

TRANSLATING *BHAGAVAD* IN DIVERSE CONTEXT A CHINESE-INDONESIAN ACCOUNT

M. Endy Saputro

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Surakarta

ABSTRACT

Bhagavad-Gita has continuously been translated and distributed in some Indonesian regions, especially in Java and Bali. It has religiously been read not only by Hindu people community, but mostly discussed by Theosophical society and Javanese *aliran kebatinan* people. This paper aims to analyze two translated versions of Bhagavad-Gita written by Kwee Tek Hoay (KTH), which was translated in Indonesian language Bhagavad Gita Interpreted (1960) and in Javanese one Handaran Bhagavad-Gita (1960). KTH confidently claims that he used Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted in the Light of Christian Tradition (1923) as a source of translation. This paper investigates how "spiritual" salient concepts was translated, transformed and contested in the context of Chinese-Indonesian and Javanese terms. This paper concludes that the passion of KTH translocality translation has been a representative of fluid religious identity which constitutes a specific worldview of Indonesian society as an inspiration source of spirituality.

Keywords: Kwee Tek Hoay; Bhagavad-Gita; Theosophy; Chinese-Indonesian

ABSTRAK

Bhagavad-Gita terus menerus telah diterjemahkan dan didistribusikan di beberapa daerah Indonesia, terutama di Jawa dan Bali. Dalam konteks keagamaan, naskah ini telah dibaca tidak hanya oleh masyarakat orang Hindu, tapi sebagian besar dibahas oleh masyarakat penganut mistik dan aliran kebatinan Jawa. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dua versi terjemahan dari Bhagavad-Gita yang ditulis oleh Kwee Tek Hoay (KTH), yang diterjemahkan dalam bahasa Indonesia tahun 1960 dan juga Handaran Bhagavad-Gita (1960). KTH percaya diri mengklaim bahwa ia menggunakan *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted in the Light of Christian Tradition* (1923) sebagai sumber terjemahan. Tulisan ini menyelidiki bagaimana konsep "spiritual" yang menonjol diterjemahkan, diubah dan diperebutkan dalam konteks istilah Cina-Indonesia dan Jawa. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa gairah terjemahan KTH telah menjadi perwakilan dari identitas agama yang merupakan pandangan dunia tertentu masyarakat Indonesia sebagai sumber inspirasi dari spiritualitas.

Kata kunci: Kwee Tek Hoay; Bhagavad-Gita; Teosofi; Cina-Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Mystic synthesis has dominantly been a vision of Javanese religiosity since the fourteenth century. Ricklefs, in his recent trilogy on history of Islamization in Java, convincingly proffers two opposite characters of this unique Javanese religious vision, consisting of being Javanese Muslim on one hand by fully fulfilling the Islamic five pillars (*rukun Islam*) and accommodating Javanese supernatural powers on the other (Ricklefs, 2006; 2007: 1-11; 2012: 3-11). To explore it in further detail, Ricklefs purposefully divides three historical periods within Javanese society, grounding from the changing contexts of the Islamization process; namely, from around the fourteenth to the early nineteenth century, from 1830 until one century after, and from 1930 to the present. The mystic synthesis was greatly invented within the *karaton* (palace) wall, observing from the grand works of the *karaton* prominent figures, such as Ratu Pakubawana's. Such mystic synthesis may be persistently called *an elite mystic synthesis*, denoting for those who lived in the *karaton* could embrace such visions of religiosity.

Entering 1840, the mystic synthesis was seemingly disrupted by the massive of Javanese *hajj* coming from Mecca who purely reformed Islamic teachings in Javanese society. Javanese society then has surprisingly been fragmented into two distinct categories, first, *putihan* for those who engaged Islamic orthodoxy (Ricklefs, 2009: 111-134), second *abangan* (Ricklefs, 2007: 84-104). Apparently, the mystic synthesis was intentionally identified by *wong abangan*, those who referred to not rigorously practice the Islamic pillars, but mostly embracing the Javanese supernatural powers (Geertz, 1964). In the mid of twentieth century, labeling *abangan* with *aliran kebatinan* was confusingly being common, mainly provoked by Islamic scholars, because such two social categories have amusingly been recognized as for those who have not embrace religions (tidak/ belum beragama). This prejudice became more constructively chaotic hav-

ing related such social categories to *Partai Komunis Indonesia* (Indonesian Communist Party) with its assumingly involvement in the coup of 1965. The prejudice, for an example, came from HAMKA (1974: 122), a prominent Islamic scholar, who wrote

Di Yogyakarta timbullah dua gerakan. Keduanya itu adalah reformasi. Pertama, reformasi Kaum Abangan, Klenik dan Primbon Jawa, yang sembahyang dalam hati alias shalat daim, dengan tidak usah mengemukakan agama. Itulah Taman Siswa. ...

To response this statement, Rahnip (1997: 242), another Islamic scholar, confidently wrote

Di sini tak seorang pun rasanya sebagai manusia yang beradab dan lebih-lebih beragama akan membela praktik-praktik pengikut Partai Komunis di Indonesia beserta Gerwani, persis melakukan ajaran-ajaran aliran-aliran dajjal itu, pada masa-masa sebelum tahun 1965.

Such aforementioned statements clearly convey their stereotyping idea of *abangan* whom was associated with *klenik* (kinds of hersey thing) and PKI. Worthy to note that HAMKA wrote the statement in the last page of the book that softly criticized *aliran kebatinan* in Indonesia. He is totally in the opinion of Rasjidi, a leading figure of Indonesian Muslim scholar, whom connects the *aliran kebatinan* to Theosophical Society (TS) grown in Indonesian in the early twentieth century. While HAMKA (1974: 123) implicitly criticized *aliran kebatinan* in order to revive the *Muslim calling* (dakwah Muslim) on stopping *aliran kebatinan*; Rasjidi (1971: 134) explicitly states, "Orang-orang jang memakai Islam sebagai dasar gerakan Kebathinan, sebenarnja mereka adalah orang jang tidak mampu membedakan antara dasar Hindu dan Islam." Futhermore, the Rasjidi's statement is very important to look at the synthesis practice of Islam and Hinduism in the *aliran kebatinan* context.

The close affinity of Hinduism and *aliran kebatinan* was evidently seen in the religious conversion of post 1965. Based

on Ricklefs's finding, surprisingly, in the 1971, the number of Hinduism followers in Java, especially in Gunung Kidul, Klaten, Boyolali and Banyuwangi, shown steadily increase, reaching out around one percent of total population. This increasing Hindu population was similar to that of north of Kediri, which in 2004, 30% of the population has consistently embraced Hinduism (Ricklefs, 2012: 139-140). Seen from the Ricklefs's finding, the areas of Hinduism revival are predominantly located in the important sites of the mystic synthesis in the past. Klaten is located nearby the grave of Sunan Tembayat. Boyolali is a district where Ronggawarsita buried. Banyuwangi is the last Java's frontier closer to Bali. Kediri is a place where Tan Khoen Sie publisher that disseminated books on *kebatinan* existed.

This paper mainly aims to elaborate the translations of Bhagavad-Gita in the twentieth century and to examine the role of a Chinese figure echoing the values of Bhagavad in the context of its involvement within Theosophical Society that more or less tremendously influenced the revival of the vision of *kebatinan* in the Javanese society. My focus here is to analyze the translated works of Bhagavad that relate each other. Following Ricci's argument (2011: 33), the term translation is to denote "sense of conveying a text of one language in another and more flexible sense of striving for an 'equivalence' of meaning." Through emanating this definition, it subsequently implies the cosmopolitanism of Bhagavad that contains diverse "untranslatable" concepts and its cultural meanings within different translated contexts.

BHAGAVAD-GITA ACROSS THE WORLD

In the simple narration, Bhagavad-Gita was mainly considered as a part of Mahabharata epic. Bhagavad was situated within context of the battle of Bharata-Yuda, while Shri Krishna and Arjuna went together to the battle and did a 'sacred' con-

versation. The conversation began when Arjuna asked to Krishna whether their achievement toward Kurawa was true or wrong. Krishna answered Arjuna's question through explaining the essence of life and convincingly argued that their action was in the right path. This conversation was claimed as the mystical teaching of human life.

The translations of Bhagavad-Gita in the twentieth century impressively exemplify the revival of Sanskrit Cosmopolis. This term primarily signifies the process of vernacularization of Sanskrit language across India and Southeast Asia during 300 – 1300. The recited song Bhagavad was frequently considered as the illustrative vernacularizing Sanskrit language took place. Pollock gave excellence example of this vernacularizing (Pollock, 2006: 312).

According to a seventeenth-century hagiography, the Brajbhasha poet and Pushtimarg adept Nanddas (fl. 1570, thus a contemporary of Eknath) "sang" the tenth book of the *Bhagavata* "in the vernacular verse." When the Brahman reciters of lore and *Bhagavata* exegetes of Mathura learned of this, they besought Vitthalnath, Nanddas's spiritual preceptor, saying, "Our livelihood will disappear as a result of this vernacular *Bhagavata*."

Consequently, entering the twentieth century, the Brahman's prediction has magnificently come true. Now, with considering the spread of Bhagavad across the world, the Sanskrit Cosmopolis may be seen as in the values level, not as the language sense. When Prabhavananda and Isherwood carefully translated the Bhagavad-Gita into English, they strongly argue, "the Gita is a gospel. Its essential message is timeless. ... Here, the translator must forget all about India and the West, Krishna and Arjuna, past and future" (Anonymous, 1951: 10).

The first translation of the Bhagavad-Gita appeared in 1785, for which Charles Wilkins generously translated the Bhagavad-Gita into English. Although he carefully translated the Bhagavad from the

Sanskrit original version, unfortunately the West people, especially in Britain, did not familiar with this version. Having prudently published in 1882, as a volume of the Sacred Book of the East edited by Max Muller, the English version of the Bhagavad translated by Telang became massively popular in the West readers. However, the translation explained nothing about the essential teaching of the Bhagavad. Then, it changed after the coming of the translated Bhagavad offered by Theosophical Society in around 1886, which creatively universalized the idea of Bhagavad into social practices, such as parallelism between the story of Bhagavad and the Indian's struggle against colonial British (see Larson, 1975: 651-669; Sharpe, 1998: 47-57; Bayly, 2010: 275-295; Sinha, 2010: 297-317).

To explore further detail, according to King, there are three approaches applied to translate the Bhagavad-Gita, namely, approach of the conceptual and linguistic level, that of doctrinal and scriptural level and that of institutional and societal level. For the first approach, translating certain concepts of Hinduism, including that of Bhagavad, sometimes, is trans-context. King clearly explains that the "West" translator understands the concepts in the light of New Testament. Almost similar to the first approach, the second and the third ones are much more political. For the second approach, the ideology seems to require the translator to explain the verse of Bhagavad based on her own interest. King provides an example how the idea of Bhagavad was being imposed under the idea of monotheism. Moreover, the translator itself tries to justify the idea of monotheism coming from the Bhagavad. Last but not least, for the last approach, the social settings seem to have driven the way of translating text. The translation of Theosophical Society aforementioned is as an example of it (King, 1989: 72-97).

In the following sections, I carefully examine three translations of the Bhagavad, namely, *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted in the Light of Christian Tradition* (Sampson,

1923), *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted* (Hoay, 1960a), and *Handaran Bhagavad-Gita* (Hoay: 1960b). The first translation is written in the context of Christian Theosophical tradition. It is worthy to note that the second one had been translated from the first book and the third had come from the second one. While the first was translated under the circumstance of Christian Theosophical tradition, the second and the third was greatly influenced by a Chinese Theosophist in the different traditions, namely, theosophy, Buddhism and Javanese *kebatinan*.

IN THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Sampson, the author of *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted in the Light of Christian Tradition*, definitely claimed, "The whole tenor and theme of the Bhagavad-Gita is, to proclaim and apply the mystery which Paul proclaimed to the gentile world, 'Christ' (Krishna) in you, the hope of glory (nirvana)" (Sampson, 1923: xiv). This is the main goal of the translated Bhagavad, understanding the Bhagavad's virtues in the context of Christians' virtues. Seen from the quotation, Sampson made efforts to stand in parallel understanding between Christ in relation to Krishna, on one hand, and the hope of glory in the sense of nirvana. Can it claim as Christianized Bhagavad?

In addition, Sampson allegorically emphasized two big families mentioned in the Bhagavad, which ultimately represented two opposite characters of humankind. First, the Kuru, symbolically "embedded in matter, and enchained by the mundane and material objects of sense and desire, have risen to a high state of development and culture, through many lives." Second, the Pandavas, metaphorically symbolized "pure and normal conditions, untainted by corruption of matter and free from the dominion of matter and as they will become by following the teaching of Krishna" (Sampson, 1923: xx). Here, Sampson tended to suspect the Kuru as bad charac-

ters of human body, while the Pandawa as that of positive one as long as it follows the path of Krishna teachings. A positivist way of thinking that clearly separated between bad and good could be seen in the Sampson's translation.

Sampson then mentioned four superb salient elements in the Bhagavad, namely, Arjuna, Krishna, the chariot and the three horses. Arjuna was the Soul containing spiritual, body, mind and spirit. Krishna was the Christ within who guided Arjuna. The chariot was bodies consisting of physical, noumenal, psychical and spiritual body. The three horses were light, desire and indifference. Furthermore, Sampson explained that when the three horses were driven by the Kuru it became dark, lush and death; while if Krishna guided the horses it became logos, aspiration and self-abnegation (Sampson, 1923: xxii-xxiii). Sampson in this explanation seems to relate between the characters of human being and Christ within.

Sampson consistently highlighted the word Krishna followed by the word Christ within. It was to remind the reader about the parallelism of Krishna and Christ within. Furthermore, he also pursued Krishna's word by Christ word. For an example, when he explained about *spiritual discernment*,

None of these people are recognized by, nor truly identified with, Krishna. "The spirituality wise," He says, "is Myself, because heart set free from desire, and at peace, he is upon the road that leadeth to the Highest Path, which is even Myself." "But," He says, "the Path to Him traversed by the spiritually wise, ending in becoming a great soul, is difficult to me." That is why He spoke so mournfully that "among thousands of mortals a single one perhaps strives for perfection, and among those so striving perhaps a single one comes to the knowledge of Me as I am. This is a parallel saying to that of Jesus, 'Strait is the Gate, and narrow the Path, and few there be that find it' (Sampson, 1923: 81).

It is worth to note that the Sampson trans-

lated book was written in prose form, which was taking different form from the song one (compare to Bhagavad which was translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood). A reason behind it is relating to Sampson's intention writing this translation, that is, in order to confirm the esoteric dimensions of Theosophical Society in the light of Christian tradition. In addition to this Bhagavad translation, Sampson also wrote numerous books on Christian and theosophical esoteric, such as *Gnoticism and Christianity*, *Practical Mysticism*, *Scala or Ladder to the Mystic Path*, *Scientific Mysticism*, *Spiritual or Mystical Healing*, *the Four Tokens of a Mystic*, *the Historical and the Mystical Christ*, *the History of Mysticism*, *Theosophia* and *True Mystics*. Hence, it shows his seriously concern on the development of esoteric traditions.

Sampson clearly mentioned that his translation was totally inspired and quoted from WQ Judge's translation of the Bhagavad-Gita that was directly translated from the Sanskrit origin (Sampson, 1923: xiii). In fact, WQ Judge, along with HP Blavatsky and HS Olcott, were founders of Theosophical Society, which first launched at New York, United States, in 1875, and then moved to Adyar India in 1897 (Nugraha, 2011: 5). Yesteryears before, Theosophical Society established Esoteric Section in London to strengthen their commitment in studying and practicing magic. However, WQ Judge rejected the use of magic, albeit continue to preserve his esoteric dimensions of Theosophical Society. After Blavatsky died, WQ Judge and Annie Besant, another leading figure in Theosophical Society, compete each other to win the leader of Theosophical Society (Sinha, 2010: 312).

Both leaders maintain their esoteric characters, which was inscribed in their translation on Bhagavad-Gita. On one hand, WQ Judge, according to Sharpe, stated, "the Bhagavad-Gita ... is the perfect allegory of the inner struggle going on in human nature. All the dramatic personae of the Bhagavad-Gita represent human characteristics." On the other hand,

Annie Besant, in Sharpe's analysis,

She at least allowed that there might be two levels of interpretation, an outer and an inner meaning, the one historical and the other allegorical. History, however, was not her strong point. Clearly she believed the historical dimension to be accessible to anyone who would simply read the text; clearly, too, she believed this to be trivial in comparison with the BG's inner (or esoteric, or occult) message. In comparison with Judge, she took the BG's element of conflict far more seriously and placed far more emphasis on action, as opposed to the mere passive enjoyment of the fruits of wisdom (Sharpe, 1998: 49; Tillet, 2012: 17-51).

In brief, although Judge and Besant must have translated the Bhagavad in the light of esoteric dimensions, they had their own characteristics. Presumably, it depended on the political context that they faced. Besant was living in India where she engaged with political interest, while Judge was not (Ingalls, 1965: 85-88).

The first edition of the Sampson's Bhagavad was indeed related to the issue of leadership succession within Theosophical Society. It was visibly mentioned in the Sampson Bhagavad that its first edition was launched in September 1918, while in 1923 for the second edition. During the years was quite considered as Annie Besant's leadership in Theosophical Society centered in Adyar, India (de Tolenaere, 1996: 69-86). To publish the translated Bhagavad that adopted from Judge's original version seemingly aimed to make balance towards Annie Besant's translation of Bhagavad. While the Besant's Bhagavad reached out over India, Sampson's Bhagavad was being sold across Britain and United States. However, to translate the Bhagavad in the light of Christian tradition was apparently to anticipate the wrong explanation offered both by Judge and Besant.

IN THE LIGHT OF CHINESE TRADITION

Kwee Tek Hoay, a prominent Chinese-Indonesian figure, completely brought the Sampson's Bhagavad out into *bahasa*, more aptly, Low Malay and holistically translating it under the theosophical Chinese values. In the first time, Hoay preferred Annie Besant's translation of Bhagavad as his source of translating it into *bahasa*, yet he failed. His daughter wrote that Hoay "setelah memahamkan berulang-ulang, kami tida dapat kemadjuan, bahkan nafsu untuk beladjar mendjadi lenjap, lantaran isinja terlalu 'kering' membingungkan, dan sukar dimengerti" (Tjoahinhoey in Hoay, 1960a: i-ii). Then, Hoay intentionally found the Sampson's Bhagavad and took it as a source of translation, because, according to Hoay, "Dalam buku tersebut, kita dapat tangkap arti sedalam-dalamnja dari kitab tersebut, jang oleh achli filsafat Hindu dianggap sebagai kitab sutji jang mengandung peladjaran amat besar dan penting bagi manusia" (Tjoahinhoey in Hoay, 1960a: ii). Two critical notes should be directed to Hoay's Bhagavad. First, he deliberately shortened the original title, from *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted in the Light of Christian Tradition* from *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted*. It subsequently aimed to take the essential of Bhagavad, and to bring the comments in Hoay's interest. Second, Hoay totally designed *the Bhagavad* in the form of poem, which projected back the sacredness song of the Bhagavad. It was proposed also to make clear distinction between the song and its commentaries.

One of unique translations in the Hoay's Bhagavad was his commentaries of the verses in the light of Chinese traditions, mainly through Confucian's saying. In the chapter of *Peladjaran Sankhya*, verse 72, said, "Oh Arjuna, inilah jang dinamakan penghidupan kekal ... Barang siapa sekali pun waktu hendak menarik napas jang pengabisan, bisa sampe ke tingkatan itu, ia akan datang di Nirwana jang bersifat kekal." As mentioned before, in the light Sampson, Nirwana was being

translated as “the hope of glory”. However, Hoay confidently commented the verses, “Khung Tju berkata:”

Djikalau telah mendengarkan pengetahuan dari Djalanan Benar (Tao) di waktu pagi hari, apakah peduli kalau orang harus mati pada malam hari nja?

Utjapan mana ada sedikit samar, ada lebih gampang dimengarti djikalau orang bandingkan dengan utjapan paling pengabisan dari Sri Krishna jang dimuat diatas ini. Djalan Benar jang dimaksudkan Khung Tju itu pastilah untuk mendapatkan ketentremen jang sampurna jang Sri Krishna katakatakan: bahwa siapa jang bisa dapatkan, meskipun waktu hendak menarik napas jang pengabisan, nanti akan bisa membikin ia sampai Nirwana jang tinggal kekal selamanya (Hoay, 1960a: 24-25).

Hoay clearly commented the term Nirwana as an eternal space. In addition, Krishna’s speaking was being translated by Confucian’s saying.

Another task of Hoay’s character was to translate the verse in the light of Chinese tradition. In the verses of 27 – 33, it mentioned, “Kemudian Krishna memberitahukan bagaimana perbeda’annja perbuatan jang dilakukan atas pengaruhnja Tiga Matjam Sifat itu, seperti jang diandjurkan oleh daging dan oleh Roh Sutji. Orang yang perbuatannja di pengaruhi oleh andjuran daging – hawa nafsu dan kainginan – ada mengandung sifat kegelapan” Hoay commented it through explicitly mentioning Yin, “Ini adalah orang Tionghua namakan Yin. Orang jang demikian selalu memandang sesuatu perbuatan telah keluar dari kepinterannja sendiri sehingga kalau berhasil harus ia merasa girang dan bangga, dan apabila gagal ia merasa malu dan sedih” (Hoay, 1960a: 38).

In addition, Hoay sometimes translated the verses and explained it in the light of other religions, such as Hinduism. In the commentary of the verse of 17 in the chapter of “Undurkan Diri dari Pergerakan”, he justified, “Dalam agama Hindu dan Buddha ada bitjarakan soal bikin manusia dari kematian, tetapi ini bukan berarti hendak mengedjar kesaktian atau kesutjian sehingga

manusia jang hidup didunia, selama-lamanja tidak dapat mati” (Hoay, 1960a: 54). In another page, Hoay wrote, “*Djadinja ketenangan dari Krishna sifat dirinja, membikin penganutnja sesuatu matjam agama dapat menerima menurut artiannja sendiri. Itu Tao dari Lao Tse, Seng dari Kho Tju, Nur Illahi dari Mohammadan, Kristus dan Roh Sutji dari orang Kristen, atau Kebenaran – Dharma – dari agama Buddhist semua terkumpul dan tergabung di dalam Krishna ...*” (Hoay, 1960a: 72). The last interpretation lucidly shows the esoteric dimension of theosophical in Hoay’s view.

Hoay’s Bhagavad, in the first time, was being published as a long article in *Moestika Dharma*, April 1932. While as a full book, it was initially launched in 1935 for the first edition and in 1960 for the second edition, published by Hoay’s daughter. Hoay had navigated monthly-magazine *Moestika Dharma* for approximately ten years, from 1932 to 1942. This emergence of this publication was derived from a soft-critique towards *Khong Kauw Hwee* meeting (Confucian Society) in Surakarta in 1931, which tried to purify the teaching of Confucianism from kind of religious syncretism and risen an invitation to publish a magazine that displayed such issue. *Moestika Dharma* in turn was published, not to purify Chinese religions in Indonesia, but conversely, to provide a space to write about the Chinese religions, including Lao Tse, Confucianism and Buddhism. However, Hoay felt that the publication was not enough to give voice for the Chinese religious followers. He then established *Sam Kauw Hwee* in May 1934 and became a president of Batavian Buddhist Association (BBA) two months before along with the coming of Ven. Naradathera from Sri Lanka to Indonesia (Coppel, 2002: 228-278; van Rees, 1987: 48-64; Sidharta: 1989; Kwee: 1980: 81-92; Brown, 2004: 44-55; 1987: 108-117).

The first publication of Hoay’s Bhagavad, in the form of full book, presumably to celebrate the establishment of the two organizations. Since arrived in Indonesia, Ven. Naradathera could not stop to preach Buddhist followers as well as Sam

Kauw Hwee members across Java. By publishing Hoay's Bhagavad, Tjoa Hin Hoey made an effort in maintaining the theosophical esoteric of Ven. Naradathera's teachings within the participants. Also, it may intend to spread the teaching of theosophical esoteric outside the Chinese community within BBA and Sam Kauw Hwee. However, it will be different intention when Hoay's Bhagavad republished in 1960 as will be discussed.

IN THE LIGHT OF JAVANESE TRADITION

In Javanese version, Hoay's Bhagavad was being translated into *Handaran Bhagavad-Gita* published by Swastika Solo. The translator was named by initial B.K. No information about who was B.K. Assumingly, B.K. was a person who understood the philosophy of Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. Although almost all pages of the *Handaran* were quite similar to the Hoay's Bhagavad, however there was a commentary that mentioned about *aku lan dudu kowe*. In the chapter of *Boten Nindaki Pandamel*, verse of 7, it was mentioned, "*Sing sapa wis tumindak Yoga, wis bisa njutjekake lan ngereh marang dirine serta ngundjara hawa nafsune nganti pribadine bisa tunggal karo sarupaning machluk, deweke iku apa bae kang ditindakake wis ora bakal kaseret utawa katarik.*" Then, the translator commented in the following sentences.

Katrangan: Kadosdene ingkang sampun marambah-rambah dipun terangaken, pinten-pinten karibetanipun manungsa punika, pinangkanipun saking anggenipun gadah raos pisah: aku lan kang dudu aku, mangka raos makaten punika ing wusananipun, andamel tuwuhing raos naming manah dating sariranipun pijambak ingkang andjalari pijambakipun ladjeng katangsulan ing wohing pandamel ingkang katindakaken (Hoay, 1960b: 61-62).

The philosophy of *dudu kowe* has been very famous within Javanese context, and popularized by Ki Ageng Suryomentaram. Principally, Suryomentaram taught the

teaching of *kawruh jiwa*. In search of self, this teaching taught about the essence of *aku* (me), which were not you (*dudu kowe*). Me in the Suryomentaram's view was quite considered as me that was not attributed, such as name, money, goods and glory. When one able to erase all attributes in her/ his body, s/he would find *aku* (me). However, *kawruh* means knowledge. This philosophy emphasized on knowing *rasa* in mind, not focused on practices (*ngelmu*). Rationalization became a key point to understand the philosophy of Suryomentaram (Grangang, 1991). Furthermore, this concept brings Suryomentaram's view different from general Javanese *kebatinan* that emphasizes on mystic practices.

Apart from the distinction above, the *Handaran* was being a popular reading for *aliran kebatinan* followers. In that time, many leaders of *aliran kebatinan* claimed to get *revelation*, include the leader of *Pangestu* in 1932, *Subud* in 1933, and *Sumarah* 1935 (Santoso, 1980: 197-204; Patty, 1986: 100-109; Kafrawi, 1969; Batubara, 1999; Stange, 1980). According to such *aliran kebatinan*, the essence of Bhagavad-Gita became one of their sources of understanding mystical esoteric. In doing so, the first publication of the *Handaran* that was released in 1939, was in parallel with the emergence of *aliran kebatinan* in Java. In the preface of *Handaran*, it was clearly written that

Murih saja djembar sumberaring serat Bhagavad-Gita djinarwa, anggitanipun saderek K. T. H. wau, ingkang ngedalaleken serat punika, sampun sarembag kajijan saderek kasebat sarta dipun sarudjuki, serat wau kasantun ing basa Djawi, nanging kasuraos malih saperlunipun, sageda laras kalijan piwulang kasauksman bangsa Djawi (Hoay, 1960b: 3).

In the following years, the Bhagavad seemed to have more popularized in *aliran kebatinan* followers. Soekarno's speech in *The Third Congress of Aliran Kebatinan* held in June 17, 1958 could be a proof how Bhagavad spread out across Java. In that meeting, Soekarno clearly mentioned the

song of Bhagavad in his speech.

Saya sering, bahkan sudah lima kali saya membaca kitab Bhagavad Gita, dari A sampai Z, A sampai Z, A sampai Z, keempat kalinya A sampai z, kelimakalnya A sampai Z. Aku kagum disitu Saudara-saudara, Bhagavad Gita ternyata bukan kitab klenik. Ternyata bukan kitab untuk duduk didalam kamar bersemedi hanutupi babahan howo songo hamandeng pucuk ing grono, tidak Saudara-saudara, tetapi Bhagavad Gita adalah dalam bahasa asing "EVANGELIE VAN DE DAAD" Gita adalah nyanyian perbuatan, nyanyian amal, nyanyian fi'il.

Kresna memberi ajaran kepada Arjuna: "Arjuna, berbuat, Arjuna, berbuatlah, Arjuna, berjuanglah, jangan engkau diam" Arjuna berkata: "Aku tidak sampai hati untuk berbuat, terutama sekali berbuat membunuh Saudara-saudaraku sendiri, membunuh mereka dipadang Kuru Kestra. Padahal mereka-mereka itu Kurawa, adalah saudara-saudara sendiri. Aku tidak sampai hati untuk membunuh kurawa itu, aku tidak mau berbuat!" Kresna berkata: "Berbuatlah, bertempurlah, bunuhlah mereka itu" "Aku tidak mau membunuh Saudaraku sendiri" "Bukan engkau yang membunuh, sebelum engkau yang membunuh, aku telah membunuh dia. Sebelum engkau membunuh dia (sijahat) aku telah membunuh dia. Engkau ini sekedar seperti membunuh dia. Tetapi pembunuh yang sebenarnya ialah aku, aku Kresna" Kresna didalam arti Tuhan (Soekarno, 1958).

Here, Soekarno mentioned the quotation of Bhagavad because, for me, this book was popular in Javanese society. The second release of the *Handaran*, that published in 1960, seemingly to have related with the Soekarno's speech, aiming to remind the Javanese people on the importance of Bhagavad.

In the preface of the *Handaran*, the publisher clearly mentioned that this book was intended for Javanese young people. If so, it was in line with the critique of Kwee Tek Hoay towards the Chinese Indonesian young people who did not care about their religions. He delivered this critique in the meeting in Solo where Khong Kauw Hwee invited him. He men-

tioned that a reason behind the Chinese Indonesian young people converted to the Christianity, because of their ignorance towards their Chinese religions. By publishing a magazine, such as *Moestika Dharma*, hope to re-emerge the spirit of the young people to study their own traditions. It was not possible that the publication of *Handaran* was intended for Chinese young people, and more general Javanese young people, who could not read in Low Malay.

CONCLUSION

The Bhagavad-Gita has been an important value in enriching esoteric view, especially within Theosophical Society. However, the translations of Bhagavad in different context clearly show how the values of Bhagavad have universal dimensions of esoteric view. As aforementioned, the first translated Bhagavad can be understood in Christian tradition. The second translated Bhagavad can be also understood in Chinese theosophical context. While, the third translated Bhagavad can be understood in Javanese context. To further research, it is important to give more emphasize on the role translation in the writing of history of Indonesian religions.

REFERENCES

- Anonymous. 1951. *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*. Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood. Southern California: the Vedanta Society.
- Batubara, Chuzaimah. 1999. "Islam and Mystical Movements in Post-Independence Indonesia: Susila Budhi Dharma (Subud) and Its Doctrines." *Dissertation*. Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.
- Bayly, C. A. 2010. "India, the Bhagavad Gita and the World." *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2). p 275 – 295.
- Brown, Iem. 1987. "Contemporary Indonesian Buddhism and Monotheism." *Journal of South East Asian Studies*, XVII (1), March, p. 108 – 117.

- Brown, Iem. 2004. "the Revival of Buddhism in Modern Indonesia." in Martin Ramstedt (ed). *Hinduism in Modern Indonesia: A Minority Religion between Local, National and Global Interests*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon and IAS. p. 44 – 55.
- Coppel, Charles A. 2002. *Studying Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia*. Singapore: Singapore Society of Asian Studies.
- de Tollenaere, Herman A. O. 1996. "The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National and Women's Movements in Indonesia and South Asia 1875 – 1947." *Dissertation*, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1964. *The Religion of Java*. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- Grangsang (ed). 1991. *Kawruh Jiwa Wejanganipun Ki Ageng Suryomentaram Vol. I-III*. Jakarta: CV. Haji Masagung.
- HAMKA. 1974. *Perkembangan Kebatinan di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Bulan Bintang,
- Hoay, Kwee Tek. 1960a. *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted*. Djakarta: Nj. Tjoa Hin Hoey.
- Hoay, Kwee Tek. 1960b. *Handaran Bhagavad-Gita*. Translated by B. K. Solo: Swastika.
- Ingalls, Daniel H. H. 1965. "The Heritage of a Fallible Saint: Annie Besant's Gifts to India." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 109 (2).
- Kafrawi. 1969. "The Path of Subud: A Study of 20th Century Javanese Mysticism." *Dissertation*, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.
- King, Ursula. 1989. "Some Reflections on Sociological Approaches to the Study of Modern Hinduism," *Numen*, 36 (1), June, p. 72-97.
- Kwee, John B. Kwee. 1980. "Kwee Tek Hoay: A Productive Chinese Writer of Java (1880-1952)." *Archipel*, 19, p. 81 – 92.
- Larson, James. 1975. "The Bhagavad Gita as Cross-Cultural Process: Toward an Analysis of the Social Locations of a Religious Text," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 43 (4), December, p. 651 – 669.
- Nugraha, Iskandar P. 2011. *Teosofi, Nasionalisme dan Elite Modern Indonesia*. Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu.
- Patty, Samuel Agustinus. 1986. "Aliran Kepercayaan: A Socio-Religious Movement in Indonesia." *Dissertation*, Washington State University.
- Pollock, Sheldon. 2006. *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men: Sanskrit, Culture and Power in Premodern India*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Rahnip. 1997. *Aliran Kepercayaan dan Kebatinan dalam Sorotan*. Surabaya: Pustaka Progresif.
- Rasjidi, 1971. *Islam dan Kebatinan*. Jakarta: bulan Bintang.
- Ricci, Ronit. 2011. *Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press.
- Ricklefs, M. C. 2009. "The Middle East Connection and Reform and Revival Movements among the *Putihan* in the 19th-century Java," in *Southeast Asia and the Middle East: Islam, Movement and the Longue Duree*, ed. Eric Tagliacozzo. Singapore: NUS Press, 111 – 134.
- Ricklefs, M. C. 2012. *Islamisation and Its Opponents in Java c. 1930 to the Present*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Ricklefs, M. C. 2006. *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Norwalk: EastBridge.
- Ricklefs, M. C. 2007. *Polarising Javanese Society: Islamic and Other Visions (c. 1830 – 1930)*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Sampson, Holden Edward. 1923. *Bhagavat-Gita Interpreted in the Light of Christian Tradition*. London: William Rider and Son, Limited.
- Santoso, Soewito Santoso. 1980. "Pangestu: One Javanese Path to Union with God," in *Indonesia: the Making of a Culture*, ed. James J. Fox. Canberra: Research School of Pacific Studies ANU). p. 197 – 204.
- Sharpe, Eric J. 1998. "Western Images of te Bhagavadgita, 1885 – 1985," *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 23 (2), p.47-57.
- Sidharta, Myra. 1989. *100 Tahun Kwee Tek Hoay: Dari Penjaja Tekstil sampai ke Pendekar Pena*. Jakarta: Sinar Harapan.
- Sinha, Mishka. 2010. "Corrigibility, Allegory, Universality: a History of the Gita's Transnational Reception, 1785 – 1945." *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2), p. 297 – 317.