

**CULTURAL NEGOTIATION, AUTHORITY, AND  
DISCURSIVE TRADITION: THE *WAWACAN SEH*  
RITUAL IN BANTEN**



By  
**Ade Fakhri Kurniawan**  
SRN. 1530010007

**DISSERTATION**

The School of Graduate Studies  
State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga  
Yogyakarta  
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## ATTESTATION

Dissertation entitled : CULTURAL NEGOTIATION, AUTHORITY, AND DISCURSIVE TRADITION:  
THE WAWACAN SEH RITUAL IN BANTEN

By : Ade Fakhri Kurniawan, S.Th.I., M.Ud.  
S I D : 1530010007  
Department. : Doctor (S3) / Islamic Studies

**To be submitted and defended**  
**As one of the requirements to obtain a Doctoral degree (Dr.)**  
**In Islamic Studies with specialization in *Islamic Thought and Muslim Societies***

Yogyakarta, 26 August 2019

Rector  
Head of the Examining Committee,

Prof. Drs. KH. Yudian Wahyudi, MA., Ph.D.  
NIP. 19610401 198803 1 002

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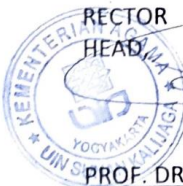
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**KURNIAWAN IS THE 677<sup>TH</sup> DOCTORAL STUDENT GRADUATED, AND THE FIRST FROM *ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND MUSLIM SOCIETIES***

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NIP. 19610401 198803 1 002

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Student ID : 1530010007

Title : CULTURAL NEGOTIATION, AUTHORITY, AND DISCURSIVE TRADITION: THE  
WAWACAN SEH RITUAL IN BANTEN

Head / Examiner : Prof. Drs. KH. Yudian Wahyudi, MA., Ph.D.

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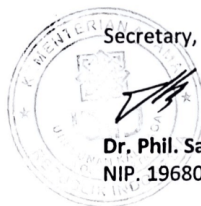
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SRN: 1530010007

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_



DATE: Yogyakarta, 22 May 2019



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Promotor : Prof. Noorhaidi, S.Ag., MA., M.Phil., Ph.D.

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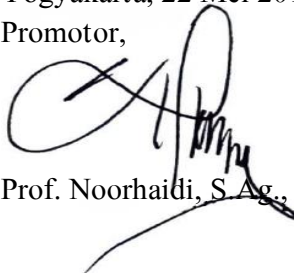
Name : Ade Fakhri Kurniawan, M.Ud.  
SRN : 1530010007  
Program : Doctor (S3) of Islamic Studies  
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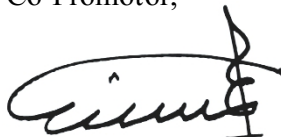
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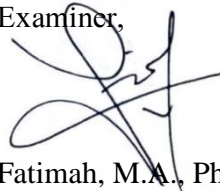
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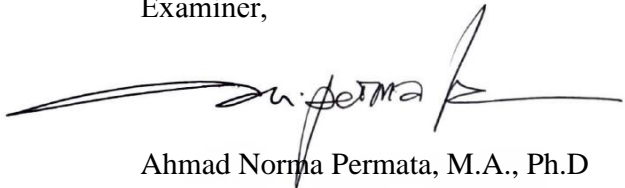
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Examiner,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ahmad Norma Permata', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Ahmad Norma Permata, M.A., Ph.D

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation deals with cultural negotiation, authority and power identification, and the process of change in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Banten. Drawing on Talal Asad's theory of discursive tradition, it will answer the following research questions: Why does the *Wawacan Seh* tradition still exist in Banten? What elements in this tradition have been preserved and modified? What are the underlying factors that influence ritual change, and how are these factors involved in the discourse? In case of supporting data, I use both bibliographical and empirical investigations.

The *Wawacan Seh* (literally meaning: reading the *manāqib* of the Sheikh) is a ritual activity in which people gather to recite and listen to Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani's *manāqib* (hagiography text). The text is written in an old form of the Banten-Javanese language, in a non-rhyming poetic form called *macapat* and is sang by a *juru maos* (reader) using a traditional chanting technique specific for these poems. The Bantenese perform this ritual to *ngalap berkah* (j/s. to seek God's blessing) and to obtain *kesakten* (j/s. supernatural powers). They also mostly perform it in pre-Islamic ways, such as by using various *sesajen* (j. offerings) and they do it during every life-cycle ritual (or rites of passage). In Banten, this ritual has become the "main ingredient" for almost all of Bantenese's performing arts and local religious traditions such as *debus*, *rudat*, *beluk*, *pencak silat*, and others.

In practice, the ritual often invites reactions from Universalist Muslims who deem the ritual "non-Islamic". The encounter of many traditions and cultures leads to discourse, and subsequently to new cultural negotiation. There are three outcomes in the discourse about the *Wawacan Seh* tradition: continuity, modified continuity, and discontinuity. As a continued but modified ritual, the *Wawacan Seh* undergoes changes that, to some extent, are attempts to adjust to cultural and social changes. There are three aspects of change in the ritual: *symbolic meaning*, *function*, and *structure*. These changes can be analysed from the new modified forms of the ritual such as *maca silsilah*, *Manakiban*, and *istigosah kubro*.

The discourse involves three influential elements: *subjects* (such as religious discourse in relation to the expression of local Islam between Localists - Moderates - Universalists), *events* (such as migration, education, less transmitter), and *conditions* (such as modernism, rationalism, globalism, transnationalism, and political-economic conditions).

The changes in the *Wawacan Sch* ritual not only mark significant changes in an objective form of culture but also in the sense of ontological, social, and power relations inherent in it. These changes indicate that there are other, more systematic and structured changes that surround cultural agents, simultaneously at the level of social interaction, power relations, and structures of authority, as well as in terms of these agents' worldview and their religious perspective. In the sense of theoretical implication, drawing on Asad's theory of discursive tradition, it inevitably led me to decipher the power relation. Even so, although on many occasions, Asad criticized Geertz's approach to interpretation and symbolic meaning, this dissertation shows that both theories (Geertz's interpretive and symbolic meaning and Asad's power relations and practices) cannot be separated nor can they exclusively run on their own.

## Abstrak

Disertasi ini membahas negosiasi kultural, afirmasi otoritas dan *power*, serta proses perubahan ritual *Wawacan Sch* di Banten. Dengan menggunakan teori Talal Asad tentang tradisi diskursif (*discursive tradition*), karya ini akan menjawab beberapa pertanyaan penelitian berikut: Mengapa tradisi *Wawacan Sch* masih tetap bertahan di Banten? Elemen ritual apa sajakah yang masih dilestarikan dan dimodifikasi? Dan factor-faktor mendasar apa sajakah yang mempengaruhi perubahan dalam ritual, serta bagaimana factor-faktor tersebut terlibat dalam proses diskursus? Data-data pendukung argumentasi dalam disertasi ini didapatkan melalui metode investigasi bibliografis dan empirik.

*Wawacan Sch* (secara etimologis berarti pembacaan *manāqib* sang Syekh) merupakan aktivitas ritual di mana orang-orang berkumpul untuk membaca dan mendengarkan kisah hagiografis Syekh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. Teks yang digunakan dalam ritual ini ditulis dalam bahasa Jawa atau Sunda dialek Banten dan disusun berdasarkan pola prosa tradisional (*pupuh*) serta dilagukan dengan teknik tradisional tertentu (*macapat*). Masyarakat Banten yang masih menyelenggarakannya percaya bahwa ritual ini dilakukan dalam rangka *ngalap berkah*, *tolak bala*, bahkan untuk mendapatkan *kesakten*. Secara umum, praktik ritual ini masih dilakukan dengan cara pra-Islam, seperti penggunaan *sesajen*. Pada perkembangannya, ritual ini bahkan telah menjadi komposisi utama dalam hampir setiap kesenian dan tradisi keagamaan lainnya di Banten, seperti *debus*, *rudat*, *beluk*, *pencak silat*, *rebo wekasan*, dan lain-lain.

Dalam praktiknya, ritual ini seringkali mengundang reaksi dari para universalis muslim yang menuduhnya sebagai praktik bid'ah dan tidak islami. Selain itu, pertemuan ragam budaya dan tradisi menyebabkan adanya diskursus yang pada gilirannya membentuk negosiasi-negosiasi kultural baru. Pada kasus tradisi *Wawacan Sch*, ada tiga eksekusi dari negosiasi kultural tersebut, yakni kontinuitas, kontinuitas *cum* modifikasi, dan diskontinuitas. Modifikasi praktik ritual *Wawacan Sch*, baik secara struktur, pemaknaan simbol, dan

fungsinya, merupakan bentuk dari proses penyesuaian terhadap perubahan sosial dan budaya yang melingkupinya. Beberapa bentuk baru dari hasil modifikasi ritual ini dapat dilihat dalam praktik *Maca Silsilah*, *Manakiban*, dan *Istigosah Kubro*. Ada tiga element utama yang terlibat di dalam diskursus dan mempengaruhi perubahan tersebut, yakni *subject* (utamanya dimainkan oleh tiga kelompok muslim dalam diskursus keagamaan: Lokalis-Moderat-Universalis), *event* (seperti adanya migrasi, perkembangan dunia pendidikan, dan menurunnya pengkaderan pembaca ritual), dan *condition* (seperti modernism, rasionalisme, globalisme, transnasionalisme, dan kondisi ekonomi-politik)

Perubahan dalam praktik ritual *Wawacan Seh* tidak hanya menunjukkan terjadinya perubahan pada bentuk objektif dari sebuah tradisi dan budaya, tetapi juga menjadi penanda adanya perubahan besar dan mendasar pada tataran ontologis, sosial, struktur otoritas, *worldview* dan cara pandang keagamaan, serta relasi kuasa yang ada di masyarakat. Pada tataran teoretis, teori Talal Asad tentang *discursive tradition* mendorong penulis bukan hanya untuk menganalisis diskursus yang mengakibatkan terjadinya perubahan budaya tetapi juga untuk mengungkap pola dari relasi kuasa tersebut. Meski begitu, ada implikasi teoretis yang tak dapat dihindari. Meskipun dalam banyak kesempatan Asad mengkritik secara tajam pendekatan interpretatif dan makna simbolik Geertz, data-data di lapangan dan temuan disertasi ini menunjukkan bahwa kedua teori (pendekatan interpretatif dan makna simbolik Geertz dan pendekatan relasi kuasa dan praktik Asad) keduanya tidak dapat dipisahkan dan tidak dapat dijalankan sendiri-sendiri secara eksklusif dalam ranah penelitian antropologi.

## الملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة المفاوضات الثقافية وتأكيدات السلطة وعملية تغيير طقوس ووجان شيخ (*Wawacan Seh*) في بنتن. باستخدام نظرية التقاليد الخطابية لطلال أسد (*Talal Asad*)، سوف تجيب هذه الرسالة على أسئلة البحث التالية: لماذا لا يزال تقليد ووجان شيخ قائماً في بنتن؟ ما هي العناصر في الطقوس التي لا تزال محفوظة وتعديلها؟ وما هي العوامل الأساسية التي تؤثر على التغيرات في الطقوس، وكيف تعمل هذه العوامل في عملية الخطاب؟ يتم الحصول على وسيطات البيانات الداعمة في هذه الرسالة من خلال طرق التحقيق البليوغرافية والتجريبية.

ووجان شيخ (لغة: قراءة قصة مبدلة للشيخ) هو نشاط طقسي حيث يجتمع الناس لقراءة واستماع إلى قصة مبدلة للشيخ عبد القادر الجيلاني. النصوص المستعملة في هذه الطقوس مكتوبة باللغة جاوية أو سندوية بلهجات بنتن وترتيبها على أساس أنماط النثر التقليدية (*pupuh*) ويتم تسميتها ببعض التقنيات التقليدية (*macapat*). يعتقد البننتيون الذين ما زالوا ينظمونها أن هذه الطقوس تتم في سياق البركة (*ngalap berkah*) ورفض التعزيزات (*tolak bala*) وحتى الحصول على قوى خارقة للطبيعة (*kesakten*). بشكل عام، لا تزال ممارسة هذه الطقوس تنفذ بطرق ما قبل الإسلام، مثل استخدام العروض (*sesajen*). في طورها، أصبح هذا الطقوس "العنصر الرئيسي" لجميع الفنون المسرحية والتقاليد الدينية المحلية في بنتن مثل *debus* و *rudat* و *beluk* و *pencak* و *silat* وغيرها.

في الممارسة العملية، في الممارسة العملية، ينتقد بعض المسلمين (وخاصة من *universalist muslim*) هذا الطقوس ويتهمون بأنه عمل بدعة وغير إسلامي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن لقاء الثقافات والتقاليد المختلفة له آثار على وجود الخطاب الذي يشكل بعد ذلك مفاوضات ثقافية جديدة. في حالة تقليد ووجان شيخ، هناك ثلاثة تجاوزات للمفاوضات الثقافية، وهي الاستمرارية، والاستمرارية مع التعديل، والتوقف. يعد تعديل ممارسات طقوس ووجان شيخ، سواء من حيث البنية والمعنى الرمزي والوظيفة، شكلاً من أشكال عملية التكيف مع التغيرات الاجتماعية والثقافية التي تحيط بها. بعض الأمثلة على أشكال جديدة من تعديل هذه الطقوس موجودة في ممارسات *Maca Silsilah* و *Manakiban* و *Istigosah Kubro*. هناك ثلاثة عناصر رئيسية تعمل في الخطاب وتؤثر على هذه التغيرات، وهي الموضوع (يشمل بشكل رئيسي ثلاث مجموعات إسلامية في الخطاب الديني: *Localist-Moderate-*



(Universalist)، والأحداث (مثل الهجرة ، وتطوير عالم التعليم ، وهبوط القراء الطقوس)، والظروف (مثل الحداثة ، والعقلانية ، والعولمة ، والعبارة للحدود الوطنية ، والظروف السياسية والاقتصادية).

لا تُظهر التغييرات في الممارسات الطقسية في ووجان شيخ تغييرات في الشكل الموضوعي للتقاليد والثقافة فحسب ، بل أصبحت أيضاً علامة على التغييرات الرئيسية والأساسية في الهيكلية الوجودية والاجتماعية والسلوكية والنظرة العالمية والدينية ، وكذلك علاقات القوة في المجتمع. على المستوى النظري ، تشجعي نظرية طلال أسد في التقاليد الخطابية ليس فقط على تحليل الخطابات التي تسبب إلى تغييرات ثقافية ولكن أيضاً للكشف عن أنماط علاقات القوة. ومع ذلك ، هناك آثار نظرية لا يمكن تجنبها. على الرغم من انتقاد أسد في العديد من المناسبات بشدة النهج التفسري والمعنى الرمزي لكليفورد جيرتز (Clifford Geertz) ، أظهرت البيانات الموجودة في هذا المجال ونتائج هذه الأطروحة أن كلتا النظريتين (النهج التفسيرية والمعنى الرمزي لجيرتز ونهج العلاقات القوة والممارسة لأسد) على حد سواء يمكن القيام به بشكل فردي على وجه الحصر في مجال البحوث الأنثروبولوجية.

## TRANSLITERATION

This work contains many non-English words in languages such as Indonesian, Javanese, Sundanese, and Arabic. I write non-English words in italics with the exception of words. Short explanations of non-English words are written inside square brackets [ ] and in footnotes for long and more detailed explanations. To write Arabic words, I use the transliteration system of the Library of Congress and the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, with slight variations.

ء= '	ز= z	ف= f
ب= b	س= s	ق= q
ت= t	ش= sh	ك= k
ث= th	ص= ṣ	ل= l
ج= j	ض= ḍ	م= m
ح= ḥ	ط= ṭ	ن= n
خ= kh	ظ= ṣ	و= w
د= d	ع= '	ه= h
ذ= dh	غ= gh	ي= y
ر= r		
Short:                = a                                = i                                = u		
Long:                ا = ā                                ي= ī                                و= ū		
Diphthong:        اي = ay                                او= aw		

The *ta marbuta* (ة) is omitted unless it occurs within an *idāfa* in which case it is written “t”, such as *waḥdat al-wujūd*. Arabic words that have been incorporated into Indonesian, Javanese, and Sundanese and that indicate certain events, names of institutions and persons, or those words that are now part of the vocabulary of these languages are written in their Indonesianised form, such as ‘*Ahli Hikmah*’ instead of ‘*Ahl al-Ḥikmah*’, ‘*istigosah kubro*’ instead of ‘*istighāthah kubrā*’, and ‘*Sultan Hasanuddin*’ instead of ‘*Sulṭān Ḥasan al-Dīn*’.

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## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATION

<i>a.</i>	: Indicates that a word originates from the Arabic language
<i>Ahli</i> <i>Hikmah</i>	: This term originated from Arabic which consists of two words, <i>ahl</i> and <i>hikmah</i> . <i>Ahl</i> means people, and <i>hikmah</i> means wisdom. Linguistically, <i>ahl al-hikmah</i> means the wise people. In the context of this study, for Bantenese people, the term <i>ahli hikmah</i> refers to Supernatural expert.
<i>Akekahan</i>	: The first, ritual shaving of a baby's head
<i>Akidah</i>	: Correct Islamic belief or doctrine
<i>Ancak- ancak</i>	: Kind of <i>sesajen</i> (offering) placed at the intersection of the village road after a ritual is completed
<i>Angker</i>	: Creepy, spooky, scary - describes a place presumed to be haunted
<i>AQJ</i>	: Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani (died in Baghdad in 1166 AD / 561 H)
<i>Ba'da</i> <i>Maghrib</i>	: After the evening prayer
<i>Bay'a</i>	: Oath of allegiance
<i>Beluk</i>	: Yodeling-like vocal tradition found only in a few pockets in Banten and West Java
<i>Berekat</i>	: Packed dish or food to be taken home after completing a religious ritual
<i>Bid'a</i>	: Belief or a practice for which there is no precedent in the time of the Prophet, loosely translated into English as 'innovation'
<i>Da'wa</i>	: Islamic missionary activity, in the contemporary period often to seek to increase religious observance among Muslims
<i>Debus</i>	: Performance the manifest function of which is to furnish proof of invulnerability ( <i>kekebalan</i> )
<i>Dhikr</i>	: Remembrance to God
<i>Dukun</i>	: Magical specialist and/or curer, shaman
<i>Hadorot</i>	: Presenting <i>Surah al-Fatihah</i> to the spirits of pious Muslim by mentioning their respective names starting from the Prophet Muhammad to all Muslims in general

<i>Haji</i>	: The pilgrimage to shrines and visitation sights near Mecca
<i>i.</i>	: Indicates that a word originates from the Indonesian language
<i>Ilmu hikmah</i>	: Supernatural technique
<i>Ilmu Tuan Sych</i>	: Supernatural power or invulnerability originating from Sheikh AQJ
<i>Istigosah Kubro</i>	: Traditional Muslim communal prayer
<i>j.</i>	: Indicates that a word originates from the Javanese language
<i>j/s.</i>	: Indicates that a word originates from both the Javanese and the Sundanese language
<i>Jimat</i>	: Amulet
<i>Juru Maos</i>	: Person who leads and reads the <i>manaqib</i> in the performance of the <i>Wawacan Seh</i> ritual
<i>Keramat</i>	: Supernatural power
<i>Kyai</i>	: Title of high respect given to religious scholars in <i>pesantren</i> in Java. In Banten, <i>kyai</i> also refers to a village elder who has in-depth religious knowledge
<i>Manakiban</i>	: Ritual reading of the Arabic text of the <i>manaqib</i>
<i>Manaqib</i>	: The text of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani's hagiography
<i>Murshid</i>	: spiritual guide in Sufism, particularly in <i>tariqa</i>
<i>Ngalap berkah</i>	: See <i>tabarruk</i>
<i>Ngelmu</i>	: Seeking supernatural knowledge or <i>ilmu</i>
<i>Noja</i>	: Telling people's fortune. It is one of the <i>Wawacan Seh</i> ritual sessions. In some areas in Banten, they also call it <i>babadean</i> , <i>mancing</i> , and <i>jarah</i>
<i>Nyarecat</i>	: Spiritual effort after physical effort has been done
<i>Peci</i>	: Small cap to cover the head
<i>Pesantren</i>	: Literally 'place of <i>santri</i> or Muslim students'. Traditional Islamic boarding schools under the leadership of a <i>kyai</i>
<i>PKI</i>	: Partai Komunis Indonesia / Indonesian Communist Party
<i>Pupuh</i>	: Traditional poetic writing in Java and Sunda that has its own rules in arranging word and rhythm in each sentence

- Rebo* : Annual ward off misfortune ritual that is performed on the last Wednesday of *Sapar* (*Sapar* or *Safar* is a second month in Islamic calendar)
- Wekasan* :
- Rudat* : Type of music art using a *rebana* of a certain size and shape, accompanied by chanting the *salawat* and certain prayers, played with certain game patterns that differ from one group to another
- s.* : To indicate that a word originates from the Sundanese language
- Ṣaḥābah* : The companions of the Prophet Muhammad
- Sesajen* : Offerings
- Shirk* : Association, i.e. association of man to God. Polytheistic or animistic; beliefs not in accordance with the teachings of Islam
- Silsila* : Spiritual pedigree; chain of spiritual authorities
- Maca* : Similar to *hadorot* by adding several sessions such as reading several *surah* of Quran and a closing prayer; *Maca* means reading.
- Silsilah* :
- Slametan* : Communal meal to commemorate important events. Popular among *abangan* Muslims
- Sunatan* : Circumcision ritual
- Tābi'in* : The followers of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad
- Tabarruk* : Seeking God's blessing
- Tahlil* : A verbal noun (or *maṣdar*) from basic word *حَلَّ* (*Hallala*) which literally means *to praise* or *to acclaim*. It is a form of *dhikr* by uttering sentence لا إله إلا الله ("Lā ilāha illallāh"; *There is no deity but God*)
- Tahlilan* : A ritual to commemorate the dead; a public ritual and people in the neighborhood are invited to the house of the bereaved. Light meals and snacks are served after the ritual has finished.
- Tali paranti* : The rope of the old traditions
- Tarekat* : (Arabic: *ṭarīqa*) A Sufi school or order
- Tawassul* : Intercession, or praying to God through the intermediary
- Tolak bala* : Ward off misfortune ritual
- TQN* : Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya. Sufi movement developed by the Kalimantan scholar

Ahmad Khatib bin Abd al-Ghaffar Sambas (1803 – 1875)

- Wali* : Muslim saint or guardian
- Wali Qutub* : The pole of a Muslim saint. It usually refers to Sheikh AQJ
- Wawacan* : Literature written by *pupuh* rules. It usually consists of stories about a certain figure or hagiography. One *pupuh* consists of a one-story topic.
- Wawacan Sch* : A ritual activity in which people gather to recite and listen to the Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani’s *manāqib*. In some areas in Banten, people also call it *Mamacan*, *Maca Sch*, *Dulkadiran*, and *Mamaca*.
- Wirid* : Regular Litany; Usually, some Muslims perform it after five times prayers or at every certain rituals.

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Contemporary anthropologists tell us that Islam in its social and cultural context is not a single or monolithic entity with a unitary essence, but rather a cultural tradition that takes many forms of expression in accordance with its historical and social context. Dale Eickelman reminds us that the challenge of studying Islam in its local form and expression is “to describe and analyse how the Universalistic principles of Islam have been realized in various social and historical contexts without representing Islam as a seamless essence on the one hand, or as a plastic congeries of beliefs and practices on the other.”<sup>1</sup> Of course, this does not represent most Muslim scholar's opinions. One famous Muslim scholar, Seyyed Hosein Nasr, for example, suggests that Islam “is at once a religion, and civilization and social order based upon the revealed principles of the religion. It is an archetypal reality, residing eternally in the Divine Intellect”, and he goes on to emphasize the integrity and unity of the Islamic tradition.<sup>2</sup> Another scholar who argues that Islam must be seen as a religious tradition is Talal Asad. He writes that “Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition.”<sup>3</sup>

Although it is a tradition, this does not imply that it is a set of unchanging principles or an existing independent unit of social life and historical circumstances. In fact, in certain socio-historical contexts, the Islamic tradition presents a variety in practice, each often with its own adherents and defenders who

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<sup>1</sup> Dale F. Eickelman, “The Study of Islam in Local Contexts,” *Contributions to Asian Studies* 17 (1982): 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> Seyyed Hosein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981), 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Talal Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, 1986), 14.

sometimes compete with each other for influence. Often certain Islamic groups, such as puritan Muslims, claim that their Islamic practices are “purer” and the only true Islamic practice and they have come to ignore, or underestimate, the practices of local culture which they deem non-Islamic. Thus, what is important is not only the diversity of different beliefs and practices within Islam, but also the structures of authority and power that determine which ideas and institutions are given priority. Asad goes so far as to suggest that a practice is Islamic ‘because it is authorized by the discursive traditions of Islam’.<sup>4</sup> Although emphasizing the link between belief and authority, it leaves open the question which cultural traditions are exactly considered Islamic.

The polemic between the “Islamic” versus “non-Islamic” traditions of a community can actually be traced back to the initial Islamization process in a community. The further it spreads from the source of religious authority—in this case, Islam—the tradition will increasingly be a mixture of Islamic teachings and the existing local tradition. The term *locality* represented here is now a popular term among social historians and anthropologists who are concerned with Islamic studies. Therefore, the term *local people* is increasingly used by ethnographers and anthropologists rather than the older *primitive, tribal, simple, preliterate* and so on. The term *locality* then refers to the multi-expression of Islamic societies in accordance with their geographical areas and their own distinctive traditions.

However, one scholar has suggested that the term *Islam* be replaced by *islams*, thus emphasizing the multiplicity of Islamic expression and asserting that in all historical and cultural contexts the *islams* of elite and non-elite, literate and illiterate, and theologians and peasants, are all equally valid expressions of fundamental, “unconscious” Islamic principles. According to El-Zein, this *islams* approach was inspired by the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.



reaction both to the orientalist's search for an ahistorical Islamic "essence" and to the somewhat parallel venture of unitarian Muslim fundamentalists who regard their interpretations of Islam as definitive, which ironically and unintentionally provides a conceptual end product that likewise reduces the Islamic tradition to a single, essentialist set of principles.<sup>5</sup> However, he also ignores the fact that most Muslims argue that their religion has central and normative principles and that these principles are very important for understanding Islamic beliefs and practices.

This dissertation attempts not only to describe the local practices of Islamic teachings, but also to analyse the changes that occur in local Islamic traditions and rituals. It takes the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Banten as an analytical object. This tradition and ritual are a form of cultural hybridization born out of encounters with and negotiations between local culture and Islamic teachings involving vernacularized literature, music, traditional chanting (*tembang macapat*, *pupuh*), and the concept of sanctity in a living tradition and religious rituals.

The *Wawacan Sch* (literally meaning: reading the *manāqib* of the Sheikh) is a ritual activity in which people gather to recite and listen Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani's hagiography (*manāqib*).<sup>6</sup> People who perform it as a ritual believe that the

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<sup>5</sup> Abdul Hamid M. El-Zein, *The Sacred Meadows: A Structural Analysis of Religious Symbolism in an East African Town* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 172; see also Abdul Hamid M. El-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1977): 227–254.

<sup>6</sup> *Manāqib* is the plural substantive (sing. *manqaba*) featuring in the titles of a considerable number of biographical works of a laudatory nature, which eventually have become part of hagiographical literature in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. However, *manāqib*, sometimes made more precise, sometimes not, by a qualificative (*jamīl*, *karīm*, etc.), is always taken in a good sense; the term may be rendered approximately by "qualities, virtues, talents, praiseworthy actions", and introduces a laudatory biography in which the merits, virtues and remarkable deeds of the individual concerned are given prominence. It will be observed that, immediately following the development of mysticism and the cult of saints, it is the marvelous aspects

magical power and piety of a *wali* (Muslim saint) can bring benefits. They also believe that a *wali* is God's friend and an intermediary between "heaven" and "earth" <sup>7</sup> so that their supplication to God would be answered. Therefore, the *Wawacan Sch* ritual is not only performed regularly (either weekly, monthly, or annually) but also organized at certain occasions.

Of course, deciding to adopt the *Wawacan Sch* ritual in Banten as the object of my discussion and analysis has several reasons. One of them is that although it is not a typical Bantenese tradition—because *Manakiban* rituals (the same ritual but in Arabic) can also be found elsewhere—but what makes it unique in Banten is that the reading performance still employs the traditional chanting technique (*macapat*) in the Banten-Javanese language and requires various offerings (*sesajen*). It has also become an added ritual for—or it could be said the main ingredient of—almost all other Islamic local traditions in Banten.

The existence of *wawacan* literature (the text of the *manāqib* written in Banten-Javanese) used in the performance of the *Wawacan Sch* ritual signifies the penetration and the cultural negotiations of Islamic teachings in Banten. The Islamic teachings and literature that came to Banten were not taken for granted by the local people. The literature was vernacularized initially in order to acquire a local taste so that the local community could easily accept it.<sup>8</sup> It shows the

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of the life, the miracles or at least the prodigies (*karāmat*) [*q.v.*] of a Sufi or of a saint believed to have been endowed with miraculous powers, which are the subjects preferred, and *manāqib* ultimately acquires the sense of "miracles" or "prodigies". See Ch. Pellat, "Manakib," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 349.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Chodkiewicz, "Konsep Kesucian dan Wali dalam Islam," in *Ziarah dan Wali di Dunia Islam*, ed. Henri Chambert-Loir and Claude Guillot (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2010), 19.

<sup>8</sup> The *Wawacan* text even uses the term *Sang Hyang Widhi* for Allah and God. In the spread of Islam in Banten, this cultural strategy later became the main factor in the smooth Islamization process in this region. Because of this

serious efforts of the early Islamic preachers in Banten who adapted and vernacularized the Arabic *manāqib* book of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani (further written as AQJ), *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir*, into an old Banten-Javanese poem (*pupuh*). They vernacularized it in accordance with the complicated poetic formulas of the various meters of *Pupuh Macapat* writing technique, such as *Sinom*, *Kinanti*, *Asmarandana*, *Dandanggula*, *Pangkur*, *Lambang*, and *Durma*. Researchers later recognized this text of the *wawacan* as the oldest *wawacan* text about Sheikh AQJ written in the local language which then spread to other regions and became the basis for the adaptation of the same *wawacan* text in the Sundanese language in the Pasundan region.<sup>9</sup>

In their local living tradition, the Bantenese use the *wawacan* as an intercessionary text during religious ritual readings performed for several intentions. For them, this ritual is part of their expression to infer their concept of sanctity. It is a form of the local Muslims' expression to honor the saint (*wali*) in the form of a ritual. Sanctity is an idea that exists in every religion. Yet, it is also a difficult topic to be grasp in the interrelationship between religion and culture. This difficulty is mainly because of the inseparability of expression between religious tenets and local culture practices.<sup>10</sup> This kind of expression has provoked criticism by Muslims with a strong preference for uniformity in religious tenets and observances,

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cultural strategy, the people in the area did not consider early Islam in Banten as alien or "other".

<sup>9</sup> G.W.J. Drewes and R.Ng. Poerbatjaraka, *De Mirakelen van Abdoelkadir Djaelani* (Bandoeng: Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, 1938); Julian Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> A comprehensive explanation of the concept of sanctity in Islam can be read in Chodkiewicz's writing. He explained this concept in the perspective of *wali* itself (or who want to be a *wali*) in relation to God, in non-*wali* perspective, and he also discussed the scholarly polemic around the concept. See Chodkiewicz, "Konsep Kesucian dan Wali dalam Islam," 9–31.

and this preference generally insists on the strict insulation of religion from the vagaries of local cultures.

In terms of their response to the practice of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, I categorize Bantenese Muslims into three categories: Universalist, Localist, and Moderate.<sup>11</sup> Universalist Muslims deem the *Wawacan Seh* practice an un-Islamic ritual due to its strong connection with the local tradition. The recent wave of Islamic reformism in Banten has also exerted its influence on this ritual and that although it has been performed for a long time, it needs to be changed and negotiated to become more “Islamic”. In addition, modernity characterized by rational thinking also influences this ritual performance.

The *Wawacan Seh*, which has been existing for centuries in Banten, has been growing, changing, and has been attached to other traditions. However, some traditions and art performances in Banten are derivative forms and became attached to this ritual, such as *debus*,<sup>12</sup> *rudat*,<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Universalist Muslims are those who believe in a single Islam and that the teachings and traditions of Islam are universal and apply to all Muslims wherever and whenever they live. Localist Muslims are those who maintain to practice Islamic teaching albeit through the expression of the local traditions they learned from previous generations. Moderate Muslims are those who are somewhere in the middle between these two groups. The latter group is more accommodative and able to distinguish between religious tenets and cultural expressions (an explanation of the reasons for choosing the names of these three categories I discuss in the next chapter).

<sup>12</sup> *Debus* is a performance the manifest function of which is to furnish proof of invulnerability (*kekebalan*). The participants are the *seh debus*, or leader of *debus* group, and a number of performers (*pemain debus*). The instruments used, the actual *debus*, are awl-like daggers consisting of a wooden hilt with an iron spike running through it, which ends in a sharp point.

<sup>13</sup> The term “*rudat*” has at least 3 (three) meanings. *First*, it is derived from the Arabic term “*raudah*”, meaning garden. *Second*, also is derived from the Arabic term “*radda*”, meaning fend off (one of the martial art moves). *Third*, the name of the music instrument. *Rudat* is one type of music art of *rebana* that has a certain size and shape, accompanied by chanting of the *salawat* and certain prayers, played with certain game patterns that differ from one group to another. Sometimes it is performed only by showing the music without dancing, particularly as art performance for welcoming guests, but sometimes it is staged completely with dance. In the *rudat* art

*beluk*,<sup>14</sup> *Rebo Wekasan*,<sup>15</sup> and other art performances which include the chanting of the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ (*Wawacan Seh*) before or during performances.<sup>16</sup> This condition has become a barrier for unifying one single voice of the implementation of Islamic *shari'a* in Banten because it has been attached to the tradition of society or even has become the distinctive local identity of Banten itself.

The implementation of Islamic *shari'a* is one of the ideals behind the formation of Banten province (separated from the province of West Java) in 2000.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of the kind *shari'a* to be implemented—until now—is still not quite clear, in this case, Nur Ichwan says:

“..., the concept of *sharī'ah*, as in any other regions, was not clearly defined by its supporters. Some understand it as *fiqh* (Islamic law) and some other as a comprehensive way of life. Some understand it culturally as Islamic practices so far implemented by society and support

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performance, at least, it consists music, dance, and literary elements (chanting some texts, such as *manqabah sheikh*). See M. Rosadi, “Seni Rudat Sururul Faqir: Sejarah dan Fungsinya pada Masyarakat Desa Kilasah, Kecamatan Kasemen, Kota Serang, Banten,” *Jurnal Penamas* 29, no. 3 (Oktober-Desember) (2016): 466–467.

<sup>14</sup> *Beluk* is a yodeling-like vocal tradition found in only a few pockets of Banten and West Java. Just like some yodeling traditions, *beluk* originated as a form of long-distance communication between Sundanese farmers working in the rice fields of highland Banten and West Java. While it developed into a narrative form connected with religious texts in many areas, in the village of Cikeusal, the regent of Serang, that original form, *beluk sawah*, wordless and intense, has been maintained until the present day.

<sup>15</sup> *Rebo Wekasan* is a ritual that performed annually by Bantenese in last Wednesday of *Sapar* (*sapar* or *Safar* is an Islamic calendar between Muharram and Rabi' al-Awwal). For those who perform it, the ritual is believed as a refusing dangers ceremony (such as an epidemic diseases, catastrophe, and others).

<sup>16</sup> See Jacob Vredendregt, “Dabus in West Java,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* Deel 129, no. 2/3de Afl. (1973): 302–320.

<sup>17</sup> Based on Law No. 23/2000 on the Creation of Banten Province, issued on 17 October 2000 by President Abdurrahman Wahid. On 18 November 2000, Banten was formally declared as the 30<sup>th</sup> province

cultural Islamisation through education and various cultural approaches and some others understand it structurally through state intervention in the forms of *shari'ah*-inspired bylaws (Peraturan Daerah/Perda) and other Islam biased decrees and policies.”<sup>18</sup>

In fact, the uncertainty about the form of the *shari'a* to be implemented has drawn many responses from *ulama* regarding forms of the Banten Islamic tradition such as the *Wawacan Seh* and arts performances and traditions they see as derivative. On behalf of the implementation of the *shari'a* in this new province, different opinions and contestations are emerging between Universalist Muslims (those who want to implement the pure teaching of Islam in Banten) and Localist Muslims (those who want to keep the tradition of Islam as it is and been handed down in a process of many generations).

Therefore, unsurprisingly, the case of taking down the statue of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa in Kebon Jahe in Serang in 2003 and that of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin in Tangerang in 2009 due to worries they might become idols Bantenese people might worship did not invite so many polemical responses than the case of the *fatwa* (religious recommendation) of the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (MUI—Indonesian Council of Ulama) of All-Java and Lampung recommending that *debus* is *haram* (forbidden) because it contains elements of *shirk* (idolatry).<sup>19</sup> This *fatwa* shocked the Bantenese people and invited reactions from various parties, including *ulama*, *santris* (Muslim students) and university students.

Since the *fatwa* was broadcasted in the mass media, a number of Banten university students gathered on the main street of a busy traffic zone in Ciceri, Kota Serang, on 18

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<sup>18</sup> Moch Nur Ichwan, “The Local Politics of Orthodoxy: The Majelis Ulama Indonesia in the Post-New Order Banten,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 06, no. 01 (2012): 167.

<sup>19</sup> This *fatwa* was issued during the Regional Coordination Meeting (Rakorda) VII MUI of All-Java and Lampung in Serang, 11-12 of August 2009.

August 2009, to protest the *fatwa*. The protest was based on the assumption that *debus* is part of the local Banten identity and has existed since the era of the Sultanate. The ritual and all other Bantenese Islamic traditions are closely related to the emergence and growth of the Sultanate of Banten, as well as to *tarekat* (Sufi Orders) and other Sufis traditions.

The traditions and art performances in Banten, such as *debus*, *rudat*, and *seni beluk Banten* have been included into the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, or are seen as popular expressions of the *keramat* (j/s. supernatural power) of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. The *Wawacan Seh* transformed into a folk tradition, even some seclude from its origin (the Sufis or the *tarekat* tradition). Formerly, the *Wawacan Seh* tradition originated from the *tarekat* tradition (Sufi orders, especially the Tarekat Qadiriyya and later Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (furthermore to be called TQN).<sup>20</sup> This ritual has a significant role for *tarekat* followers. They perform it to affirm their spiritual connection (*ribāṭ*) to the Saint, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. In the Pesantren<sup>21</sup> Suryalaya in Tasikmalaya, West Java, which is explicitly allied with the TQN, the *Manakiban*

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Laffan, “From Alternative Medicine to National Cure: Another Voice for the Sūfi Orders in the Indonesian Media,” *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 51e Année, no. 135 (2006): 94; The TQN was founded by Ahmad Khatib of Sambas, Borneo, who appointed ‘Abd al-Karim of Banten as his successor shortly before his death in Mecca in 1876. The latter subsequently appointed deputies throughout Southeast Asia, with the line at Suryalaya having been transmitted by Sheikh Talha. Essentially this hybrid Sufi Order is an Indonesian interpretation of the Qadiriyya that fused some of the techniques of the Naqshabandiyya. Indeed, when he was in Mecca in 1885, Snouck Hurgronje probably identified Ahmad Khatib Sambas's teachings as passed on to a Lampungese sheikh as Qadiri for this reason, see C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily Life, Customs and Learning. The Moslems of the East-Indian Archipelago* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 278; For more detailed information about this order and its relationship with the Naqshabandiyya in general, see Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia* (Bandung: Penerbit Mizan, 1992).

<sup>21</sup> In Java, *pesantrens* are known foremost as traditional Islamic education institutions.

ritual is performed aggregately as a monthly ritual (on every 11<sup>th</sup> day of the Hijri months, it is also called *sebelasan*), and as an annual ritual (on every 11<sup>th</sup> of the month Rabi'ul Akhir in commemoration of the day of death of Sheikh AQJ—*haul*). The *Manakiban* consists of the recitation of the history of the Prophet Muhammad and the history of Sheikh AQJ, especially their virtues and miracles.<sup>22</sup> However, in some areas in Banten, it has become a folk tradition that has seen several changes and modifications due to the historical interaction between Islam and local culture.

In contrast to the Pesantren Suryalaya community in Tasikmalaya, in many areas the Bantenese people perform the ritual in different ways. In Petir, one of the sub-districts of Serang, for instance, a host should provide *sesajen* (offerings) before performing the ritual. *Sesajen* are the most basic offerings, such as cups of coffee (bitter and sweet), cups of tea (bitter and sweet), cups of milk, cups of mineral water, seven types of flowers, seven types of foods (known as *perwanten*), cigarettes, *menyan* (j/s. incense), and a basin with water and coins. As a requirement of the ritual, the *juru maos* (the ritual guide) usually checks the *sesajen* to see whether it is complete or not, because they believe that if it is not complete it will magically disturb the ritual. Whereas in the region of Baros, the *sesajen* has to consist of: cups of milk, cups of coffee (bitter and sweet taste), cups of tea (bitter and sweet taste), *rujak haseum* (s. unripe fruit in spicy tamarind water), cooked eggs, salt, red peppers, rice, *liwet seh* (j/s. cooked rice with the crust from the

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<sup>22</sup> Soebakin Soebardi, "The Pesantren Tarikat of Pesantren Suryalaya in West Java," in *Spectrum Essays Presented to Sutan Takdir Alisyahbana on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. Udin (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 1973), 226; Sri Mulyati, "The Educational Role of The Tariqa Qadiriyya Naqshabandiyya with Special Reference to Suryalaya" (McGill University, 2002), 393–398; Zulkifli, *Sufism in Java: The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java* (Leiden-Jakarta: INIS, 2002), 75; Ajid Thohir, *Gerakan Politik Kaum Tarekat: Telaah Historis Gerakan Politik Antikolonialisme Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah di Pulau Jawa* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 2002), 82–86.



bottom of the pan) and *ayam bakakak* (j/s. grilled chicken). The ritual is performed in various stages: first, the host states the intent and the objective of the ritual; second, the *juru maos* reads the *tawasul* (a. supplication to the Saints and Sheikhs); and lastly, the *juru maos* recites the text of the *manāqib*—in some case it is read alternatively with others. This ritual usually goes on from *bakda isya* (after *Isha* prayer) until dawn—or from about 9.00 PM until 2.00 or 3.00 AM.

There are several reasons why the people in Banten perform this ritual. Generally, they perform it to gain merit when they are conducting wedding or circumcision ceremonies, build houses, start businesses or trade, have a new motorcycle or car, having made a *nadhar* (a. vow to do something if the prayer is answered), even continuing study at universities or higher schools of learning, and for other intentions. By doing the ritual, they hope their intentions may be achieved. As mentioned before, art performances, such as *debus*, *rudat*, and *beluk Banten* have become part of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. By performing the *Wawacan Seh* ritual before or during these art performances they intend to invoke God's magical power and protection through the hand of Sheikh AQJ, who, as is well known, is the King of the Saints in the Sufi tradition.<sup>23</sup>

The respect for Sheikh AQJ and the forms of ritual associated with him are now widespread in almost all regions of Indonesia. The origins of the people's present beliefs and ritual practices associated with the saint are not very clear and this is also the case for the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and this is probably because of a lack of documentation. Van Bruinessen speculates that *tarekat*-associated traditions and practices may have started at the sultanate court of Banten from where it spread and turned into a popular tradition. Its spreading widely in the public sphere subsequently turned AQJ into a saint with a local character and initiated the ritual practices associated

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<sup>23</sup> Vredenburg, "Dabus in West Java."

with him.<sup>24</sup> In addition, van Bruinessen also speculates that this ritual has been existing in Banten since the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, when, as has been proved, the reciting of this ritual in the Javanese version using old Banten-Cirebon Javanese commenced.<sup>25</sup>

Sufism, particularly the *tarekat*, had a significant role in the Islamization process and the formation of an “Islamic tradition” in Banten although how the ritual of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition was performed is very difficult to trace due to lack of data. Historical fragments of the influence of Sheikh AQJ’s *keramat* (j/s. Supernatural power) in Banten provide clues about its long history in the area. One is the story of Sultan Hasanuddin (in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) who Islamized eight hundred local Hindu priests. This event was related to his efforts to demonstrate his supernatural power and the invulnerability skill he got from the influence of Sheikh AQJ’s *keramat*;<sup>26</sup> the story of Abu al-Mafakhir ‘Abd al-Qadir whose political legitimacy first derived from the ruler of Mecca and increasingly cemented the bond between the Sultanate and the *tarekat*;<sup>27</sup> the heroic story of Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari during the time of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (r. 1651-1682) in which he taught his invulnerability skills to his followers and the Banten sultanate’s military through the *tarekat*’s teachings to fuel the

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<sup>24</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “*Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia*,” *Journal of the History of Sufism* 1–2 (2000): 367.

<sup>25</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), 274.

<sup>26</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “*Tarekat Qadiriyyah dan Ilmu Syekh Abdul Qadir Jilani di India, Kurdistan, dan Indonesia*,” *Jurnal Ulumul Quran* 1 (1989): 69.

<sup>27</sup> Hoesein Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa* (Jakarta: KITLV dan Djambatan, 1983), 196–197; Martin van Bruinessen, “Shari’a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate,” *Archipel* 50 (15AD): 167; Azyumardi Azra, *The Origin of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), 95.

spirit of *jihad* among his followers in confronting the colonial government;<sup>28</sup> the story of Sultan ‘Arif Shifa’ Zayn al-‘Ashiqin’s curiosity about Islamic knowledge, Sufism, and translating Arabic Islamic books into local languages;<sup>29</sup> and the story of the heroic peasants revolt in Banten in 1888 which was mostly led by religious figures: *kyai* (religious teachers) and *murshid tarekat* (leaders of Sufi orders).<sup>30</sup>

Based on the historical pieces depicting fragments of the *Wawacan Seh*’s influence in the *tarekat*’s long history in Banten, it is not surprising that in some areas in Banten, the Bantenese perform this tradition in different ways. Today, the ritual is performed in diverse forms, or even discontinued and thus no longer found. Some who still perform it do the ritual in the same way as their ancestors (with offerings etc.), others perform it in a simple way without any specific conditions (or without any offerings), and others still perform it only by inviting a *juru maos* (reader of the *manāqib*) to chant by himself in the host’s home when he or she has a reason for the ritual to be performed. Some perform the ritual in a modified way that is acceptable to wider Muslims circles in the public space, such as *istighātha*.<sup>31</sup> Throughout its history, these changes have been

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<sup>28</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 268; Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 35; Abu Hamid, *Shaykh Yusuf: Seorang Ulama, Sufi dan Pejuang* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1994), 99.

<sup>29</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 23; C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, Vol. II. (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 249; Martin van Bruinessen, “*Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia*,” 361–395; A. Ismail Muhammad, *Banten: Penunjuk Jalan dan Keterangan Bekas Kerajaan Kesultanan Banten* (Serang: Saudara, 1980), 27; Ade Fakhri Kurniawan, “*Konsep Tajalli ‘Abd Allah Ibn ‘Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani dan Posisinya dalam Diskursus Wujudiyah di Nusantara*,” *ULUMUNA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 17, no. 2 (Desember) (2013): 277–278.

<sup>30</sup> Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants’ Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia* (Springer Science+Business Media, B.V., 1966), 257–263.

<sup>31</sup> “*Istighātha*” is an Arabic word meaning ‘calling for help’ or ‘appealing for help’ in a critical situation. However, in Indonesian Islam, this term refers

in line with changes in reality and in the social structure in Banten.

It is interesting to discuss and study the *Wawacan Sch* in terms of its cultural negotiation and discursive tradition. This dissertation not only affirms that culture is dynamic, but also argues that the changes in the concepts behind the ritual and the ways it is practiced constitute a watershed of fundamental change in cultural, social and structural patterns in society. However, rituals are part of the material objects of a culture that change the slowest compared with others. This is due to the nature of the ritual because its transmission from one generation to the next is always sacred, efficient, strict and conservative. In addition, the ritual reveals the most basic and private “software” of the agents of culture (people), namely belief and a cosmological worldview.

Therefore, changes in the concepts and practices of the *Wawacan Sch* ritual for the Bantenese not only indicate changes in terms of cultural and social practices but also epistemologically. Toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it became clear that the world was changing, not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. Human society moved to a new phase in its history. Economic and technological developments encouraged even greater cultural diversity, fragmentation, and differentiation in the containers of homogeneity and standardization that were previously the hallmark of modernism and mass society.<sup>32</sup>

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to a compilation of prayers or litanies recited on a particular occasion which consists of an invocation for divine help by repeating the sacred names of God and by saying other prayers. The word *istighātha* is usually used by those affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) organization, rather than reformist organizations such as Muhammadiyah and PERSIS. The *istighātha* ritual was originally taken from the Sufi tradition, particularly the Qadiriya wa Naqsabandiyya. See Arif Zamhari, *Rituals of Islamic Spirituality: A Study of Majlis Dhikr Groups in East Java* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 165–166.

<sup>32</sup> Edward T. Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1990), 11–12.

## **B. Research Question and Purpose**

This research aims to examine the cultural change and discursive tradition of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Banten. My starting point is the analysis and elaboration of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition to discover how the Sufi supplication ritual has been and is transmitted, modified or even discontinued as a folk tradition. Moreover, the research is also conducted to observe an Islamic discursive tradition that deals with ritual change, as well as the contestation between orthodoxy and heterodoxy and its derivative forms.

The objective of the present work is to answer the following research questions:

1. Why does the *Wawacan Seh* tradition still exist in Banten?
2. What elements in this tradition have been preserved and what has been modified.
3. What are the underlying factors that influence ritual change, and how are these factors involved in the discourse?

## **C. Literature Review**

I have to say here that this dissertation is not the first work to discuss tradition in a general way or specifically about narrative texts used in ritual practices. Most of the research carried out by previous scholars was related to their interest in the texts as they might reveal the Islamic cultures and traditions in the Indonesian Archipelago. Many texts are actually not only to be read in the way we read today, because they are intercessionary texts which are interesting not only because of their narrative contents but also because of their function. The Islamic community of the archipelago usually uses texts for specific ritual reasons. In a ritual, a text functions as an intermediary between the people and God.

These intercessionary texts usually contain narratives about Islamic heroes or other important figures such as the guardians of Allah (*Waliyullah*). Many scholars found that these texts had been translated into local languages and Winstedt estimated that similar texts were translated in Malay in the sixteenth or perhaps even in the fifteenth century.<sup>33</sup> The scholars who research these texts also focused on their functions in society, namely as texts meant for intercession. Texts that were used as part of a ritual function as intermediaries between people and God played an important role in shaping the cultures and the traditions which later became the valuable cultural heritage of the archipelago or, in a wider sense, in Southeast Asia. Shortly after they were introduced into the region, these works were translated into local languages, such as Javanese and Sundanese, to name but some. We can still find some of these translations today, for example, the texts telling the story about Amir Hamzah, Sama'un, Seh Bari, and of course the most popular and still used ritual text of the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ.

Many scholars who are interested in these texts and make them the object of their studies used a philological approach. The 'Abd al-Qadir narratives have been examined by G.W.J. Drewes and Poerbatjaraka,<sup>34</sup> Petrus Voorhoeve,<sup>35</sup> Ahmad,<sup>36</sup> Budhisantoso,<sup>37</sup> and Muhamad Hamidi.<sup>38</sup> These studies mostly focus on the contents of the texts and pay little or no attention

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Winstedt, *A History of Classical Malay Literature* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1972), 86–87.

<sup>34</sup> Drewes and Poerbatjaraka, *De Mirakelen van Abdoelkadir Djaelani*.

<sup>35</sup> Petrus Voorhoeve, "Het Origineel van de Hikajat Abdulkadir Djelani," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (TBG)* 83 (1949): 110–124.

<sup>36</sup> Ahmad, "Hikayat Syekh Abdul Qodir Jailani; Sebuah Kajian Filologis" (Universitas Pajajaran Bandung, 1988).

<sup>37</sup> S. Budhisantoso, *Wawacan Layang Syekh Abdul Qodir Jaclani* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1990).

<sup>38</sup> Muhamad Hamidi, *Mitos-Mitos dalam Hikayat Abdulkadir Jailani* (Jakarta: Yayasan Naskah Nusantara (Yanassa) dan Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2003).

to the ritual contexts in which they had, and continue to have, such value. The question that remains unasked in these studies is what actually happens during the recitation of these tales.

The supplication *Manakiban* ritual or the *Wawacan Seh* is a tradition that has an important role for the followers of the Tarekat Qadiriyya and Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN). In the *tarekat* tradition, this ritual is usually held monthly (i.e. every 11<sup>th</sup> day of the month of the Hijriyya calendar) and annually (i.e. every 11<sup>th</sup> of Rabi'ul Akhir, commemorating the death of Sheikh AQJ). Therefore, scholars who conduct research on the *tarekat* (TQN) usually also discuss the *Manakiban* tradition, to mention some of them: Sri Mulyati,<sup>39</sup> Zulkifli,<sup>40</sup> Soebardi,<sup>41</sup> and Ajid Thohir.<sup>42</sup> They discuss the *Manakiban* as a regular spiritual exercise performed by the followers of TQN, particularly in Pesantren Suryalaya, besides other rituals such as *dhikr* (a. repeated remembrance of God) and *khataman* (reading a distinctive prayer or remembrance of God in the *tarekat* tradition).

Generally, these scholars do not reveal different information about the *Manakiban* ritual in Pesantren Suryalaya, even though each of them emphasized different aspects. Thohir, for instance, tells us that he was amazed at how fanatic *tarekat* followers treat their Grand Sheikh and how they were very eager to obtain Sheikh AQJ's blessing during a *manāqib* recitation. After having followed the ritual, he saw hope and optimism emanate from their faces, especially after they had kissed the hand of the Grand Sheikh.<sup>43</sup> This phenomenon is an emotional response of the followers in a

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<sup>39</sup> Mulyati, "The Educational Role of The Tariqa Qadiriyya Naqshabandiyya with Special Reference to Suryalaya."

<sup>40</sup> Zulkifli, *Sufism in Java: The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufism in Java*.

<sup>41</sup> Soebardi, "The Pesantren Tarikat of Pesantren Suryalaya in West Java."

<sup>42</sup> Thohir, *Gerakan Politik Kaum Tarekat: Telaah Historis Gerakan Politik Antikolonialisme Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah di Pulau Jawa*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

*Manakiban* ritual, but unfortunately, Thohir did not discuss it further as a social phenomenon which is an expression of the TQN followers' perception of sainthood miracles (*keramat*) and divine grace (*baraka*). In this regard, I should mention Julian Millie's work, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java* which discusses the *Pangaosan Layang Seh* or *Karamat* reading ritual performed by Sundanese Muslims, particularly TQN followers on Bandung's northern fringe in West Java. Millie tried to answer a single question in *Splashed by the Saint*, and that is "What can the ritual reading and recitation of saintly narratives [based on written texts] tell us about Islamic sanctity and the place it occupies in the wider Islamic society?"<sup>44</sup> In order to examine this religious observance empirically, the author looked not only at the text but also at the context of *karamat* reading, which is the recitation by TQN followers of some of the written religious texts about 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani in Bandung.

In conclusion, Millie gave an overview of how Islam's greatest saints, such as 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani, were welcomed into the people's prayers and the expectations people had because of this in West Java. He recounted the social history of the reading of 'Abd al-Qadir's *karamat*. Another important discussion here is that on the marginality of the *Pangaosan Layang Seh* and the increased popularity of the *Manakiban*. Millie surmises that this seems to have been caused by the former's tendency to grant authority to a local convention, whereas the latter does not appear purely and simply as a supplication for 'worldly ends', but instead blends this interpretation with others.<sup>45</sup> However, the *Pangaosan Layang Seh* itself has also changed. Millie relates that it is now more accessible to Sundanese of all walks of life due to Pesantren Suryalaya's stipulations for *karamat* reading.<sup>46</sup> In the

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<sup>44</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 122–123.



past, only wealthy people performed *Pangaosan Layang Sch* because the performance was expensive.

In the context of Banten, I need to mention three researchers who have carried out research related to the *Wawacan Sch* practice: Athoullah Ahmad,<sup>47</sup> H.M.A. Tihami,<sup>48</sup> and Ruby Achmad Baedhawiy.<sup>49</sup> In his work, Ahmad explains the *Wawacan Sch* tradition and its ritual in Banten, especially in Carenang village. He discusses three main subjects, i.e. the technical details of the *wawacan* ritual, its social and religious functions, and its influence on the religiosity of the Bantenese people. In contrast, Tihami's research is actually a study of the practice of the *Rebo Wekasan* tradition, in which the *Wawacan Sch* ritual is part of the tradition. Nevertheless, he describes the *Wawacan Sch* ritual in detail, especially regarding its symbolic meanings.

In his turn, Baedhawiy's research focuses on the practice of the *Wawacan Sch* ritual as performed in two districts, Baros and Gunung Kaler in Banten. In addition to a description of the ritual, he also analysed the social context in these two districts.

These three researchers have emphasized similar matters, especially in their conclusions about the *wawacan*'s tradition and ritual. They acknowledge that the social function of the ritual is that it is tool for social cohesion (it seems that they draw on Durkheim's and Parsons' theories to analyse its function) and they also use the Geertzian approach, especially for identifying the meaning of the ritual's symbols. What's interesting about these three types of research is that they display the data that existed at the time of their research. Ahmad and Tihami conducted research in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Banten was still under the administration of

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<sup>47</sup> M. Athoullah Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Syekh Abdul Qadir Jaclani pada Masyarakat Banten* (Serang, 1987).

<sup>48</sup> M. A. Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat* (Serang, 1991).

<sup>49</sup> Ruby Ach. Baedhawiy, *Wawacan Sch: Praktek dan Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten* (Serang: Lemlit IAIN SMH Banten, 2009).

the Province of West Java, while Baedhawy examined the *Wawacan Sch* ritual in 2007 when Banten had acquired its own provincial government and had been separated from the Province of West Java. This stretch of time, for me, is very important because it provides historical data for this dissertation.

In contrast to the researchers' discussions above, this dissertation focuses on the ritual change and cultural negotiation in the framework of the Islamic discursive tradition. In contrast to Millie, this study will not only focus on *tarekat* followers who usually perform the ritual but also on non-followers, i.e. common people who perform the ritual. In the case of Banten, the ritual has become part of the folk tradition and common people who have never taken the oath of allegiance (*bai'at*) of the *tarekat* also perform it. In contrast with Ahmad, Tihami, and Baedhawy, this research not only discusses the ritual practices and their social function but also analyses the cultural and social transformations, changes and modifications, and/or the discontinuity of the ritual. Furthermore, I will extend my discussion to analyse the discursive tradition dealing with ritual change.

#### D. Theoretical Framework

Early ethnographic analyses of rituals often describe the realities to which the ritual in discussion belonged, as unchanged and timeless. These studies usually work on materials based on oral traditions and, accordingly, the ritual itself was often perceived as part of a timeless tradition.<sup>50</sup> The significance of change and its effect on ritual have been greatly underscored. Kelly and Kaplan point out that the shift of scholars of ritual from understanding ritual as the ahistorical response of some societies to change, toward a theory of ritual

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<sup>50</sup> John. D. Kelly and Martha Kaplan, "History, Structure, and Ritual," *Annual Rev. Anthropology* 19 (1990): 119–150; Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 210.

as part of history-making in society has been a gradual process.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, as any other social practice ritual is embedded in its social reality; it reflects the surrounding world, and as such, it must follow changes if its efficacy is to be maintained.

Rites are not just rigid structures; they also change.<sup>52</sup> Jennings, contesting the allegedly unchanging nature of ritual, argues that ritual is adaptive, varying in space, and changing in time.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, recent approaches emphasize the importance of applying a temporal frame to the study of concrete ritual practices, to pay adequate attention to the changes in the social reality, and to see single patterns of cases of ritual practice as products of different historical moments, an approach I strongly pursue throughout the present work. Following the development through which the pattern and the role of the ritual went across times unfolds the path that closely followed the transformations of Bantenese society, in particular regarding social structure, religious discourse, and economic and political conditions. All these affected the *Wawacan Seh* tradition and came to be reflected in the symbolic system of its past and present forms.

On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that not in every case, changes are integrated successfully into ritual practice. Ritual 'tend to resist change' in a more effective way than other social forms and customs.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, major changes in the social reality of a given ritual practice often cause the loss of ritual practice. Significant and long-lasting transformations imply a change not only upon a particular ritual practice but also on the wider ritual culture of the given community and society. In most Western societies, for

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<sup>51</sup> Kelly and Kaplan, "History, Structure, and Ritual," 139.

<sup>52</sup> Ronald L. Grimes, "Defining Nascent Ritual," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50, no. 4 (1982): 539–556.

<sup>53</sup> Theodore W. Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," *The Journal of Religion* 62, no. 2 (1982): 126.

<sup>54</sup> Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 211.

example, modernization and industrialization brought about the decline of a large number of rituals as well as an overall transformation of the ritual calendar. It is also important to note that the issue of change in ritual is a major subject of debate for not only scholarly research but also for ritual experts and social commentators.

In this regard, Stausberg called for caution when controversial opinions judging changes in a concrete case of ritual practice emerge.<sup>55</sup> Religious organizations are often concerned with the appropriate ways to adapt “traditions of worship to shifting social and spiritual realities”.<sup>56</sup> Numerous cases of controversial opinions will be cited in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition when during its development ‘new’ elements emerged in its practice. Critical voices often accompanied the introduction of these new elements. The slightest change in ritual form is often perceived as evidence of loss of authenticity. This is also because adherence to traditions and to unchanging stable patterns and meaning is commonly judged as the legitimating force of a ritual’s authenticity.

To sharpen my analysis in the present study, I will use Talal Asad’s theory of “discursive tradition”.<sup>57</sup> This theory is an important analytical tool for scholars of Islamic studies. It seeks to break free from the dichotomy between the textual approach—commonly used by orientalists—and the social, economic, and political approach, particularly used by anthropologist and sociologist.

According to Asad, a tradition is not as it is defined by orientalists, anthropologists, and Muslim scholars who view it as a “legacy of the past” as opposed to an expression of

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<sup>55</sup> Michael Stausberg, “Patterns of Ritual Change among Parsi-Zoroastrian in Recent Time,” in *The Dynamics of Changing Rituals: The Transformation of Religious Rituals within Their Social and Cultural Context*, ed. A. Deschner J. Kreinath, C. Hartung (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), 233–242.

<sup>56</sup> Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 210.

<sup>57</sup> Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 15.

modernity, or the opposite of reason.<sup>58</sup> Tradition is a set of discourses that grows, dynamically develops or is eliminated in accordance with the social, political and economic forces surrounding it.

Essentially, a tradition consists of discourses that attempt to invite its practitioners to the true form and objective of a practice which, precisely because it is created, has a history. Therefore, Asad says:

“These discourses relate conceptually to *a past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and *a future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through *a present* (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions). An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present.”<sup>59</sup>

Islam as a religion that has a worldview derived from its authoritative texts (*Qur'an* and Hadith) and a history of its established intellectual struggle based on authoritative texts. Therefore, Islam as a discursive tradition must be understood as a “historically evolving set of discourses, embodied in the practices and institutions of Islamic societies and hence deeply imbricated in the material life of those inhabiting them.”<sup>60</sup>

Thus, the tradition would more appropriately be understood as a collection of perpetual discourses, as a framework of thinking (understanding) not as static doctrines. Tradition does not merely refer to the past or is merely

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> Ovais Anjum, “Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and Middle East* 27, no. 3 (2007): 662.

repetitive, but rather refers to the need of continuous coherence by referring to a set of texts, procedures, arguments, and practices. This set of belief and understanding—both intellectually, politically, socially and culturally—frames the practices of Islamic reasoning. It is a set of discourses with a diversity of positions, roles, and tasks that ultimately form the corpus of Islamic knowledge.

However, the *Wawacan Seh* tradition must be understood as a dimension of Bantenese social life and not as a stage in its social development. Therefore, it is important to understand that “tradition and modernity” exist due to different historical aspects and it is important to emphasize this rather than to say that they are unrelated to culture or society.<sup>61</sup> This means that the Islamic discursive tradition has its own distinctive features both rationality and as a way of thinking, written in its texts, history, and institutions. This does not mean that there is a certain kind of rationality, logic or philosophy that is Islamic and cannot be penetrated or influenced by outsiders, but there are certain theoretical considerations and premises that derive from the content and the form of basic Islamic discourse (i.e. the content and the context of texts, the early history of Islam, etc.). Therefore, anyone involved in the Islamic tradition should start with this.

In addition, the Islamic discursive tradition is certainly different from what happened in the West. The West has its own discursive tradition, namely liberalism which is an important aspect of modern Western society. MacIntyre stated that liberalism itself evolved into a tradition: “liberal theory is best understood, not at all as an attempt to find a rationality independent of tradition, but as itself the articulation of a historically developed and developing set of institutions and forms of activity... Like other traditions, liberalism has its set

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<sup>61</sup> Talal Asad, “Modern Power and the Reconfiguration of Religious Traditions: An Interview with Saba Mahmood,” *SEHR* 5, no. 1: Contested Politics (1996), <https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-1/text/asad.html>.

of authoritative texts and its disputes over their interpretation.”<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, if Muslim reformists sought the support for their contemporary arguments by referring to the authoritative texts of the past, they are not very different from liberal scholars who cite “authoritative texts” to describe current conditions. They have different positions in contesting the “true” interpretation of the text that is considered authoritative.<sup>63</sup> Based on that view, an inadequate way to understand a contemporary Islamic tradition, such as the *Wawacan Seh*, is by dichotomizing the oppositional terms of ‘traditional-modern’. Rather, it must be understood in terms of dissimilar perspectives of understanding, articulating and practicing Islam. The continuity and change in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and its derivative traditions must be understood as part of a discursive dynamic influenced by ever-changing global circumstances.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, Islamic traditions cannot be comprehended merely by looking at them using traditional Western-orientalist standards as syncretic forms so that they are labeled ‘*abangan*’ or ‘primitive’, but rather should be understood from the discursive tradition in Islam itself which has its own arguments and ways of reasoning using its own coherent internal-rational standards. In accordance, Muslims understand their “Islamic tradition” not only in its social functions. Also the kinds of reasoning they practice using their own argument and rationality must be analysed.

## E. Method

This study combines theoretical and empirical investigations. In terms of data collection, this study employs

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<sup>62</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 345.

<sup>63</sup> Samira Haj, *Reconfiguring Islamic Tradition: Reform, Rationality, and Modernity, Religion* (California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.

<sup>64</sup> Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 16.

several research methods and techniques. The sources for these investigations were collected through bibliographical study, fieldwork as well as observation.

Before conducting my field research, I first made a bibliographical study to enrich my data. During my field research, I checked these data to get a more comprehensive picture. During my fieldwork I obtained many new data regarding the ritual changes that existed in the community.

However, this dissertation is not intended as an ethnographic work in a strict sense, but focuses on specific ritual practices. I did my field work for six months in several areas in Banten, namely in Serang Regency (sub-districts of Cikeusal, Pamarayan, Anyer, Cinangka, Ciruas, Baros, Pontang, Tirtayasa, and Carenang), Tangerang Regency (Kresiek and Rajeg), Serang City (Walantaka, Serang, and Taktakan), Cilegon City (Cibeber and Purwakarta), Lebak Regency, and Pandeglang Regency. Of course, I did not engage in participatory observation in all of these areas by way of attending and participating in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. In some areas, I interviewed community leaders or the *juru maos* (s. ritual guide) of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. I did participatory observation only in Ciruas, Tirtayasa, Cinangka, Rajeg, and Cikeusal.

For my observations, I attended the *Wawacan Seh* ritual as an active participant. In Cinangka, for example, I attended this ritual which lasted the entire night until dawn broke. From this observation, I not only obtained direct information about the ritual practices but also a firsthand feeling of what the participants experience during the ritual. Abundant information about social psychology and a comprehensive understanding of this ritual I got from casual conversations with worshipers and *juru maos* during regular breaks or while enjoying cup of coffee together after the program was completed.

I also visited several *tarekat* figures, such as *murshid* and *tarekat* members to get information about the *tarekat* tradition



and its transmission. One of the figures I met was K.H. Suhaemi, an elder in Cilegon City and the only *murshid* of the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) from the path of Ki Abdul Lathief. He got his TQN *ijaza* (license) and became a substitute for the previous *murshid*, namely K.H. Muhaimin. While K.H. Muhaimin got his *ijaza* from his father, Ki Abdul Lathief. The latter received his *ijaza* from Ki Asnawi of Caringin and Sheikh Abdul Karim of Tanara (Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's main *Khalīfa*). In addition, I also met leaders from religious organizations to obtain direct information about their discourse of local traditions and Islamic teachings pertaining to the *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

The data I obtained from my field research was confirmed again with the data I got from the documents I had previously collected. The data were then analysed according to the relevant theories. To get comprehensive information about ritual changes, I used the diachronic and synchronic methods.<sup>65</sup> Comparing culture or ritual with the diachronic method is done by comparing ritual concepts and practices that exist today with the same ritual concepts and practices in the past in the same place and in the same community while the synchronic method is done by comparing ritual concepts and practices with the same concepts and practices in different places at the same time. From these two methods of comparison, it became apparent that there are changes in the concepts and practices of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in the sense of ritual symbols, structures, and functions. However, in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, using the diachronic method proved more difficult because of a lack of historical documentation regarding this ritual and it what there is was moreover difficult to obtain. Even so, the historical fragments in several documents and the collective memory of the community helped me in this matter.

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<sup>65</sup> Alan Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8–10.

## F. Structure

The chapters shed light on the ritual change of the *Wawacan Seh* and the derivative traditions performed by the Bantenese people, as well as their cultural negotiation, authority, and discursive tradition. Chapter 1 is the introduction, which includes the background of my research, my research questions, aims and objectives, previous studies, and the method employed.

Chapter 2 focuses on the historical background of Islamization and the formation of the “Islamic tradition” in Banten. I also observe the role of the *tarekat* in the Sultanate of Banten and the structure of power and religious authority in Banten.

Chapter 3 elaborates the cultural flows and religious transmission of the popularity of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani among Bantenese Muslims, the Bantenese’s cosmological worldview and its cultural appropriation, and the vernacularization of the text of the *Wawacan Seh*.

The practice of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and its various performances in Banten society and the derivative forms of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, such as *debus*, *rudat*, *beluk*, *Rebo Wekasan*, and *Mulud Fatimah*, are elaborated in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 analyses elements of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition that have been preserved and changed, as well as the factors that influence(d) the process of continuity and change in the ritual and its derivative traditions. It also discusses the place of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual among wider society, and elaborates the discursive tradition of this ritual. It also describes the contestation between Universalist and Localist Muslims, or between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. Chapter 6 offers the conclusion on the main findings of my research.

## CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

In Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual has been a local living tradition for many centuries. Changes made in the ritual indicate the presence of changes on a broader scale in Banten society. We can observe this by employing two methods, the diachronic and the synchronic. Drawing on these methods, this dissertation consists of three main parts, all of which are presented in six chapters. The first part is a historical explanation of the pre-conditions of the formation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. The second part is an explanation of the process of the formation of the ritual that later became a living tradition in Banten, whereas the third is about the processes of change, the factors that influence changes, and discourse.

The historical explanation of the pre-conditions during the formation of Islamic traditions begins with historical data on the early Islamization and the establishment of the Islamic Kingdom of Banten. The early Islamization in the archipelago had a profound impact on the character of what is now Indonesian culture. Scholars agree that from all the approaches and perspectives used to analyse culture in the archipelago, “encounter” was the most influential in the process of cultural reproduction. New local traditions began to inspired by the encounter of Islamic teachings with existing local traditions. Many scholars call this encounter process “acculturation” which, in a later phase gives birth to a syncretic tradition and culture, or a mixed culture that consists of a combination of Islamic teachings and local culture.

The accommodative nature of the early Islamization in the Banten Sultanate cannot be separated from the influence of Sufism, more specifically the *tarekat*. Historically, almost all the Sultans in Banten were members of a *tarekat*, and some of them were even *khalifa* of a certain *tarekat*. This condition certainly had a very significant effect on the Islamization

process in Banten. Therefore, even though a religious court had been established, Sufi mystical traditions and Islamic traditions continued to be felt in the Islamization process and in the creation of new religious traditions in Banten. This Sufi Islamic style is considered to have been the dominant and most successful factor in the Islamization process in Banten, and the archipelago in general.

Before Islam was massively proselytized into the archipelago, the population there was very much inclined towards spiritual matters and this is related to their cosmological worldview. The inhabitants of the archipelago generally believed that cosmic centers, namely the sacred places where the world of the living meets that of supernatural powers played an important role in their lives. These sacred places were believed to be the graves of ancestors, mountains, caves, forests and other places that were considered sacred. Visiting sacred places to gain spiritual power has long been an important part of religious life in this region. These places were not only visited as a form of worship but also to seek supernatural power (*ngelmu*), magical power, and political legitimacy.

After the inhabitants of the archipelago had embraced Islam there was a change in their orientation about the cosmic centers. The main cosmic centers were now the holy places in Islam, such as Mecca and Medina, and Mecca was seen as the center of the world and the new source of spiritual and supernatural power, wisdom and political legitimacy. Replacing the old supernatural agents or the ancestral spirits such as *Karuhun* and *Ki Buyut*, now Sheikh AQJ had become the new supernatural agent, of course with the novel understanding that his *keramat* and his supernatural power were “loaned” to him by God. Islamic readings written in Arabic were also considered to contain higher levels of magic and efficacy than local readings in the local languages. The Banten society’s recognition of their Sultans’ supernatural

power and deep religious knowledge became the source of the legitimation of their power.

Moreover, the use of the *tarekat* as social networks, and sources of supernatural power and *keramat* became even more apparent in the period of the struggle against the Dutch colonials. The Bantenese were known as the most rebellious people in Indonesia in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century and from 1813 until 1890, there were no less than 80 uprisings in this region.

Gradually, through *tutur tinular* (stories that were verbally disseminated from generation to generation) the story of Sheikh AQJ's *keramat* became increasingly widespread and the Bantenese people considered Sheikh AQJ as the *wali* who could help them, give them magical power, and could act as intermediary between the people and Allah, and because of this they turned the performance of his *manāqib* into a living ritual and tradition. The Bantenese people made the readings of the text of the *manāqib* written in Banten-Javanese a ritual by way of *hadorot* and the recitation of the *al-Fātiḥah* to Sheikh AQJ and by praying for him. After the Banten Sultanate collapsed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Islam increasingly spread to the inland areas of Banten and some Islamic teachings had renewed encounters with local traditions including that of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. It is because of this that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual went through very complex changes in terms of the way it was executed.

The expression "*Wawacan Seh*" consists of two words, "*wawacan*" and "*seh*" and means the "reading about the Sheikh." The *Wawacan Seh* is the ritual of reading the hagiography of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani which the community holds for specific reasons. The extraordinary stories about Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani are read from Banten-Javanese or Sundanese texts in Arabic-Pegon script, which were the results of adaptations from Arabic ones. To read the text, the reader does not need to pay attention to the recitation rules of Al-Quran (*tajwid*), but he must read by using the

melodic rules of the *pupuh*, such as *Sinom*, *Kinanti*, *Asmarandana*, *Dandanggula*, *Durma*, *Lambang*, and *Pangkur*.

At the beginning of its formation in Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* tradition signaled a major change in the cultural pattern of the community. It became a hallmark of active and massive change caused by the Islamization process in Banten. The *Wawacan Seh* in the form of a living tradition became a bridge between the existing local tradition and Islamic teachings. It also became a modified culture as the result of negotiation caused by the meeting of the local traditions and Islamic teachings which later started to form a hybrid culture due to the integration of elements of both as can be seen in its literature, music, *macapat* songs, worldview, as well as in the concept of sanctity.

In the case of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, three aspects of change in ritual and tradition can be observed, namely *symbolic meaning*, *function*, and *structure*. From the aspect of symbolic meaning, changes in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition can occur in the meaning of the ritual itself and in the meaning of the symbolic objects of the ritual, such as the symbolic meaning of *sesajen*. Many changes also occur in its ritual function. The changes in terms of ritual function mostly related to its function as an intercessionary text, social cohesion, as well as social control and authority identification. While changes in the *Wawacan Seh*'s ritual structure mostly related to agency's structure of the ritual, the form of ritual practice (from communal to individual), as well as derived form of this ritual (such as *maca silsilah*, *Manakiban*, and *istigosah kubra*).

There are three dominant factors that greatly influence cultural changes in general and rituals and traditions in particular. These factors are *subject*, *event*, and *condition* and they do not work independently. The subject referred to here are the people who are involved in culture. Every person in the environment is a cultural agent. This subject is a cultural actor because he or she forms, changes, and determines the course of culture. There are three dominant subjects who are involve in

the discourse about the ritual: Localist Muslims, Moderate Muslims, and Universalist Muslims.

Another factor that determines the changes in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition is the event. Events, in this case, are things that happen in a given place and time or a special set of circumstances. An event describes human action in response to the surrounding environment. In this sense, rituals and traditions are events because they depict the human response to reality and sacredness. But what is meant by events in this dissertation are human actions that can influence the *Wawacan Seh* tradition. Based on my field research in Banten, both in areas where the community still performs the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and in others where it is no longer done I found that events have a major influence in the process of ritual change. Some of the most influential events are migration, education, and the death of the last *juru maos* in the community when he has no successor.

The last factor that has a major influence on the *Wawacan Seh* tradition in Banten is condition which can be defined as a mode of being or existence of a person or a thing, or a state in a particular moment in time. Based on my findings during my fieldwork in several areas in Banten, “conditions” that have a profound influence on the *Wawacan Seh* ritual changes include: multiculturalism, globalization, and modernization, the wave of transnationalism and rationalism, political and economic conditions, as well as open access information and social media.

These three factors also do not work in isolation of each other. The division of these three factors is categorical, but in reality, they work together in an arena called discourse. In a religious discourse, these factors operate in a situation where cultural agents play an important role as “active change actors” who are intensely influenced by events and conditions. From that discourse cultural negotiations emerge which then give rise to a response. There are three responses related to cultural

discourse, including in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition. They are *continuity*, *modification*, and *discontinuity*.

Finally, the changes that occur in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition are not only markers of significant changes in the objective form of culture but also in the web of meaning in the sense of ontological, social, and power relations within it. These changes indicate that there are other, more systematic and structured changes surrounding these cultural agents, both at the level of social interaction, power relations, and structures of authority, as well as in terms of worldview and their religious perspective. This, in fact, confirms Asad's contention that ritual is always intertwined with power. In other words, ritual is also a field where power is exercised. On the other hand, this research also augments his argument about the ritual change.

In order to test its theoretical implication, using Asad's theory of discursive tradition for analysing the *Wawacan Seh* tradition and ritual, inevitably led me to an attempt to decipher the power relations present in their ritual practice. Even so, although on many occasions Asad criticized Geertz's approach of interpretation and symbolic meaning, this dissertation shows that both theories (both Geertz's interpretive and symbolic meaning and Asad's power relations and practices) cannot be separated or run exclusively on their own. To analyse the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, finding answers to the question "what does the ritual do?" does not lead to enough understanding if we also do not analyse "what the ritual *means*". Therefore, when analysing the *Wawacan Seh* ritual by only emphasizing the power and practice approach the researcher will face difficulties because of the power relations that exist in the community of the practitioners of the ritual are built on symbols.

In the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, it is very clear that the symbolic meaning makers and the interpreters of ritual symbols are those who have the power over the existence of and the change made in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition. This research shows that Talal Asad's anthropological approach that



emphasizes how power works in religion can indeed go hand in hand with those of Durkheim (looking at the function), and Geertz (symbolic meanings). This research demonstrates that looking at power in ritual does not mean that one has to abandon these aspects.



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## Interviews

- Interview with Sairi of Ciruas on April 27, 2018
- Interview with Ustadh Uting Sirojuddin of Ciruas on May 6, 2018
- Interview with Dulyani of Cinangka on May 10, 2018
- Interview with Ustadh Husein of Cinangka on May 10, 2018
- Interview with Rosid of Cinangka on May 11, 2018
- Interview with Salkin of Anyer on May 13, 2018

Interview with K.H. Khalwati of Ciruas on June 23, 2018  
Interview with Sukri of Tirtayasa on June 24, 2018  
Interview with Saruri of Cikeusal on July 1, 2018  
Interview with Muarif of Cikeusal on July 1, 2018  
Interview with Hamid of Cikeusal on July 1, 2018  
Interview with *Kang* Ajo of Cikeusal on July 7, 2018  
Interview with Ki Sohra of Anyer on July 8, 2018  
Interview with Taufik of Lebak on August 5, 2018  
Interview with Abah Ubed of Kresek on August 12, 2018  
Interview with Ki Samawi of Rajeg on September 2, 2018  
Interview with Said of Serang on October 8, 2018  
Interview with Supyan of Taktakan on October 18, 2018  
Interview with K.H. Suhaemi of Palas on November 11, 2018  
Interview with HDY of Tangerang on November 26, 2018  
Interview with Asep of Kota Serang on December 16, 2018