change. In this genre of texts, Indonesia is imagined as belonging to the East (*Timur*), in opposition to the West (*Barat*). To be Eastern and nationalistic means to create and develop a national style of civility and civilization derived from the existing local and ethnic cultures.

Nilakusuma, another local author—a female writer, a Minangkabawi from West Sumatera—published a book, *Etiket Sopan Santun Pergaulan Sehari-hari* (The Etiquette of Everyday Personal and Social Interactions), in 1959 during the era of President Sukarno (ruled 1945–1965). In this book, Nilakusuma uses the term *adab* in its derivative form: *peradaban*. This term means civility or civilization, a concept that includes manners. She suggests that etiquette determines both an individual's level of civility and sense of nationhood. She contends that manners are a critical necessity for the Indonesian people from all walks of life—the educated and the general public, men and women, old and young—in order to position them to adapt to the changing environment and attain success in life. Westerners and Easterners such as Indonesians, she writes,

have different etiquettes. For her, etiquette is one of the key characteristics of a civilized nation. Although men are "hard" and women "soft" in speaking and in character, both must work to create harmony and to act politely toward each other in a sincere way. All citizens, she maintains, need to learn and practice the appropriate ways of behaving, talking, visiting, dressing, debating, shaking hands, serving guests, offering greetings and thanks, laughing, sleeping, keeping promises, and other daily activities. By way of example, she insists that during Islamic holidays, such as after the fasting month of Ramadan, people should be considerate in the timing of their visits, avoiding the early morning hours when women are still preparing for food and drink, or the late afternoons when the hosts are likely to be resting.

Nilakusuma worries that as societies progress, the sense of nationhood deteriorates. To avoid the loss of tradition and good manners, she contends, leaders and lay people—both Muslims and non-Muslims alike—are all responsible for preserving their manners and creating a national personality (*kepribadian nasional*). In her view, nationalism requires speaking the Indonesian language instead of foreign languages, and using local products such as clothing made in Indonesia in order to support the creation of a national style of dress (*pakaian nasional*).[6] In this text, a distinct Indonesian national etiquette is characterized by language, slogans, clothing, and dress, as well as through moral behavior among the members of the nation—a bulwark against a lack of sense of belonging to the nation and the loss of the tradition.

In a similar fashion, another local Javanese author, Oetomo Ds, in his book *Tata-Krama Nasional Indonesia* (Indonesian National Etiquette), published in Yogyakarta in 1963, suggests that it is crucial to create a national etiquette (*tata krama nasional*). In European cultures, he contends, shoes are more respectable than hats, whereas in Indonesia, the reverse is true. The text provides a host of other detailed examples. In reference to the manner of walking, the author writes: "Westerners walk fast, Arabs walk slowly, and Indonesians walk at a moderate pace." Regarding eating, he notes that because Indonesians eat rice, they sit and rarely eat while walking. These are some of the good manners inherited from the past, rightly preserved for future generations. In his estimation, custom (*adat istiadat*) constitutes a unique cultural aspect of the national identity. Without culture and its cultivation, there can be no strong and widespread sense of nationalism. The book was published to "present valuable guidelines for formulating a new code of conduct in accordance with the spirit of the Indonesian revolution." The text frames the Indonesian Revolution as the continuation of the Indonesians' struggle after the declaration of independence

on August 17, 1945 to build the nation-state under the leadership of President Sukarno. The book is also considered a contribution to the creation of manners in accordance with the spirit of the state philosophy of *Pancasila* (the Five Pillars: Belief in One and Only God, A Just and Civilized Humanity, A Unified Indonesia, Democracy Led by the Wisdom of the Representatives of the People, Social Justice for all Indonesians) and the nation's sense of morality.[7] For the author, Indonesian etiquette is constructed and promoted to serve nationalist projects and cultivate the state's philosophy, a compromise between the competing factions promoting an Islamic state or a secular state.

In a nation-wide effort, numerous Indonesian political leaders also promoted a sense of national morality grounded on the doctrine of *Pancasila*. President Suharto (who ruled from 1966 to 1998) promoted *Pancasila* in the form of Pancasila Moral Education (*Pendidikan Moral Pancasila*), a program to be taught in public schools and universities. After the fall of his New Order—an authoritarian regime characterized with rampant corruption, collusion, nepotism, and an educational culture focusing on intellectualism and materialism—Indonesian leaders and educators formulated and promoted a character-based education (*pendidikan karakter*) in an effort to resolve the multidimensional crises that culminated in the Asian financial crisis that ravaged the nation in the late 1990s.[8] In contemporary times, Muslim educators also emphasize character education in terms of promoting *adab* toward Allah, *adab* toward oneself, and *adab* toward other human beings, encouraging the ethical virtues of promoting honesty, responsibility, self-confidence, compassion, charitableness, respectfulness, tolerance, and peacefulness.[9] Today, this act of combining religious and nationalist frames in public education continues to be promoted by numerous Muslim leaders and sponsored by the Department of National Education and the Department of Religious Affairs, two governmental institutions in charge of national and religious education, respectively. Given this dynamic, *adab* may be better understood if we analyze the concept in both specific and broader contexts, covering ethnic and nationalistic traditions, codes of behavior, and ethics.

Adab and *Akhlaq* in Indonesian Religious Literature

A separate genre of religious Islamic texts addresses a broader Muslim audience, mostly written in local languages or translations of Arabic texts. This Indonesian religious literature emerged as an outcome of the broader religio-intellectual

networks connecting religious scholars and people between the Middle East, Southeast Asia and beyond.[10] Returning from their travels abroad, Indo-Malay students and pilgrims brought with them literature from Mecca, Medina, Cairo, and other places, a number of them translating the Arabic works on *adab* and publishing them in their hometowns.

A prominent early text on *akhlaq* (morals, ethics, or manners) that spotlights *adab* combines a Javanese translation and commentary on Imam Al-Ghazzali's (d.1111) book, *Bidayat al-Hidaya* (The Beginning of Guidance), Al-Zandawaisiti's (d.922) *Rawdatul 'Ulama* (The Garden of the Scholars), and other works on Qur'anic exegesis and the foundation of Islamic jurisprudence. This is probably one of the earliest treatises in Java on Muslim ethics, a manuscript that dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time when Javanese society was not predominantly Islamized. The author is unknown, although he is referred to as a caliph (*khalifa*), a term usually used for a Sufi teacher with some background in religious education but perhaps not to the level of the preeminent teacher, or Shaykh. Some of the book's passages may be attributed to Shaykh Malik Ibrahim, an Arab merchant and preacher responsible for the Islamization of Java; others are likely derived from other books on moral education (*tahdhib al-akhlaq*). This Javanese text gives a great deal of attention to the inner disposition of a Muslim and stresses the need for further religious education to cultivate Muslim ethics, following the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet. It suggests that the benefits of following the right path are simultaneously moral and spiritual: beautiful behavior garners respect from other people and, at the same time, provides blessings from God (the same favors as fell to the lot of al-Khidr, the servant of God on whom, according to the Qur'an Chapter 18, Al-Kahf, 65: "We have bestowed a mercy from Us, and whom We had taught from Our side knowledge.").[11]

Another important text on Muslim ethics that focuses on good manners is *Riyadh Al-Shalihin* (The Garden of the Pious) by an influential Sunni jurist and *hadith* scholar from Damascus, Abu Zakaria Yahya ibn Sharaf Al-Nawawi (d.1277). This Arabic text has been widely taught in Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) across the Indonesian-Malay world. The first pages of the book describe sincere intention as the only true and proper motivation for an act to be accepted by God, in keeping with the Prophet's statement, "Actions depend on their intention, and a person will get the reward according to his attention." A Muslim should have no other purposes beyond being close to Allah.[12] The book has chapters addressing good manners, dressing, sleeping and sitting, greeting, traveling, praise and gratitude to Allah, supplications, and forgiveness.

A specific chapter on good manners comprises many *hadiths* reporting the Prophet's sayings and deeds. One of the traditions is about a hypocrite, or *munafiq*, which has been translated into Malay and Indonesian as *munafik*. According to the text, there are three signs of a *munafiq*: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted, he betrays his trust. By comparison, the Prophet is said to speak softly, to smile instead of laughing loudly, and to use his right hand in all matters: in combing his hair, putting on his shoes, and other acts.[13] For Imam Al-Nawawi, sincere intention and truthfulness shape good morality and proper manners.

For the Islamic modernist organization Muhammadiyah—named after Prophet Muhammad and founded in Yogyakarta, Central Java, in 1912—ethics and manners constitute an integral part of the faith and ritual of Islam. Ahmad Dahlan (d.1923), the founder of Muhammadiyah, together with his wife, founded a women's organization named Aisyiyah (after the wife of the Prophet) in Yogyakarta in 1917. Both the Muhammadiyah and the Aisyiyah's schools include *adab* in the curricula, in addition to the subjects of *aqidah* (pillars of faith), *fiqh* (jurisprudence for daily worship), and the memorization of the short chapters of the Qur'an.[14]

The organization published a book entitled *Adab al-Mar'ah fi al-Islam* (The Ethics for Women in Islam) from their congress in West Java in 1976. This text outlines *adab* and *akhlaq* derived from the Qur'an and the *hadith* for their members across the country. Starting with the *hadith* of the Prophet, "I was not sent down to the world but to improve the morality of humankind," the book elaborates the ways that Muslim women should behave and act in relation to God, to their husbands, to their children, to neighbors, and to guests, along with details on how they should dress and act in society and in public spaces such as the arena of the arts, the court, on the streets, and in politics. A chapter in the book entitled "In the Carnivals and Street Demonstrations," states:

> In principle, for their safety and dignity, Muslim women are preferred to stay at home unless for justified reasons and without contravening good manners and social ethics commanded by God and His Prophet . . . There is a *hadith* collected by Tabrani [the *hadith* in Arabic is cited and translated into Indonesian] which prohibits women from going out of their homes unless at times of the Islamic festivals concluding the fasting of Ramadan and for performing the pilgrimage, but this chain of the transmitter of this *hadith* is weak and unreliable because there are other *hadiths* [two *hadiths* are cited and translated] suggesting that the Prophet allowed women to go out of their homes for performing other religious obligations, for studying, and other purposes. However, when women are out of their homes, they should pay attention to good manners and propriety (*adab-adab kesopanan* dan *kesusilaan*) as taught in Islam as follows: a. they should not show off their jewelry and fineries [the Qur'an, Chapter 33, Al-Ahzab: 33, "And abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as was the display of the former times of ignorance," is cited and translated]; b. they should not intermingle with men [three *hadiths* are cited and translated]; c. they should not use fragrances to draw attraction [a *hadith* is cited and translated]. In short, if the carnivals and demonstrations are for the purpose of the religion or for public good, then there should be no prohibition.[15]

Islamic ethics and good manners have also become an increasingly important theme in Muslim reformist publications during times of moral crisis and social change. The most prolific Muhammadiyah author was Haji Abdul Malik bin Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (1908–1981), a towering figure from Minangkabau, West Sumatera, who was better known by the nickname Hamka (1908–1981). According to his biographer, Hamka "remained open to the new hybridities that Indonesia's complex, evolving society might achieve with Islam as its compass."[16] Hamka was a prolific novelist, an influential activist, and renowned scholar across the Indonesian-Malay world, as well as the first chairman of the Council of Islamic Scholars (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*) of the Republic of Indonesia during the era of Soeharto (1966–1998). One of his short essays published in a local newspaper during the Dutch colonial time deals with the etiquette of speaking and delivering speeches (*kesopanan berpidato*).[17]

In the postcolonial era, Hamka was especially interested in etiquette as an integral part of Islamic morality and the basis for an Islamic philosophy of life. One of his books published and circulated in postcolonial Indonesia and Malaysia entitled *Falsafah Hidup* (The Philosophy of Life) contains a chapter entitled "*adab kesopanan*" (politeness). In this chapter, Hamka asserts that reason is progressive in its development and impact on human lives, engaging not only the intellect but also, and more importantly, emotion. Emotion comprises moral qualities (*budi*) and an ethics of politeness (*adab kesopanan*), which distinguish humans from animals. For Hamka, the ethics of politeness are divided into the inner and the outer [*batin* and *zhahir*]. The inner *adab* takes the forms of human relationships for the purpose of protection against unethical behavior. The expressions of the outer *adab*, by contrast, change according to different places and times, such as customary law (*hukum adat istiadat*) and courtesy (*resam basi*). For example, according to the old Malay custom, young people were expected to sit cross-legged (*bersila*) in front of their elders.

Courtesy or manners, Hamka writes, vary according to local customs, whether Minangkabawi, Javanese, Buginese, or Acehnese.

Hamka maintains, however, that it is the inner form of *adab* that endures and requires careful cultivation and preservation. The inner courtesies (*kesopanan batin*) such as good intention and kind-heartedness are shared by all human beings and represent the root source of the outer *adab*. The inner courtesy takes two forms: one toward other humans, and the other toward the creator. Hamka explains that proper *adab* toward other humans includes abstaining from seeing the bad in others and avoiding worldly luxuries (*perhiasan dunia*) (as expressed in the Qur'an Chapter 24, An-Nur: 30–31); maintaining good social relationships (as in Chapter 49, Al-Hujurat: 11–12); respecting parents (as commanded in Chapter 31, Luqman: 14–15); and respecting the host when visiting others (as in Chapter 24, Al-Nur: 27–8). The *adab* toward God takes many forms, such as serving Him, following His commands, avoiding His prohibitions, fearing His anger, being anxious and hoping for His mercy, and loving and longing for Him—all of which are signs of the faith and trust in Allah.[18] For Hamka, therefore, *adab* signifies both the fixed and enduring inner, spiritual qualities, as well as the fluid outer moral expressions. Hamka sees the external expressions of *adab* as being less fixed than the internal qualities of *adab*.[19]

Another Muslim group with a rural basis and even larger affiliation, the Nahdlatul Ulama (the Awakening of Islamic Scholars, NU), founded by Ahmad Dahlan's contemporary, Hasyim Asy'ari (d.1947), has also produced texts on morality primarily based on medieval jurisprudential scholarship. Hasyim Asy'ari, who was educated in a boarding school (*pesantren*) in Java and then in Mecca, sought to reform Javanese Muslim society primarily through the traditional boarding schools (*pesantren*) and community gatherings. Given the NU's focus on traditional schooling, one of his widely used manuals focuses on the code of conduct for teachers and students (*Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'allim*). This text outlines the primary objective of religious education: to allow the student to reach the status of a scholar (*'alim*) and a noble man as the inheritor of the prophets. The other objectives, he argues, were to translate the knowledge acquired into good action and to obtain the pleasure of Allah.[20]

The NU's ethical teachings also concern women. This is constructed through their reading of the medieval Arabic works transmitted in the *pesantrens* and by the production of *fatwas* (religious opinions) in their meetings. For example, a text in Javanese using Arabic script (*pegon*), *Al-Mar'ah al-Shalihah* (The Virtuous Women), addresses the good manners of Muslim women toward their husbands, children, parents, neighbors, and guests. The text, as scholar Pieternilla has

summarized, "consists of lists with admonitions concerning issues from gossip, foul language, and spending too much of the husband's money to wasting the family's money on foods that are too expensive."[21]

One of the widely read and influential Arabic works in the *pesantrens* is *Kitab Syarh 'Uqud Al-Lujain fi Bayan Huquq Al-Zaujain* (The Book of Explication of the Contracts of Silvers in the Explanation of the Rights of Husbands and Wives), compiled and composed by Shaikh Al-Nawawi al-Bantani (1813–1897), a prolific scholar from Banten, West Java, who lived, studied, taught, and wrote in Mecca. This influential text begins with a Qur'anic verse (Chapter 4, Al-Nisa: 19): "And treat your wives in a good manner," and another chapter (Chapter 2, Al-Baqarah: 228), emphasizing the rights of husbands and wives. A number of *hadiths* are cited, including: "the best man is the best man who treats his wives." Yet, in the interpretation, some passages suggest a harshness in men's attitudes toward their wives. For example, one such quote argues that "a husband is permitted to beat his wife if she refuses her husband's request for adorning, or refuses having sex with him, or leaving home without her husband's permission, or if she beats a child, or if she rips her husband's shirt, or if she says to her husband: you are a sheep, a donkey, stupid, and so on, even if she says it after the husband belittles her . . . a husband is allowed to beat his wife if she does not pray after she is reminded of that."[22]

These passages and others in the text are the reason why this influential treatise has been described as "gender biased" by NU scholars and activists who seek to reinterpret texts in the framework of the Qur'anic teachings on justice and the modern ideas of human rights and gender equality.[23] In this context, the textual reference to men's discriminatory attitudes toward women may be read as part of the patriarchal etiquettes that could and should change. For that reason, among NU's scholars and activists, both men and women, there has been a mission to emphasize the more fundamental ethics of Islam, such as moderation (*tawassuth*), justice (*adl*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), balance (*tawazun*), and enjoying the good and forbidding evil (*amar ma'ruf nahy al-munkar*)—ideas derived from the Qur'an and the substantive values of the *hadith's* message, as well as the objectives of Islamic law formulated in Muslim scholarship.[24]

Adab and *Adat* in Malaya/Malaysia

In Malaya/Malaysia, the concept of *adab* is also associated with *adat* or local custom. However, in contrast to Indonesia, which has several hundreds of ethnic

groups and local customs, authors in Malaya/Malaysia have become preoccupied with Malay customs and their integration with Islamic identity. Even so, the explicitly Islamic texts and their translations in Malaysia have more in common with Islamic texts translated and/or produced in Indonesia.

Malay mannerisms and ethnic tradition have frequently been conflated, with a distinction often made—from the colonial era to the present day—between the native (*bumiputera*) Malays and the foreign nationals. Historically, the British colonial practice was made official in the words of the Malaysian Constitution concerning Malayness. In this logic, a Malay is "one who speaks the Malay language, professes Islam and habitually follows Malay customs."[25] An everyday but crucial aspect of the Malay *adat* is language (*bahasa*) that signifies speech, culture, or even manners. Thus, to be a Malay means to speak and behave according to Malay standards, although exactly what Malayness means varies and changes over time.[26]

One of the early literary works in this context is the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), composed by different authors and editors, including Sultan Abdullah of Johor (1615–1623) who rewrote his own version. This text begins with some reference to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad and tells a story of the origin, rise, and fall of the Malacca Sultanate to the Portuguese in 1511. According to the text: A Portuguese captain visited the port of Malacca and presented the Malay chief minister with a gold neck chain by passing it over his head. The people were surprised until the *vizier* calmed them down, saying, "Never mind! He knows not our manners." (*Biarkan! Dia ta' tahu bahasa*).[27] In this passage, *bahasa* signifies speech and manners, which does not necessarily carry a religious connotation.

Another text that shows the connection between manners and custom, particularly the way in which the use of proper language signifies good manners, is *Bustan al-Katibin* (The Garden of Writers) by Raja Ali Haji (ca. 1809–ca. 1873), a member of the ruling family on the island of Penyengat near Singapore, then part of British Malaya. In this text, morals and manners are said to originate from speech and only subsequently from conduct ("*adab dan sopan itu daripada tutur kata juga asalnya, kemudian baharulah pada kelakuan*").[28] In his *Gurindam Dua Belas* (Twelve Couplets, 1847), Raja Ali Haji describes Malays of good breeding in the following way: "If you want to know someone from a good nation (*berbangsa*), look at his good morals and proper language (*budi dan bahasa*)."[29] Here, Malay language, Malay manners, and Malay nationhood are interrelated.

The presence of Europeans and other foreigners, and the weakening sense of Malay identity and customs, led foreign authors to also record and promote the Malay language and culture. Many of these authors saw etiquette as an integral part of the Malay culture, learned in religious schools and socialized in everyday life. R. J. Wilkinson, the British administrator residing in Malaya from 1896 to 1916, wrote about Malay beliefs, observing that Malay courtesy was taught in "the old Malay Koran-classes," in which "a boy was taught to be silent until he was addressed, to keep his eyes cast down in the presence of his superiors, to behave unobtrusively at a public meeting, and to adapt his language to the occasion on which it was used."[30] Wilkinson and later British scholars such as Mubin Sheppard, an Irish civil servant of the British colonial government in Malaya and a historian who converted to Islam, wanted to show their cultural sensitivity and respect for the Malay's "act of politeness."[31] According to their views, Malay *custom* may change, whereas Malay *courtesy* endures: "Some of the old customs might change as he grew up, he would probably never chew *sireh* quid (betel leaf) or learn to handle a *kris* (dagger with a serpentine blade), and he might not live in Kampong Bahagia, but of one thing he was sure, he would never abandon Malay courtesy."[32] Here *adab* in the sense of a Malay code of conduct is understood as being less flexible than the everyday details of the Malay customs.

Other Malay authors felt the need to record and disseminate their views about the Malay code of behavior and politeness. Dato' Muhammad Ghazzali bin Arifin, for example, came to the State of Kelantan in 1900 as a clerk to Sultan Muhammad IV and served as teacher to his son Ismail (later Sultan) before being appointed head teacher of the government vernacular school in Kota Baru and then a "visiting teacher" for the State. He saw the need for transmitting knowledge about the court and the ordinary Malays' code of behavior to the foreigners and the locals alike. Ghazzali wrote an article in English on the court language and etiquette of the Malays in 1933 in the *Journal of the Malay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, a publication promoting both British and Malay research. Ghazzali suggests that it is "the duty of Malay parents to teach their children how to behave before elders and superiors so that the humblest Malay may be fit to be a follower or companion of royalty and the aristocracy." For him, even illiterate Malays would need to know court language and manners, while "education of the higher kind" was not regarded as of paramount importance.[33] The Malays, he insists, are expected to follow the proper way of addressing persons by using their official titles, knowing the colors of the flag for each of the states, and adhering to court customs.[34]

For Ghazzali, the sultanate system, Islamic greetings, equality, and social class distinctions at the palace coexist. He writes, "The palace is open to the public

during the two festivals . . . During the Muslim *Hari Raya* holidays, visitors are all treated alike; one's own servants are received in the drawing room, where they are served with food and drinks as guests of equality. No angry words or quarrels are allowed, and whoever infringes this golden rule is looked upon as a savage or an outcaste. Brotherhood and democracy reign supreme during the two festivals."[35] Ghazzali adds, "On entering the mosque, the *raja* regards himself as an ordinary man. Anyone of his subjects, high or low, may stand beside him while worshipping the Creator."[36] In his view, social hierarchy and religious equality are both necessary, and manners serve as a cultural mechanism to ensure social order and political stability in Malaya.

The importance of Malay language and manners as an integral part of Malay cultural identity—as well as social interactions with other cultures, particularly between Islam and the West—is a point of emphasis for Zainal Abidin Ahmad (1895–1973), also known as Za'ba. Za'ba was a literary critic of the British and the Malays alike, and he sought to modernize the classical Malay language and to preserve (and, at times, reform) the Malay code of behavior. Having studied and taught in both Malay and English-styled school systems, including the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Za'ba reasoned that the rules of social etiquette were "never properly studied or systematically set down in writing, either in English or in Malay." Za'ba argued that every community or nation has customs and "habits of politeness."[37] He felt the need to record "the fundamental ideas" informing the codes of behavior of both the Malay royalty and ordinary citizens. During the final decades of the British presence in Malaya, he notes, Malays had been interacting with non-Muslims and non-Malay Westerners. As a result, the Malays had become educated in traditional local and modernized Western schools, and in the process had been increasingly exposed to modern ways of behavior. In addressing and greeting people, for example, a Malay, "who is always Muslim," would meet a non-Muslim friend or superior and would use the Malay word *tabek* (salute), but if the Malay were educated in the other person's language then he would give greetings in that language (such as *Selamat Pagi*, or "Good Morning!").[38]

Having observed and experienced a mixture of cultures, Za'ba insisted that Islamic, indigenous, and Western manners are not contradictory, as people would act according to the circumstances. When a Malay invites a friend to his home, for example, sweetened tea and sweetmeats are served, but no strong (alcoholic) drinks as in the Western custom. When it comes to sexual interaction, Za'ba continues, it is "unorthodox" or "ultramodern" for a man to join women visiting other women, and for a woman to join men meeting other men in the house.

"Sexual segregation," he contends, "is the etiquette, with the exception that the visitor of either sex is an old and close friend of the family, or if the visitor is a lady with modern or Western education and the men of the house are likewise so educated and vice versa."[39] For Za'ba, Islamic ethics, local customs, and the Western modes of etiquette and behavior can be compatible when each is applied in their proper places and moments.

After the independence of Malaya from the British in 1957, writings about ethics and manners continued to flourish. A Malay author of Arab descent, Alwi bin Sheikh AlHady (1893–n.d.), distinguished the Malay from the Western ways in two texts published in 1962 and 1965. In his assessment, Western practices had come to influence Malays who seemed to lose their own manners as a result. His first book, *Adat Resam dan Adat Isti'adat Melayu* (The Malay Customs and Traditions), is derived from his knowledge of the Royal Court of Rhio (part of Malaya) and the general household and village customs handed down orally through the years. The Malay traditions he outlines include the piercing of ear-lobes, circumcision, marriage customs, and funeral customs. Alwi AlHady implies that Malay customs and habits are not necessarily of Islamic origin. In a marriage ceremony, for instance, the *akad* (the contract between the groom and the guardian of the bride), with witnesses and a dowry, is stipulated by Islamic jurisprudence, but other rites and protocols of the wedding are shaped by Malay customs that could either persist or change.[40]

Alwi AlHady maintains, however, that proper etiquette carries moral judgment and social punishment. The consequences of bad manners are either hard or soft. In his assessment, the royal protocols are to be strictly observed by the royalty and the commoners when interacting with them. For example, in the section "Etiquette on Public Roads," he notes that disobeying the proper way of paying homage to royalty (by raising the hands to the forehead even in public roads) is "a punishable offence," except if the offender is a foreigner in which case he or she is excused but should be informed of the local custom.[41] Any man, whether of royal descent or a man of rank, walking along a public road should give the right of way to any of the following people who he may happen to meet: the Sultan; the *Raja Muda* (Young King or Prince); the *Bendahara* (Chief Treasurer); the *Temenggung* (Chief of Security); a *Tengku Besar* (an Honorable Figure); womenfolk, both married or single, who are either visiting or returning from a shrine; funeral and wedding processions; persons carrying heavy loads or burdens; a blind person; children; and mad persons.[42] For Alwi AlHady, Malay etiquette is to be followed by all Malays according to their social position, with special attention to those who deserve the most respect in society.

In 1965, Alwi bin Sheikh AlHady published another book on the code of conduct concerning social relations entitled *Adab-Tertib (Dalam Pergaulan dan Champoran) Chara Barat dan Chara Melayu* (The Good Manners of Social Interaction: The Western Way and the Malay Way). The educated, young Malays, Alwi AlHady argues, are becoming Westernized through their education and the changing environment and, in the process, are neglecting the dictates of traditional Malay etiquette. He suggests that the Western way is neither always bad nor unworthy of learning. Instead, he presents both systems of etiquette so that readers can understand and apply each in their proper times and places. In the text, Alwi AlHady discusses such topics as proper social introductions and the rules for attending meetings, dinners, engagements, marriages, weddings, and funerals—with each topic divided into the "Western way" and the "Malay way." For example, according to Malay customs, on introducing oneself and others, a nonmarried woman should be introduced to the married woman, unless the nonmarried woman is higher in rank; in the West, by contrast, where a woman is given the honor, it is the man who is introduced to the woman, unless the man is higher in rank. Unlike in the West, women and men are not to shake hands according to the Malay etiquette, unless the woman offers her hand first and the meeting is in her house.[43] In this context, Alwi AlHady argues that the Western etiquette of introduction is neither inherently bad nor impermissible. Introducing a man to a woman and vice versa in public places is a Western custom, he insists, but it is not necessarily against Islam or Malayness.[44]

In other cases, Alwi AlHady notes, the Islamic norm agrees with the Western habit but disagrees with the local practices of Malays. Westerners invite others to meetings and arrive on time, whereas Malays do not attend meetings on time (thus, the epithet "Oriental punctuality")—a practice, he argues, that contradicts the basic Islamic ethic of keeping promises. Alwi AlHady asks why the Malays imitate Western dress and lifestyle but do not follow the practices of punctuality and promise keeping. He goes on to note that, "Dancing at a party in which people dance, hug, and sing together is a Western custom," that is "in contradiction with the Malay and Islamic custom." But the dancing and singing of a professional dancer (*biduan-penari*) before the king or other people is considered customary and therefore fine.[45] Alwi AlHady, therefore, admits that there are tensions between these cultural traditions (local or foreign, Eastern or Western) and then attempts to resolve the tensions between *adab* as etiquette and *adat* as cultural tradition.

For Malay authors such as Ghazzali, Za'ba, and Alwi AlHady, the main objective was to record and disseminate knowledge about distinctly Malay

customs, of which proper etiquette is a crucial part. In these writings, the compatibility or incompatibility between *adab* and *adat* is judged according to the individual author's personal experience in the court and basic understanding of the dynamics of social relations. It is clear that for these Malay authors, while gender distinctions are significant, social class and rank are of paramount importance.

The following section addresses specifically Islamic texts—works originally composed in the Malay language, as well as local translations of Arabic texts. One of the key features of this genre of Malaya religious literature is the close association of *adab* (etiquette) and *akhlaq* (ethics).

Adab and *Akhlaq* in Malaya/Malaysia

The tension and overlap between etiquette and ethics are evident in a number of important Arabic texts circulated in Malaya and their local translations. A book, *Adab Sopan Orang-orang Muda Perempuan* (Manners for Young Women), a *jawi* translation of an Arabic book, *Adāb Al-Fatāt* (Manners for Young Women), published in Cairo in 1898 by an Egyptian author, Ali Efendi Fikri, asserts that *adab* is more fundamental and hence important than *'aqal* or rationality.[46] Ali Fikri published a series of two books: one for girls and one for boys, but the Malay translator, a woman, Badriyah Muhammad Thahir, translated the text on *adab* for girls only. Badriyah sought to make this particular *adab* known and practiced by the women of her nation in general and Muslim women in particular. It was quite unusual for a woman to translate an Arabic book at this time, but the existence of this translation indicates a female readership.

Although Badriyah's biographical details are unknown, she states her purpose in translating and commenting on the Arabic work. Above and beyond merely teaching girls about knowledge (*ilmu pengetahuan*), she says, the text aims to educate young women about their natural being (*semula jadi*), grounded on beautiful and fine behavior (*perangai elok dan tingkah laku yang baiknya*). "Knowledge without a*dab* (manners) and *perangai baik* (good conduct) reaches no victory; some even use knowledge for making evil," she writes. It is clear that Badriyah wanted to help Muslim girls to understand and embody ethics and rationality (*beradab dan berakal*), although for her the former is considered more important than the latter because ethics guide reason and not the reverse. Since the girls would become wives, mothers, and headwomen of the house, they needed to know their marital rights, their husband's rights, and how

best to nurture children so that they would be loved by men and blessed by God.[47] Educating Muslim girls about *adab* and *ilmu pengetahuan agama* (religious knowledge), as well as household duties and other worldly skills, is the responsibility of every Muslim parent, she argues. If a Muslim girl does not follow the prescribed religious obligations, she would be punished (although the text does not specify who will punish her and how).[48]

Etiquette and ethics are also an important subject in Malay reformist writings, such as the work of Syed Sheikh bin Ahmad AlHadi (1867–1934). Syed AlHadi was born in Malacca of a Malay mother and a Hadrami-Arab father. AlHadi opened a *madrasah* (Islamic school) and worked at the *Shari'a* court in Johor Bahru, but he later went back to Malacca and established another *madrasah* there. As a pro-British advocate for modernization, he became a writer of books and articles in periodicals. In one of his works, he argues in defense of Islam as a rational religion. In the context of the Western challenge, Syed AlHadi affirms goodness and justice as the most important Islamic values. In a chapter on ethical rules in Islam, he maintains that a Muslim should speak the truth and be trustworthy, perseverant, self-controlled, forgiving, obedient to parents and the family, and compassionate toward the weak, the poor, the needy, and animals. He insists that Islam commands Muslims to respect people of other religions, their inherent dignity and fundamental rights. Muslims, he insists, can enjoy good food and nice clothing, but they should not do things that lead to enmity among people, such as drinking, gambling, and other harmful activities. In his view, Islam allows Muslims to do what is beneficial for them and others in the context of time and place, so long as it is not against the principle of *tauhid* (God's unity) and human deliberation (*bermufakat bersekutu*).[49] Here *adab* is interpreted as religious ethics and etiquette. In the face of Western culture and the Muslims' pervasive lack of understanding of their own religion, AlHadi elaborates Islamic ethics in a framework that champions Islam as a rational, modern religion.

One of the popular translated works in the Indonesian-Malay world is *Minhaj al-Muslim* (The Way of Muslims), authored by Abu Bakr Jabir Al-Jazairi (d.1999), an Algerian scholar who taught and lived in Medina. A series of *jawi* translations of selected chapters and parts of Al-Jazairi's book were published in *Pengasuh* (The Guardian), a *jawi* periodical in Kelantan, Malaya, in 2001. (The *Pengasuh* periodical has been published in Kelantan since 1918.) The translator published sections of the Al-Jazairi's Arabic text focusing on particular topics, including the *adab of* meeting, the *adab* of eating and drinking, the *adab* of clothing, the *adab* of visiting, and the *adab* of performing funerals. In the text, Al-Jazairi argues that the codes of behavior enshrined in the Qur'an and the

hadiths are challenged by non-Islamic practices, both foreign and indigenous, and trivialized by divisions among Muslims on such nonfundamental issues as the ritualistic details on how to pray or what to pay for charity. Muslims have been more concerned about inconsequential problems that divide them, he asserts, than more fundamental issues that should have unified them, such as faith and ethics.

Al-Jazairi was asked by Muslim communities he visited in Morocco to elucidate guidelines regarding the main moral and ethical dimensions of Islam. To do so, he divides the book into five chapters on distinct topics: *aqidah* (belief), *adab* (manners), *akhlaq* (ethics), *ibadah* (worship), and *mu'amalah* (social interaction). The chapter on *adab* begins with the *adab* of intention and ends with the *adab* of sleeping. Here again, sincere intention plays a crucial role in Islamic ethics. On the manners of eating and drinking, al-Jazairi emphasizes the importance of taking the food closest to you when eating in a group; licking the fingers after finishing the meal to receive blessings (*barakah*); retrieving and eating food dropped from your mouth; not blowing on hot food; and not eating or drinking in excessive ways. Emphasizing the notion of divine blessing as the objective of moral acts, he cites the *hadith*: "one third of the stomach is for food, another third for water, and another third for air."[50] On matters of proper dress, Al-Jazairi insists that Muslim men are prohibited from wearing silk, gold, or female clothing and asserts that Muslim women should not wear male clothing.[51] Reading Al-Jazairi's text as a whole, in its original and its translation, we find that the Islamic notion of *adab* is both fundamental and situational, alternatively generalizable and particular. For Al-Jazairi, *adab* is fundamental and general for actions that are "morally good." It is situational and particular regarding the etiquette of such mundane, day-to-day activities as eating, although in his view even these small matters are ultimately reflections of the fundamental ideas of correct faith and correct action.

Conclusion

In the texts we have analyzed in this essay, the formulation and defense of ethical values—which include both universalized values and everyday acts of politeness—may be differentiated on the basis of local ethnic, nationalistic, and religious identities. In the ethnic texts, the preservation of the elite–commoner hierarchy, socioeconomic class markers, and prescribed gender identity is deemed necessary to sustain proper and harmonious social relationships.

The royal–commoner protocols are traced to the traditions of ancestors, with hierarchy deserving honor and respect. In the nationalistic texts, by contrast, morality is expected to be in line with the state's philosophies, often influenced by mainstream religious sensibilities. In the Netherlands Indies/Indonesian context, while Javanese etiquette and Islamic ethics are not identical, many Javanese texts do blend local Javanese spirituality with Islamic identity and norms. In Malaysian constructions, Malay etiquettes and Islamic ethics are typically described as complementary if not integrated codes of behavior. In both Indonesia and Malaysia, religious nationalist authors perceive the deterioration of the sense of belonging to the nation, as well as the overarching challenges of societal progress, as precipitating the loss of the past and its traditions. And because Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Western, and other local cultural influences have been either embedded in or recently introduced into the fabric of society, the word *adab* and related local terms have in effect become cosmopolitan ideas shared by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. This complex cultural interaction forms not only a "hybrid semantics" but also a sense of "cultural enrichment" that resists any overgeneralization about what constitutes correct and good behavior. In specifically Islamic *adab* texts, however, reformist authors tend to locate good manners firmly within the framework of global Islamic notions of divinity, prophethood, and spirituality—and the important ethical values of good morality (*akhlaq karima*), moderation, equality, and justice. *Adab* refers to the practical and situational aspects of good morality, but both Indonesian and Malaysian religious texts on etiquette conflate *adab* and *akhlaq* in ways that they often make them indistinguishable.

How do we understand the context and purpose for the production of literature on *adab*? As Barbara Metcalf and others have suggested, in predominantly Muslim communities the loss of political power and external challenges such as the impact of Western cultures have frequently led religious elites to express concern with moral revitalization.[52] In Muslim Southeast Asia, particularly the Netherlands Indies/Indonesia and British Malaya/Malaysia, these factors have profoundly influenced the call for cultural and religious reform. A prevalent sense of a lack of conformity to the rules of an orderly and pious society significantly influenced many reformist authors to search for the teachings deemed authentic in the sources deemed authoritative. In doing so, they aimed to promote *their own* cultural symbols, language, and modes of behavior based on social position and identity: age, social status, gender, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. In effect, Muslim authors sought a solution to the problems

of widespread ignorance and bad character by inviting their fellow Muslims to return to correct knowledge and correct action.

The writing and dissemination of literature on *adab* and related concepts of morality and etiquette can be seen as a technology of communal identity and cultural politics in times of crises and change. In these texts, questions and answers about the definitions of Islam, the differences between East and West, the distinction between nobility and commoners, the prescribed gender roles for men and women, and the rules of proper social relationships (between parents and children, between siblings, teachers and students, and so forth) are articulated and formulated in ways that ensure hierarchical but harmonious relationships. For all these authors, identity, moral crises, and change are to be dealt with a sense of purpose and cultural continuity. A persistent and widespread search for authenticity rooted in the past and promoting the good offers the reformist authors and their targeted audience a normative and practical moral compass for orienting their everyday lives. In these texts and contexts, *adab* functions as a balancing mechanism in the lives of both cultured Muslims and non-Muslims alike.