

**CULTURAL NEGOTIATION, AUTHORITY,  
AND DISCURSIVE TRADITION:**

The Wawacan Seh Ritual in Banten

**Ade Fakh Kurniawan**

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## 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= ḏ	و= w	
د= d	ع= '	ه= h	
ذ= dh	غ= gh	ي= y	
ر= r			
Short:	= a	= i	= u
Long:	ا̄ = ā	ي̄ = ī	و̄ = ū
Diphthong:	اي̄ = ay	او̄ = aw	

The *ta marbuta* (ة) is omitted unless it occurs within an *iḏāfa* 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

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

- near Mecca
- i.* : Indicates that a word originates from the Indonesian language
- Ilmu hikmah* : Supernatural technique
- Ilmu Tuan Sych* : Supernatural power or invulnerability originating from Sheikh AQJ
- Istigosah* : Traditional Muslim communal prayer
- Kubro*
- j.* : Indicates that a word originates from the Javanese language
- j/s.* : Indicates that a word originates from both the Javanese and the Sundanese language
- Jimat* : Amulet
- Juru Maos* : Person who leads and reads the *manaqib* in the performance of the *Wawacan Sch* ritual
- Keramat* : Supernatural power
- Kyai* : Title of high respect given to religious scholars in *pesantren* in Java. In Banten, *kyai* also refers to a village elder who has in-depth religious knowledge
- Manakiban* : Ritual reading of the Arabic text of the *manaqib*
- Manaqib* : The text of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani's hagiography
- Murshid* : spiritual guide in Sufism, particularly in *tariqa*
- Ngalap berkah* : See *tabarruk*
- Ngelmu* : Seeking supernatural knowledge or *ilmu*
- Noja* : Telling people's fortune. It is one of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual sessions. In some areas in Banten, they also call it *babadean*, *mancing*, and *jarah*
- Nyareat* : Spiritual effort after physical effort has been done
- Peci* : Small cap to cover the head
- Pesantren* : Literally 'place of *santri* or Muslim students'. Traditional Islamic boarding schools under the leadership of a *kyai*
- PKI* : Partai Komunis Indonesia / Indonesian Communist Party
- Pupuh* : 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* : Annual ward off misfortune ritual that is performed on the last Wednesday of *Sapar* (*Sapar* or *Safar* is a second month in Islamic calendar)
- 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 *hadrot* by adding several sessions such as reading several *surah* of Quran and a closing prayer; *Maca* means reading.
- Silsilah* : Similar to *hadrot* by adding several sessions such as reading several *surah* of Quran and a closing prayer; *Maca* means reading.
- 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 *maṣḍar*) from basic word *حَلَّلَ* (*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 1

## INTRODUCTION



### A. One Islam, Many Expressions

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

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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.

socio-historical contexts, the Islamic tradition presents a variety in practice, each often with its own adherents and defenders who 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

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



expressions of fundamental, “unconscious” Islamic principles. According to El-Zein, this *islams* approach was inspired by the 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.

## B. *Wawacan Seh* as Muslim Local Tradition

This research 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 Seh* (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

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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* 6 (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

believe that the 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 Seh* ritual is not only performed regularly (either weekly, monthly, or annually) but also organized at certain occasions.

Of course, deciding to adopt the *Wawacan Seh* 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 Seh* 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

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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 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.

the local community could easily accept it.<sup>8</sup> It shows the 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

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<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 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

expression has provoked criticism by Muslims with a strong preference for uniformity in religious tenets and observances, 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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the concept. See Chodkiewicz, “*Konsep Kesucian dan Wali dalam Islam*,” 9–31.

<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 *sch 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

*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:

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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 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 Bantenesse 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

“..., 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 cultural Islamisation through education and various cultural approaches and some others understand it structurally through state intervention in the forms of *sharī’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,

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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.

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 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

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Laffan, “From Alternative Medicine to National Cure: Another Voice for the Sûfi 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 Moslims 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).

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* 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,

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

<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.



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 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

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

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 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

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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-*

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 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

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*Indonesian Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 95.

<sup>28</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 268; Martin van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 35; Abu Hamid, *Shaykh Yusuf: Scorang 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.

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

It is interesting to discuss and study the *Wawacan Seh* 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 Seh* 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

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<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 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 Majelis Dhikr Groups in East Java* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 165–166.

homogeneity and standardization that were previously the hallmark of modernism and mass society.<sup>32</sup>

### C. Ritualizing Sheikh: From Text to Ritual Practices

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

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

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

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 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>

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<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 Jaelani* (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).

<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*.

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 *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

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<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.

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

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 Sch* 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 Sch* 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 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 Baedhawy.<sup>49</sup> In his work, Ahmad explains the *Wawacan Sch* tradition and its ritual in Banten, especially in Careng 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

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

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 122–123.

<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. Baedhawy, *Wawacan Sch: Praktek dan Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten* (Serang: Lemlit IAIN SMH Banten, 2009).



people. In contrast, Tihami's research is actually a study of the practice of the *Rebo Wekasan* tradition, in which the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is part of the tradition. Nevertheless, he describes the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in detail, especially regarding its symbolic meanings.

In his turn, Baedhawiy's research focuses on the practice of the *Wawacan Seh* 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 the Province of West Java, while Baedhawiy examined the *Wawacan Seh* 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 Baedhaway, 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. Ritual and Discursive Tradition**

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 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

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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.

<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.

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 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

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

<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.

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 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

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

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

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 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

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

<sup>60</sup> Ovamir 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.

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 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

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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>.

<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.

‘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. Doing Fieldwork in Banten**

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

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

(Kresek 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 worshippers 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 *Khalifa*). 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.

## **F. Organization of the Book**

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 of this book is introduction, which includes the description of general view of culture and tradition in Banten, as well as practical and theoretical view of Islamic local culture.

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.

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

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 II.**  
**ISLAMIZATION IN BANTEN: THE *TAREKAT'S* ROLE,  
RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY, AND POWER STRUCTURE**



In *A History of Modern Indonesia Since C. 1200*, Ricklefs begins with the assertion that the spread of Islam is one of the most important processes in the history of Indonesia, albeit it is also the most obscure.<sup>1</sup> He is right because the new Muslim community, in addition to having political and social power, had a significant role in the formation of Indonesian traditions and culture. In the subsequent process, in many parts of Indonesia, the coming of Islam seems to have been the main determinant of this new culture. This new culture, new traditions, and novel worldview of society in the archipelago emerged along with the pervasive values of Islam. Although the culture and traditions which were produced as a consequence of the encounter between Islam and local culture seem to have been new, they were inseparable from the existing culture and the culture of sanctity that manifests itself in the *Wawacan Sch* tradition and ritual.

The changes in archipelago's social and power structure as a result of the early Islamization movement exerted tremendous influence on the construction of a new tradition, or at least of the syncretic culture in which the Islamic tradition adapted to the local communities' circumstances. With regard to culture, scholars have used various perspectives and taken different approaches to explain how this came about. Schudson<sup>2</sup> examined "how culture works" but from the perspective of culture not that of the individual.

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<sup>1</sup> Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since C. 1200* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Schudson, "How Culture Works: Perspectives from Media Studies on the Efficacy of Symbols," *Theory and Society* 18, no. 2 (1989): 153–180.

Geertz<sup>3</sup> conceived of culture as the process of “sense-making,” but at the micro level. Functionalist theories lack the micro-level mechanism that produces the synchronization between culture and social structure. Epistemological cultural theory adheres to the effect of a knowledge-based mechanism, which makes social order desirable, be it order created through culture, or order manifested in structure.

In analysing culture, scholars agree that “encounter” is very influential for culture production. Therefore, the spread of Islam in the archipelago has been a watershed for the production of the many cultures we still find today. Regarding the Islamization process in the archipelago, Ricklefs said that, in general, there are two possible main processes. On the one hand, the interaction between indigenous Indonesians and Islam and subsequent conversion. On the other hand, foreign Muslims from overseas (Arabs, Indians, Chinese, and so on) settled permanently in an Indonesian area, intermarried and adopted local lifestyles to such a degree that in effect they became Javanese or Malay etc. These two processes often may have occurred in conjunction and when a piece of evidence survives indicating, for instance, that a Muslim dynasty had been established in some area, it is often impossible to know which of these two processes was the more important.<sup>4</sup>

In Banten, as well as in other parts of Indonesia, religion—Islam—is interpreted first in the sense of locality. This interpretation will continue to grow in line with the development of society, in terms of the development of social, political, economic and interaction that occurs among its inhabitants. In the process of defining “religion”, it produces a new culture because of the different character and local tendency of societies among the regions that influence the different colors of each culture. For this reason, this chapter

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz* (New York: Basic Book, 1973).

<sup>4</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since C. 1200*, 3.

will discuss three subjects: the early Islamization in Banten and its development, the role of the sultanate and the *tarekat*, and the structure of power and authority in Banten.

### A. Islamization in Banten: A Perpetual Process

Nowadays, Banten is the thirtieth province of Indonesia and located in the westernmost part of Java. It became a new province with Serang as its capital based on regulation No.23/2000 dated October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000. This new province consists of four regencies (*kabupaten*): Serang, Pandeglang, Lebak and Tangerang, and four cities (*kota*): Serang, Cilegon, Tangerang, and South Tangerang. It covers an area of approximately 9,160.70 square kilometers, with 155 sub-districts (*kecamatan*), 1,238 villages (*Desa*), and 313 villages/wards (*kelurahan*). Because of its geographical position, Banten is not only a main trade route between Java and Sumatra, but also important in international trade. Moreover, since Banten, especially Tangerang, borders on Jakarta—the capital of Indonesia—it has become an influential partner in supporting the economy of Jakarta as the seat of the government, whereby Tangerang is one of the industrial centers, as are Serang and Cilegon.<sup>5</sup>

For a long time before it became a province, Banten was one of the influential kingdoms in Java and even in the archipelago. To discuss the Sultanate of Banten is also to discuss the process of early Islamization in Banten. The historical phases of Islamization in this region proved to be an acculturation process. Banten is known as a region that has a religious population.<sup>6</sup> The Islamization process in Banten, or in the archipelago in general, still evokes many speculations and disputations among scholars.<sup>7</sup> However, it is clear that the

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<sup>5</sup> BPS-Statistics of Banten Province, *Banten Province in Figures, 2016*.

<sup>6</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 153.

<sup>7</sup> In relating to the Islamization process in the Archipelago, I found at least two scholarly articles with different perspectives. They are: G.W.J. Drewes, "New Light on the Coming of Islam?," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 124 (1968): 433–459; Syed Farid Alatas, "Notes on

Islamization process did not occur in a single way. Trade and political alliances between merchants and the sultanate played an important role.<sup>8</sup> Some historical records state that Islam was disseminated through wars.<sup>9</sup>

Since its presence in the archipelago, Islam has laid a firm foundation for a process of communication and sociocultural interaction among the various communities in regions scattered over various islands. Islamization, which went hand in hand with the increasing network of Asian trade, connected the people in Nusantara and this did not only involve economic transactions and political diplomacy, but most importantly also the connection of Islam. This can be seen from the role of *ulama* in the Islamization process in which they contributed by Islamizing other territories; the political alliances that existed among the kingdoms with the conditional conversion of the king to Islam; and the teacher-student relationship that made Islamization reach a wider geographical area. At this point, Islam has emerged as a binding force for diverse groups of people reaching beyond primordial-local identities.

In this regard, the development of Indonesian Islam has engendered what Taufik Abdullah called a “collective memory network”.<sup>10</sup> The process of religious conversion has strengthened networks of inter-regional relations in the archipelago and has laid a solid foundation for Islam to function as a buffer force for the diverse communities that inhabit the region that later became Indonesia. At the same

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Various Theories Regarding the Islamization of the Malay Archipelago,” *The Muslim World* 75 (1985): 162–175.

<sup>8</sup> A. Johns, “Aspects of Sufi Thought in India and Indonesia in the First Half of the 17th Century,” *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28, no. 1 (1955): 70–77.

<sup>9</sup> C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Islam di Hindia Belanda*, ed. S. Gunawan (Jakarta: Bharata, 1973), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Taufik Abdullah, “Proses Islamisasi dan Pola Pertemuan Budaya,” in *Sejarah Islam Indonesia, Vol. 1: Akar Historis dan Awal Pembentukan*, ed. Taufik Abdullah (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2015), 84.

time, Islam in Indonesia also established its distinctive character, distinct from Islamic civilization in other regions of the world, such as Arabia, Turkey, Persia, Africa, the Indian subcontinent, China, Europe, and America. The distinction covers all aspects of spiritual, intellectual, and material and cultural life.<sup>11</sup>

### 1. Islamizing Banten: Organizing Political, Economic, and Spiritual Life

The establishment of Islamic realms, commonly called “sultanates”, is a significant period in the Islamization of the archipelago. During the Islamization stage, the formation of a sultanate marked the beginning of a more intensive integration of Islamic values in the social and political system, after which the sultanate became the basis for the implementation of Islamic teachings. At an earlier stage, the spreading of Islam was limited to small communities in the trade centers in the archipelago, but the establishment of the sultanates made Islam more extensive and a political and cultural force.

The devastation of the Malacca trading network increasingly involved the coastal areas of Java and jeopardized the extensive international trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Muslim traders, who became the leading social elite, contributed to transforming the trade centers in these areas into an Islamic empire. Muslims became the members of a new elite<sup>12</sup> and turned their economic accumulation into a political force. The principle of egalitarianism in Islam, unlike the caste system in Hinduism, ensured strong social solidarity among the traders and paved the way for their integration into local

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<sup>11</sup> Azyumardi Azra, “Pendahuluan,” in *Indonesia dalam Arus Sejarah Jilid III: Kedatangan dan Peradaban Islam*, ed. Taufik Abdullah (Jakarta: Ihtiar Baru dan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2012), 1–2.

<sup>12</sup> H.J. de Graaf and Theodore G.Th. Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-Kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram* (Jakarta: Grafiti Pers, 1985), 26–27.

communities.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, Muslim communities grew rapidly on the coast and political as well as economic power was created in their hands, while the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit kingdom in the interior of Java collapsed.

The Sultanate of Banten in West Java was one of the Islamic kingdoms at that time that played an important role. The establishment of the sultanate is intimately related to Sunan Gunung Jati (d. 1570 AD), a prominent preacher and one of the nine saints (*Wali Sanga*) in Java.<sup>14</sup> He started his career as a political advisor to Sultan Trenggana of the Sultanate of Demak. He is said to have been the main actor behind Demak's military expansion and the take-over of Banten from the Kingdom of Pajajaran. Not long after this takeover, around 1552, he moved to Cirebon to expand the political power of Islam on the north coast of Java. Here, he ruled Cirebon as his own Islamic realm and made it a center for the spread of Islam to various regions in West Java.<sup>15</sup>

Banten had long been known to the outside world and had relationships with overseas nations, among others China and India. Its cooperation with China involved commercial affairs, while that with India was about religious matters. A number of archeological objects have

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<sup>13</sup> Willem Frederik Wertheim, *Indonesian Society in Transition: A Study of Social Change* (The Hague: van Hoeve, 1959), 195–196.

<sup>14</sup> The *Wali Sanga* are important in Javanese culture as the *ulama* or saints who played a role in the Islamization process of Javanese society. The number of the nine saints is likely to be related to the Hindu-Javanese cosmological belief that nine is an important number referring to the nine places or the nine protecting deities that control the directions of the winds in the old cosmological system. See G.W.J. Drewes, "Indonesia: Mysticism and Activism," in *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, ed. G.E. von Grunbaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 297.

<sup>15</sup> Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *The Seen and the Unseen Worlds in Java 1726-1749: History, Literature and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II* (Sydney & Hawai'i: Allen & Unwin and University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 56–57; de Graaf and Pigeaud, *Kerajaan-Kerajaan Islam di Jawa: Peralihan dari Majapahit ke Mataram*, 138–150.



been discovered in the area, such as Chinese ceramics, statues, and inscriptions. It can be ascertained that even the Greeks were already familiar with Banten, which produced large quantities of silver.<sup>16</sup> As a trading center on the north coast of western Java, Banten was expected to emerge during the reign of the Kingdom of Sunda. In Ma Huan's book *Ying-Yai-Sheng-Lan* (General Record of Ocean Beaches) on the story of the journey of Cheng Ho published in 1416, he cited that Banten was called by the name *Shun-t'a* (Sunda). Similarly, in other Chinese sources compiled by Groeneveldt, one of the areas in the archipelago that the Chinese knew during the Ming Dynasty was *Sun-la*, which is considered the Chinese pronunciation of "Sunda".<sup>17</sup>

Another source is a note by Tome Pires (1512-1515) in which he called Banten "Bantam" and that it was one of the important harbours of the Sunda Kingdom, besides "Pomdam" (Pontang), "Cheguide" (Cigede), "Tamgaram" (Tangerang), "Calapa" (Sunda Kelapa) and "Chemano" (Cimanuk). As Tome Pires expressed in his *Suma Oriental*:

The kingdom of Sunda has its ports. The first is the port of Bantam. Junks anchor in this port. It is (a) trading (port). There is a good city on the river. The city has a captain, a very important person. This port trades with the Maldives islands and with the islands of Sumatra on the Panchur side. This port is almost the most important of all; a river empties there by the sea. It has a great deal of rice and foodstuffs and pepper.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Supratikno Rahardjo, *Kota Banten Lama: Mengelola Warisan untuk Masa Depan* (Jakarta: Wedatama Widya Sastra, 2011), 31–32.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>18</sup> Tome Pires and Francisco Rodrigues, *The Summa Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515, and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues, Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack, and Maps, Written and Drawn I* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1944), 170.

Some historical sources on the Islamization in Banten can be found in two native chronicles and in foreign documents. The *Babad Tanah Jawi*, *Sajarah Banten*, *Carita Parahyangan*, *Pustaka Rajyarajya i Bhumi Nusantara* and *Babad Cirebon* are native chronicles that provide valuable information about the coming of Islam and the Islamization process in Java, although Snouck Hurgronje once said that nothing that these works tell of the Islamization in Java is reliable. In his view, the works are “childish and without chronology.” Snouck Hurgronje's distrust of the accounts of the Islamization of Java as told by the Javanese themselves was based on a misunderstanding of the circumstances of the authors of these chronicles, of whom Hoesein Djajadiningrat, Snouck Hurgronje's pupil, remarked that they lacked knowledge of their own early history.<sup>19</sup>

However, Berg, in his theory of the Islamization in Java, offers an interesting picture. He acknowledges the theory that Islam came to Java via trade relations between Java and Malacca. Basing himself on van Leur's theory, he rejects the notion that Muslim traders played a key social role in introducing Islam to the Javanese population. He also rejects the notion that the Javanese population embraced Islam merely to become part of the economic elite.<sup>20</sup> As van Leur pointed out, the traders involved in the international commercial relations of Southeast Asia before 1800 were not people who were specifically intend to spread new civilizations in Java.<sup>21</sup>

In addition, Vlekke proposed the same argument. He said that we must reject the idea that the new religion was

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<sup>19</sup> Cornelis C. Berg, “The Islamization of Java,” *Studia Islamica* 4 (1955): 116.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>21</sup> Jacob C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society* (The Hague: W. van Hoeve Publishers Ltd., 1967), 113–114.

brought to Southeast Asia through missionary activities. The word “*da’wa*” alone, for Vlekke, is misleading. The reason is that until the last decade of the sultanates, the teachings of the Prophet had never been disseminated through Islamizing the people in an organized manner. Its followers did not establish a religious organization and did not recognize a particular priestly class. Religion and state were one. The expansion of Islamic rule over non-Muslims often lead them to turn Muslim, and the presence of Muslims in influential positions in non-Muslim environments would likely have encouraged some of their servants and neighbors to follow them. In some religious traditions, conversion was caused by belief, but in other cases, it was caused by other hidden and non-religious motives.<sup>22</sup> Although to some extent aware of the distinctions between Hinduism and Islam, Berg accepted the application of this theory to the situation of both faiths in Java.

In the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century, Banten was not only a trading port but had also grown as a power center (kingdom). The founding of the Sultanate of Banten rested on two main elements: political and economic power. The political power that pioneered the legacy of the Sultanate of Banten consisted of three main forces: Demak, Cirebon, and Banten itself with Sunan Gunung Jati, Fatahillah, and Maulana Hasanuddin as pioneers. It started with the spread of Islam, then came the formation of Muslim community groups, military control over the region (1526), and finally political control over the region until the establishment of a sovereign government under the name of the Sultanate of Banten. The second power that enabled the establishment of the Sultanate of Banten were the Muslim traders, both local merchants, and traders from other regions. In fact, it was supported by the existence of Muslim communities

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<sup>22</sup> Bernard H.M. Vlekke, *Nusantara: Sejarah Indonesia*, ed. Samsudin Berlian (Jakarta: KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia), 2008), 92–93.

that had settled on the north coast of Banten since the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

At the time of Sunan Gunung Jati (1525-1552), Banten was a vassal of the Sultanate of Demak. The first succession to power in Banten occurred around 1552. It was preceded by the assassination of Sultan Trenggana (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sultan of Demak) during Demak's attack on Panarukan in 1546. This event caused a weakening of Demak's control over Banten. Another event that led to the succession in Banten was the death of Prince Pasarean in 1552. He was the son of Sunan Gunung Jati and to be his successor to the throne of Cirebon. At the same time, when Sunan Gunung Jati returned to Cirebon, he appointed Hasanuddin—his son from his marriage to Nyai Kawunganten, the daughter of the King of Pajajaran—to hold the Sultanate of Banten. Although Sunan Gunung Jati can be considered as the founder of the Sultanate of Banten, it was Prince Hasanuddin who was the first to liberate Banten from Demak and who formulated the power and the sovereignty of the Banten royal dynasty.

While creating the Sultanate of Banten, Hasanuddin emphasized spiritual and material endeavors. The spiritual endeavor was pursued by the spread of Islam from 1515 to 1552, while the material endeavor was carried out by maintaining and developing existing commercial and agricultural activities and upholding Banten's position and role as a port city. It was possible because Banten had become a port where merchants gathered to stop-over and trade along the traditional Asian trade routes.

## **2. Four Key Strategies for Establishing an Islamic Kingdom**

The most obvious question regarding the process of Islamization in Banten would likely be: Why did the Bantenese so easily accept Islam? The answer consists of four reasons. *First*, Islam benefited from Southeast Asia's

weakened economic-geo-political conditions as a consequence of the decline of Southeast Asian international trade which began with the fall of Malacca at the hands of the Portuguese.<sup>23</sup> The fall of Malacca and the unhealthy international trade competition in Malacca invited many reactions from traders who moved to a new trading center.<sup>24</sup> Because of this, Chinese traders felt that they were greatly disadvantaged because the Portuguese subsequently sailed to the Moluccas to buy spices on their own. This condition ruined the distribution lines and the competition caused spice prices to soar.<sup>25</sup>

Conversely, Sharif Hidayatullah and his son, Hasanuddin, saw this as an opportunity to turn Banten into an international trading center considering its strategic location in Selat Sunda. Given that Malacca had been conquered by the Portuguese in 1511, trading activities moved to Aceh, Banten, Cirebon, and Demak. Their trading vessels did not want to pass by Malacca because the Portuguese levied high taxes, especially on Muslim traders and they monopolized trade. In addition, the

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<sup>23</sup> J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society* (Den Haag: Van Hoes, 1955), 113–114.

<sup>24</sup> Although they managed to conquer Malacca, this did not mean that the Portuguese managed to control all of the Asian trade routes. In addition to the above-mentioned factors, internal Portuguese factors for this were the Portuguese's ineffective management systems and miss-management in other ways. In the western archipelago two kingdoms developed because of the fall of Malacca, namely the kingdoms of Aceh and Johor. Both appear not only to have been inhibiting forces against the Portuguese trade and its intended monopoly on the Asian route. They joined the conflict on the Malacca trade line and while the kingdoms of Aceh and Johor competed against each other, they defeated the Portuguese. Therefore, although Malacca's dominance and the organization of Asian trade had been seriously disrupted, the Portuguese lacked strong influence in the western archipelago. Malacca became alienated from the Asian trade line that continued to run through many other areas of the archipelago. See Jajat Burhanudin, *Islam dalam Arus Sejarah Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2017), 62; Ricklefs, *The Seen and the Unseen Worlds in Java 1726-1749: History, Literature and Islam in the Court of Pakubuwana II*, 34.

<sup>25</sup> Vlekke, *Nusantara: Sejarah Indonesia*, 92–93.

establishment of the Sultanate of Banten was also influenced by the political conditions in Java, mainly due to the declining conditions in the Kingdom of Pajajaran and the strengthening of the newly established Islamic Kingdom of Demak substituting the Kingdom of Majapahit.

The meeting point between the kingdoms of Pajajaran and Demak has a wedge on the concerns of both sides, whereas Pajajaran cooperated with the Portuguese in Malacca to stem an invasion that might come from Demak. Pajajaran's apprehension was real and also driven by the Demak's concern over the potential political, economic and religious threat posed by the Portuguese. In fact, Pajajaran's concern was preceded by the rapidly growing political and economic Muslim power in Java causing Pajajaran to have two main political options: restriction of Muslim traders in the port under its authority and cooperation with the Portuguese in Malacca to prevent an attack by Demak.

According to João de Barros's note, in response to the offer of King Samiam (*Sangiang?*), the King of Sunda (Pajajaran?), Jorge de Albuquerque, the captain of Malacca, sent a delegation led by Henrique Leme to finalize an agreement in 1522. The King of Sunda welcomed de Albuquerque very well. To obtain military support against the Muslim army and to strengthen trade relations, the Portuguese were given the right to build a fortress and were guaranteed that they could load as much pepper as they liked. In addition, the king promised to annually offer 1000 sacks of pepper to the king of Portugal starting the day the fort was built. The agreement was made in writing. At the king's order, his people escorted Leme to the location where the fort was to be built on the right bank of the river in the area called *Calapa* (Sunda

Kelapa).<sup>26</sup> The Portuguese then set up a *padrão*.<sup>27</sup> Jorge de Albuquerque considered this very important and wrote to the king of Portugal to seek his approval. João III approved it and entrusted its execution to Francisco de Sa.

A few years after signing the agreement, Francisco de Sa arrived at “the port of Sunda” to follow up the agreement but the territory had been conquered by Fadhilah Khan or Fatahilah, the envoy from Demak, while Banten was already occupied by Hasanuddin, Demak’s vassal. Fatahilah and Hasanuddin’s position was strong enough to enable them to dispel the Portuguese and to prevent them from building the fort. The Portuguese deliberated for a while and after deciding neither to continue building the fortress nor waging war they disappointedly returned to Malacca.<sup>28</sup> With the establishment of the Sultanate of Banten, the process of Islamization increased in a systematic manner. The notion “society follows its king’s religion” proved to be very true in Java and seems to have been seriously acknowledged by Maulana Hasanuddin in the systematic way the region was further Islamized.

*Second*, the establishment of the Sultanate of Banten was not the starting point of the Islamization of Banten as, in fact, a Muslim community, although small, had been in existence there. Banten, with its international trade route, supposedly had overseas connections since the beginning

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<sup>26</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 79–87; Halwany Michrob and A. Mudjahid Chudari, *Catatan Masalalu Banten*, 3rd ed. (Serang: Penerbit Saudara, 1993), 54–56; Claude Guillot, *Banten: Sejarah dan Peradaban Abad X-XVII* (Jakarta: KPG bekerjasama dengan École française d’Extrême-Orient, Forum Jakarta-Paris dan Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Arkeologi Nasional, 2008), 31–55.

<sup>27</sup> *Padrão* is a kind of memorial. See HAMKA, *Sejarah Ummat Islam, Jilid III Dan IV* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1976), 176.

<sup>28</sup> Guillot, *Banten: Sejarah dan Peradaban Abad X-XVII*, 33.

of the century.<sup>29</sup> It was possible that in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Banten had already become a port that was visited by foreign merchants. When Arab traders brought Islam to the east, Banten had become the target of Islamic preaching. According to Tome Pires's note, in 1513 Muslims had been found in Cimanuk. At least at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Islam had begun to be introduced in the port belonging to the Sunda dynasty. In addition, when Ali Rachmatullah, later known as Sunan Ampel, first arrived in Banten, he found a Muslim community there while the ruler at the time was Hindu.<sup>30</sup> The *Carita Parahyangan* reports that before the establishment of the Sultanate of Banten, some members of the Banten-Pajajaran elite had already converted to Islam. This helped Sharif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Jati and his son, Hasanuddin, in their spreading of Islam before they finally established political and economic power in the form of the Sultanate.<sup>31</sup>

The manuscript of the *Carita Purwaka Caruban Nagari* tells the story of Sharif Hidayatullah or Sunan Gunung Jati and his 98 students who attempted to Islamize the Bantenese. Slowly but surely, the Bantenese people accepted Islam. Even the Regent of Banten converted to Islam due to his interest in Sharif Hidayatullah's great personality, superior knowledge, and intense morality. Moreover, he asked Sharif Hidayatullah to marry his sister, Nyai Kawunganten from which he begot two children: Ratu Winahon (in other sources called Wulung Ayu) and Hasanuddin.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, *Babad Banten* tells that Sunan Gunung Jati and his son, Hasanuddin (Pangeran Sabakingkin), continued to Islamize the people in Banten.

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<sup>29</sup> Nina Herlina Lubis, *Banten dalam Pergumulan Sejarah: Sultan, Ulama dan Jawara* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2003), 26.

<sup>30</sup> Michrob and Chudari, *Catatan Masalahu Banten*, 50–51.

<sup>31</sup> Yoseph Iskandar, *Sejarah Banten* (Jakarta: Tryana Sjam'un Corp., 2001), 145–157.

<sup>32</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 161.



They went to Banten's southern region, to Mount Pulosari, where 800 Hindu's *rsi* converted to Islam. On the hillside of Mount Pulosari, Sunan Gunung Jati instructed his son, Hasanuddin, in various realms of Islamic knowledge. After completing his teaching, Sunan Gunung Jati asked Hasanuddin to wander off while spreading Islam to the people.<sup>33</sup>

*Third*, the Islamization process and the power struggle by Sunan Gunung Jati and Hasanuddin were made easy because of the influence of their strong kinship ties. It is commonly known that kinship ties play a very strategic role and foster the political legitimacy of royal lineages and the elite in the archipelago, even today. It can almost be ascertained that kings in the archipelago invariably associated themselves with previous kings of their lineages, though the latter have different political and religious tendencies.

An interesting point that needs to be made here is that Muslim kings in the archipelago not only linked themselves to previous local kings, but also to the lineage that leads to the person who has the highest authority in Islam, namely the Prophet Muhammad. *Sajarah Banten* and *Carita Parahyangan*, in this case, mention that Sunan Gunung Jati was the grandson of the King of Pajajaran, Shri Baduga Maharaja or Prabu Siliwangi from his mother's side and a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad from his father's side.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the use of marriages,

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 34; Lubis, *Banten dalam Pergumulan Sejarah: Sultan, Ulama dan Jawara*, 26–27.

<sup>34</sup> *Carita Parahyangan* mentions that the king of Pajajaran, Shri Baduga Maharaja or Prabu Siliwangi (r. 1482-1521), had a second wife named Nyai Subanglarang or Nyai Subangkarancang. From this second wife, Siliwangi had two children named Pangeran Walangsungsang or Pangeran Cakradana and Nyai Larasantang or Saripah Muda'im (while from his first wife, Ambetkasih, Prabu Siliwangi had no children). It is narrated further that Nyai Subanglarang was a Muslim who had studied Islam with Sheikh Hasanuddin in Pesantren Quro Pura Dalem (Karawang), which is believed to have been the oldest *pesantren* in West Java. The two sons of Prabu

kinship ties, and pedigrees was the most efficient strategy of the Islamization in the archipelago.<sup>35</sup> Hence, it can be understood, both politically and psychologically, that the people would not see Muslim preachers as strangers. In this sense, the community adopted a very different attitude regarding the transition of power to Muslims than the transition of power to Europeans who came later.

Sharif Hidayatullah was the creator of the Sultanate of Banten and he was later succeeded by his son, Maulana Hasanuddin, as the first Sultan. Both derived their legitimacy from being part of the lineage of the ruler of Pajajaran and it was this legitimacy that paved the way for the massive penetration of Islam in Banten. Some contemporary Bantenese regarded the arrival of Sharif Hidayatullah as “the return of the lost child” so that he was welcomed and openly accepted by the ruler of Banten,

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Siliwangi from Nyai Subanglarang followed their mother’s religion and were Muslims. Not long after their mother died, Pangeran Walangsungang and Nyai Larasantang asked permission from their father to continue studying Islamic knowledge under the tutelage of Sheikh Datuk Kahfi or Sheikh Nurjati in Pesantren Quro Amparan Jati Cirebon under the care of their grandfather from their mother’s side, Ki Gedeng Tapa, the ruler of Cirebon. Later, Pangeran Walangsungang became the ruler of Cirebon as the favorite of his father, the King of Pajajaran, and Nyai Larasantang was married to Sharif Abdullah, a member of the Egyptian elite with a lineage up to the Prophet Muhammad. From her marriage to Syarif Abdullah, Nyai Larasantang had a son named Sharif Hidayatullah or Nurullah or Sunan Gunung Jati. See Atja Ekadjati, *Carita Parahiyangan* (Bandung: Yayasan Pembangunan Jawa Barat, 1989), 165; Iskandar, *Sejarah Banten*, 117–126; Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 114–115.

<sup>35</sup> In fact, not only Sharif Hidayatullah linked his legitimacy with elite kinship, Ali Rakhmatullah or Sunan Ampel Denta did so as well. He was the son of Sheikh Ibrahim Akbar who had a lineage up to the Prophet. He married Dewi Candrawulan, the daughter of the King of Campa. Therefore, Ali Rachmatullah was easily accepted in Majapahit and was given *perdikan* land in Ampel due to the kindness of his mother's sister, Dewi Darawati, the wife of the King of Majapahit, Prabu Kertabumi or Prabu Brawijaya V. Afterwards, Sunan Ampel’s legitimacy was strengthened by marrying Nyai Ageng Manila, the daughter of Arya Teja, the Regent of Tuban. See Iskandar, *Sejarah Banten*, 130–135.

Adipati Arya Surasowan, who had previously allowed Tubagus Ali Rahmatullah (the title of Tubagus indicates that Sunan Ampel had a place in the hearts of the Bantenese) to proselytize Islam.<sup>36</sup> Djajadiningrat said that to strengthen this, as stated in two manuscripts from Banten—*Sajarah Banten Rante Rante* and a work by Tubagus Muhammad Kanari—that Nyai Babadan, one of Sunan Gunung Jati's wives, came from Majapahit while another was a princess from Pajajaran who became Hasanuddin's mother. Therefore, according to Djajadiningrat "in this sense, Hasanuddin was actually the heir of, and had the right to succeed to the throne of Pajajaran."<sup>37</sup>

*Fourth*, the Islamic teaching of egalitarianism which opposes the Hindu caste system was one of the reasons the Bantenese were interested in converting to Islam. Another reason why the process of converting to Islam seems to have been easy was, as Coedes pointed out, the impact of the system of Hindu aristocracy that existed in the Archipelago at the time. Historically, the caste system in the archipelago was heavily influenced by Hinduism from India. The caste system finally "disappeared into the lower layers of the Javanese consciousness."<sup>38</sup> The Hindu doctrine of social stratification believes that Hindus can never escape the caste they are born in. Islam came with its teachings of human equality, which teaches that babies are born free and do not belong to any social strata. Social stratum, rather, is determined by individual deeds, efforts and believes—it also is believed that the best man before

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<sup>36</sup> Atja Ekadjati and Edi S. Ekadjati, *Pustaka Rajyarajya i Bhumi Nusantara 1.1* (Bandung: Proyek Penelitian dan Pengkajian Kebudayaan Sunda (Sundanologi), 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 91.

<sup>38</sup> Robert R. Jay, *Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java* (Yale University: Southeast Asia Studies, 1963), 5.

his Lord, is he who is the most pious.<sup>39</sup> The doctrine of egalitarianism had become a liberating force for a hierarchically structured oppressed society.<sup>40</sup>

Particularly as a coastal area, in Banten, the principle of egalitarianism gained momentum and made Islam easily accepted by people. This acceptance was also related to the political and economic conditions at that time, when the power and authority of the Kingdom of Pajajaran were weakening and a new elite grew stronger due to the consolidation of international trade. For the lower classes, in the sense of the hierarchical structure of Hindu society at the time, becoming a Muslim meant elevated status and social position, increased human dignity, enhanced self-esteem, and a new identity. This principle, as noted by van Nieuwenhuijze, was the driving factor behind the acceleration of the Islamization of urban communities and people living along the northern coast of Java who resented the Hindu caste system that degraded them.<sup>41</sup>

## **B. The Sultanate and the Role of the *Tarekat***

In the archipelago, the name “sultanate” refers to a Muslim kingdom ruled by a sultan. In Java, the term “*ratu*” refers to a king and his palace is called “*keraton*” or “the residence of a *ratu*”. *Keraton Surosowan* refers to the early Banten Islamic empire that lasted from Maulana Hasanuddin to Maulana Muhammad. Banten started to be identified as a “sultanate” since Sultan Abu al-Mafakhir. He was the fourth king of Banten and the first to receive the title of “sultan” from the *Sharif* of Mecca who thus legitimized the ruler’s Islamic identity.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Q.S. al-Hujurat [49]: 13

<sup>40</sup> Burhanudin, *Islam dalam Arus Sejarah Indonesia*, 46.

<sup>41</sup> Christoffel A.O. van Nieuwenhuijze, *Aspects of Islam in Post-Colonial Indonesia: Five Essays* (The Hague: van Hoeve, 1958), 36.

<sup>42</sup> Michrob and Chudari, *Catatan Masalalu Banten*, 125.

Obtaining the title of “sultan” from the ruler of Mecca cannot be seen separated from Banten’s international connections with other regions. One of the Sultanate of Banten’s instruments to strengthen its power and trade connections was “Islam”. Moreover, Islam is not just a religion, it is an ideology that unifies its adherents from all regions of the world and was particularly strong between *tarekat* followers and in teacher-student relationships. Sunan Gunung Jati was a scholar who has studied in the Haramayn, Yemen, and in other Muslim countries before he went to Banten. He took advantage of his relationships when he studied in these places to build an extensive system of cooperation. Like in the Sultanate of Aceh where international connections had been built since Hamzah Fansuri, al-Raniri and al-Sinkili who utilized teacher-student relations and *tarekat* connections as catalysts for international religious, political, and commercial cooperation.

Among these relationships, the connections of *tarekat* followers seems to have been particularly strong. A *tarekat* is considered capable of providing intimate horizontal and vertical communion. Horizontal communion means that the *tarekat* was able to entertain cooperative relations with *tarekat* in other countries where rulers paid close attention to them to bind *tarekat* followers to the seat of power. While vertical communion means that being member of a *tarekat* was an effort to foster a direct connection with the sultan—who was also a member of the *tarekat*—and subsequently to God. This vertical relationship also involved the sultan’s “special” legitimacy making him God’s representative on earth, especially in the territories under his control.

### 1. The Sultans as *Tarekat* Members

Regardless of whether true or not, the name “Banten” is usually associated with Islamic militancy<sup>43</sup> and magic<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Van Bruinessen, “Shari’a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate,” 166.

and this is indeed no exaggeration when we trace the history of the development of Islam in this area. At least, it cannot be separated from the role of three institutions that influenced each other, i.e. *Sultanate-tarekat-pesantren* each with their respective main figures. Through their *tarekat* networks, Sufis were very influential figures in the Islamization process in the archipelago, including Banten.<sup>45</sup> A *tarekat* was—and is—a Muslim community that has the ability to adapt smoothly to other communities and cultures which made it a very effective instrument for spreading Islam in the archipelago.<sup>46</sup>

Through a *tarekat*, the people of the archipelago accepted Islam easily and gradually without losing their previous identity in its entirety. Islam through the *tarekat* was—and is—adding new moral values to their own identity and culture. It is a fact that in most areas in Indonesia, as well as other countries in Africa and Central Asia, Sufis were central figures in the Islamization process and they taught people the fundamental Islamic values of love, modesty, and belief in God without resorting to complicated ways of discourse nor through very strict laws.<sup>47</sup> In addition, in the Islamization process, they did

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<sup>44</sup> M.A. Tihami, “*Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Studi tentang Agama, Magi, dan Kepemimpinan di Desa Pasanggrahan Serang, Banten*” (Program Pascasarjana Universitas Indonesia, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> A.H. Johns, “Sufism as a Category in Indonesian Literature and History,” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 2, no. 2 (1961): 23; Martin van Bruinessen, “The Origins and Development of Sūfī Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia,” *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* I, no. 1 (April-June) (1994): 4.

<sup>46</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, second ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 150–166; Anthony H. Johns, “Sufism in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations” 26, no. 1 (1995): 169–183; Julia Day Howell, “Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (August) (2016): 702–703.

<sup>47</sup> Theodore W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Co., 1896).

their *da'wa* by using local culture and the language of the people, rather than Arabic, to be more easily accepted.<sup>48</sup>

The meeting point between the *tarekat* and the Bantenese was at the roots of the Islamization process. It can even be said that almost all the kings and sultans of Banten were *tarekat* members and its representatives (*khalifā*). *Sajarah Banten*, for instance, noted that the first Banten Islamic ruler, Hasanuddin, was a member of the *tarekat*. He had taken the oath (*bai'at*) of the Tarekat Naqshabandiyya with his father, Sunan Gunung Jati, in Mecca before establishing his political power in Banten<sup>49</sup> and this indicates Hasanuddin's special concern for spirituality and the organizational system as his provision to be the king. It should be noted that Sunan Gunung Jati himself, who was also a student of Hamzah Fansuri while studying in Mecca,<sup>50</sup> was said to have been a *murshid* of some *tarekat*, such as the Naqshabandiyya, Shattariyya, and Shadhiliyya Orders.<sup>51</sup> The tradition of the ruler of

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<sup>48</sup> Johns, "Aspects of Sufi Thought in India and Indonesia in the First Half of the 17th Century," 70–77.

<sup>49</sup> Hasanuddin visited some areas in Banten for several years to preach before he became the ruler of the Banten Islamic Kingdom. He also visited some sacred sites such as Gunung Pulosari, Gunung Karang, Gunung Lor and Panaitan Island in the South. I consider Hasanuddin visited these sacred sites in Banten in an attempt to look for a spiritual and cultural connection. In fact, it played an important role in his personal and spiritual introduction into the heart of Banten civilization because of which Islamization and the substitution of power could proceed smoothly and friendly. This strategy, ultimately, paved the way for Hasanuddin to convert 800 Hindu-*Rsi* (priests) at Gunung Pulosari which at that time had become a spiritual center in Banten and he managed to bring a *watu gigilang*—a large and flat stone as a symbol of his spiritual and political power—on which Bthra Guru Jampang himself had sat to perform his ascetic ways. See Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 34–36; Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>51</sup> Gabriel Facal, "Religious Specificities in the Early Sultanate of Banten (Western Java, Indonesia)," *Indo-Islamika* 4, no. 1 (2014): 95.

Banten's initiation in a *tarekat* continued with his next successors.

*Sajarah Banten* notes that Sultan 'Abd al-Qadir (r. 1626-1651) sent a mission to Mecca in the 1630s to obtain the title "Sultan" from the Meccan ruler. It seems that he was inspired more by political than religious interests even though the delegation's mission was concerned with religious issues. After having stopped at the Maldives, Coromandel, Surat, and Mocha, the king's delegation went to Jeddah where it visited Sharif Zayd (r. 1631-1666) to ask for elucidation of three treatises on religious issue.<sup>52</sup> These three treatises have been identified as Sufi texts on eschatology issues. One is a compilation of Hamzah Fansuri's works and another possibly al-Raniri's refutation of Hamzah Fansuri's thoughts. The latest scholarship has proposed the possibility that the religious polemic between Kamal al-Din and al-Raniri in Aceh might have triggered the Sultan of Banten's mission to Mecca.

However, the *Sajarah Banten* points out that the religious polemic in Aceh was also a concern in West Java. The Bantenese kept in touch with al-Raniri after he had returned to Gujarat. The Banten delegation originally planned to continue its mission to Constantinople, but it was canceled because its leader died on the way. Sharif Zayd (the Meccan ruler and representative of the Ottoman Empire) rewarded the delegation with a Footstool stone of the Prophet Muhammad, a cover of the Ka'ba, and a slab of a flag supposedly having belonged to the Prophet Ibrahim. However, the mission did not succeed because Sharif Zayd did not send an *ulama* to join them as requested. Sheikh Ibn 'Allan (d. 1647), a recommended *ulama*, was also not

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<sup>52</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*.



ready to leave Mecca.<sup>53</sup> Even so, the delegation returned to Banten with satisfaction and was greeted happily in 1638.

The *Sajarah Banten* implies that the Meccan ruler gave the Sultan of Banten the right to bestow the title of “Sultan” on the rulers of Mataram and Makassar but these rulers preferred to send their own envoys to Mecca, an act that seemed to be prevalent in the seventeenth century. The Meccans apparently were well aware of the potential donations to be had from monarchies in the archipelago, because in 1683 they sent envoys to the Sultane of the Sultanate of Aceh, Queen Zakiyyat al-Din (r. 1678-1688).<sup>54</sup> In addition, Banten entertained a good relationship with the Haramayn (Mecca and Medina) and the Sultan of Banten with the important central regions for Islamic studies in Java and even in the archipelago that were visited by many people who wanted to learn, as well as by Sufis.<sup>55</sup>

## 2. *Tarekat*, Politics, and Knowledge

During the reign of the next Sultan, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (r. 1651-1682), the Sultanate of Banten was in its heydays. At that time, Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari was in Banten and he was very influential, especially in politics and religion. Van Bruinessen called him one of the two Great Scholars in Banten, the other being Sheikh Abdullah b. 'Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani. Both were the most influential and prominent *ulama* in the Sultanate of Banten in their respective eras.<sup>56</sup> Yusuf al-Makassari was a highly respected *ulama* and was the *murshid* of five *tarekat*, i.e.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*; van Bruinessen, “Shari’a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate,” 167–168.

<sup>54</sup> Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*, 19.

<sup>55</sup> Azra, *The Origin of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 95.

<sup>56</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 267–270.

the Khalwatiyya, Naqshabandiyya, Shattariyya, Qadiriyya, and Ba'alwiyya Orders.<sup>57</sup> Upon his arrival in Banten, after intellectual sojourns in Mecca, Medina, and Damascus, Sheikh Yusuf became a very influential and powerful person in the region, and even became the Sultan's son-in-law as well as his closest confidant.

Sheikh Yusuf was highly respected by the Bantenese not only because of his mastery of religious knowledge and politics but he was also considered to possess supernatural powers (as written in a Dutch colonial report). He also obtained the loyalty of a large number of Buginese and Makassarese immigrants who were generally devoted to the Sultanate of Banten as soldiers and sailors. In education, Sheikh Yusuf had a major role in raising the name of Banten as a center of Islamic education which attracted students from all over the archipelago.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Sheikh Yusuf's important role in spreading Islam through *tarekat* and his anti-colonial political stance proved that mystical piety did not hinder political militancy.

In the next period, the relationship between the Sultanate of Banten and the *tarekat* tradition remained as it was. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the *tarekat* tradition acquired a very clear form during the reign of Sultan 'Arif Zayn al-'Ashiqin (r. 1753-1777). During his reign, the Sultan was noted to have obtained the *ijaza* from several *tarekat* and that he even was a *khalifa*<sup>59</sup> of the Qadiriyya, 'Alwaniyya, Naqshabandiyya, and Rifa'iyya Orders. As can be seen from the epithets attached to his name, al-Khalifa al-Sultan ibn al-Sultan Abu al-Nasr Muhammad 'Arifin al-'Ashiqin al-Qadiri al-'Alwani al-

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 168; van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 40–45.

<sup>58</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 34–35.

<sup>59</sup> In the Sufi tradition, the *khalifah* is appointed by a sheikh to propagate the *ratifa*'s teachings, thereby continuing the lineage of the order

Rifa'i al-Bantani al-Shafi'i.<sup>60</sup> The reason he wanted to be the *khalīfa* of the Qadiriyya and the Rifa'iyya Orders was because of his association with the *keramat* of Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani and Sheikh Ahmad al-Rifa'i who were recognized by traditional Islam.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, Sultan Abu Nasr Muhammad 'Arif Shifa' Zayn al-'Ashiqin was much involved with Islamic knowledge by writing and copying Islamic texts.<sup>62</sup> In L.W.C. van den Berg and R. Friederich's catalog, this Sultan's name is often mentioned: it is listed on pages 18, 24, 42, 77, 99, 105, and 123.<sup>63</sup> These pages indicate that he was the Sultan of Banten who loved and was obsessed with knowledge. The Sultan often asked someone to copy an Arabic text for him or to write a book or a treatise and to translate it into the local language.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that Millie said: "For a relatively short time, Banten was an entry point through which the influence of the ancient centers of the Islamic world arrived in Java".<sup>65</sup>

It can be said that the *tarekat* is the final stage of the development of Sufism. In the thirteenth century, when

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<sup>60</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 23.

<sup>61</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, 249; van Bruinessen, "Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia."

<sup>62</sup> Muhammad, *Banten: Penunjuk Jalan dan Keterangan Bekas Kerajaan Kesultanan Banten*, 27.

<sup>63</sup> L.W.C. van den Berg and R. Friederich, *Codicum Arabicorum in Bibliotheca Societatis Artium et Scientiarum Quae Bataviae Floret Asservatorum Catalogum* (Bataviae: Hage Comitatus, 1873), 18, 24, 42, 77, 99, 105, 123.

<sup>64</sup> For example, when the Sultan wanted to deepen his knowledge about the Sufi *wujudiyah*, which was a trend and a controversial topic at the time, he asked Sheikh 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantanī to write a treatise on the subject. 'Abd Allah granted his wish by writing two treatises, *Mashāhid al-Nāsik fī Maqāmāt al-Sālik* and *Faṭḥ al-Mulūk li Yaṣīla ilā Mālik al-Mulki 'alā Qā'idat Ahl al-Sulūk*. See Kurniawan, "Konsep Tajalli 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani dan Posisinya dalam Diskursus Wujudiyah di Nusantara," 277–278.

<sup>65</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 24.

Indonesians began to convert to Islam, *tarekat* was at the height of their popularity. The word *tarekat* (literally “path”) refers to spiritual exercises, such as meditation (*murāqaba*), remembrance (*dhikr*), and litanies (*awrād*), linked to a series of Sufi masters and organizations growing up around a distinctive Sufi method. Thus, it can be said that a *tarekat* is a systematic spiritual Sufi method. Teachers of the same *tarekat* teach the same spiritual method and exercises. *Tarekat* follower make progress by obtaining a series of *ijaza* (license) when they have reached a specific level recognized by all the followers of the same *tarekat* and, in increasing levels, from ordinary followers (*mansūb*) to disciples (*murīd*), assistants of the sheikh or *khalīfa*, and finally—in some cases—independent teachers (*murshid*).

Actually, *tarekat* do not only have a spiritual function. Each *tarekat* is like an extended family or a brotherhood (in some *tarekat*, all members indeed call each other *ikhwān*, ‘brother’). Some scholars noted that in some cases in the past, *tarekat* had political power. There were many charismatic *tarekat* sheikhs who played important roles in politics because they had many followers and substantial social influence. The government might see these sheikhs as threats or, conversely, as useful allies, but in any case, it is almost impossible to ignore their role.

Many scholars embrace the theory that the palace is a symbol of political, military, economic, and even cultural and spiritual power. The fact that many kings in the past claimed to be both political and religious authorities is solid evidence and hard to deny. This explicitly affirms the function of the palace as a center of semi-absolute power spanning almost the entire life of its people. Therefore, in the sense of tradition and culture, the palace became the ideal model for how certain cultural expressions and traditions should be performed. The closer the tradition is

to the palace, the more authentic and sacred it becomes, and vice versa.

The diverse Islamization processes in different regions and cultures in the archipelago has given rise to various styles of religious expression, as can be seen in the formulation of political thinking, and the intellectual, institutional, and also Islamic tradition. At the political level, these expressions are in line with the process of acceptance of Islam as the kingdom's formal religion and ideology. In this case, to make politics meaningful, the formulation of authoritative concepts was adopted from the Islamic empire.<sup>66</sup> Subsequently, it became the main agenda of the kingdom that was faced with a changing society whose people had turned into Muslims.

The history of Islam in pre-colonial Indonesia shows evidence of a structural relationship between Islam and politics, which made Islam an important element in the kingdom. Under such conditions, Islamic institutions became part of the royal political structure, next to the *ulama* who played a role in settling religious, political and social issues all at the same time. Their role made the kingdom or sultanate a center of Islamic knowledge and Islamic translation, which in turn produced what they called "the original dimensions of Islamic Indonesia."<sup>67</sup>

### 3. *Tarekat* and Mobilizing Movements

Many scholars describe Banten as the region with the most religious population and the area most resistant to colonialism. The nineteenth century saw no less than 80 uprisings against the Dutch colonizers in this region

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<sup>66</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, 218.

<sup>67</sup> M.B. Hooker, *Islamic Law in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1984), 3.

alone.<sup>68</sup> These uprisings were almost invariably driven by *ulama* who also belonged to a *tarekat*. In this case, the *tarekat* had a very important role in organizing the masses and it was a force the colonial administrators had to reckon with.

The most phenomenal rebellion in which the *tarekat* was the main igniter was perhaps the uprising led by Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari. During the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, the Sultanate of Banten confronted the colonial government. At the time, Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari's role in inflaming the spirit of *jihad* of his followers in the Sultanate of Banten in leading the *jihad* against the colonial government was enormous.<sup>69</sup> Van Bruinessen also said that Yusuf al-Makassari taught his followers and the military of the Sultanate of Banten invulnerability skills through the teachings and the spiritual exercises of the *tarekat*.<sup>70</sup> I assume that with his skills in Islamic sciences and his involvement with the *tarekat*, Yusuf al-Makassari influenced not only the interconnectivity between Banten and the *tarekat* but also the Banten Sultanate and the popularity of Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani who was believed to be the greatest saint of all who was explicitly most referred to for his invulnerability skills. In fact, in order to convert as many Bantenese Hindus and Buddhists as possible to the Muslim cause to support the war against the infidel Dutch, the Sultan tolerated the practice of local traditions and by doing so created syncretism in Banten. This might have created even more powerful invulnerability skills to be used against the Banten Sultanate's enemies because of the amalgamation of the *tarekat*'s *dhikr* and *awrād* (regular

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<sup>68</sup> Mufti Ali, *Peran Tokoh Tarekat dalam Pemberontakan Muslim Banten 1926: Studi Kasus K.H. Abdul Hamid Ilyas Muhammad Muqri al-Quty Labuan (1860-1959)* (Serang: IAIN SMH Banten, 2007), 1.

<sup>69</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 35; Hamid, *Shaykh Yusuf: Seorang Ulama, Sufi dan Pejuang*, 99.

<sup>70</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 268.

litanies) techniques and local magical formulae (*jangjawokan*).

Another rebellion in Banten which was also linked to the *tarekat* and should be noted here was the rebellion in 1888. Although it did not last long, its psychological effects and socio-political implications for the Dutch colonials cannot be underestimated. In fact, a number of historians recognize that the uprising in Banten in 1888 was a decisive event for colonial policy in this area. One of the most widely known is the academic work of Sartono Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888*.<sup>71</sup> The discourse about the revolt it is still ongoing with the publication of works discussing the same theme but looking at it from different viewpoints. A. Hamid, for example, writes in Indonesian and his book is entitled *Tragedi Berdarah di Banten 1888*. He called the revolt a “tragic bloody event,” as the title suggests and he mainly focused on the role of one of the religious leaders who was involved in the uprising.<sup>72</sup>

A century later, on the 462<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of Serang (an area in Banten), historian Hasan Muarif Ambary and his colleagues wrote a book entitled *Geger Cilegon 1888*. As explicit in the title, the book, which was distributed by the local government, discussed the spirit of the Bantenese struggle against colonialism. Thus, this book adds to the event the popular term “*geger*”, which means unrest, riot, ruin, and turmoil, to the rebellion and to the resistance of Banten society—and Indonesia in general.<sup>73</sup>

According to Kartodirdjo, the Bantenese rebellion in 1888 was a social movement influenced by the popular and

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<sup>71</sup> Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*.

<sup>72</sup> A. Hamid, *Tragedi Berdarah di Banten 1888* (Cilegon-Jawa Barat: Yayasan Kiyai Haji Wasyid, 1987).

<sup>73</sup> Hasan Muarif Ambary and Halwany Michrob, eds., *Geger Cilegon 1888: Peranan Pejuang Banten Melawan Penjajah Belanda* (Serang: Panitia Hari Jadi ke-462. Pemerintah Daerah Tingkat II kabupaten Serang, 1988).

trendy atmosphere of millenarism in Java in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars tend to associate social rebellions in the Muslim world with the concept of Mahdism. Al-Mahdi, which literally means “the one who gives guidance”, can be interpreted as a righteous person who gives religious teachings their proper place and he will be present at the end of time to keep the faithful from tyranny and oppression. Banten society, in the case of the 1888 rebellion, used the concept of Mahdism as an explosive force to oppose colonialism which was considered highly oppressive and tyrannical.<sup>74</sup>

In fact, throughout the history of the Muslim world, belief in Mahdism and the involvement of *tarekat* in politics often happened. In 1881, for example, along with the fall of Egypt to the British army, Muhammad Ahmad, a sheikh and leader of the Sammaniyya Order in Sudan, became enormously influential and he gained a huge number of followers who felt oppressed by their social and economic circumstances. He declared himself al-Mahdi and claimed he would alleviate Sudan and make it a prosperous society.<sup>75</sup> His Mahdism taught the people to return to the golden age of pure and unblemished Islam. This condition produced a social, political and religious movement known as “the Mahdist movement.”

It is interesting to consider these symptoms from an anthropological perspective, for instance, by using the theories developed in the study of revitalization

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<sup>74</sup> Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*.

<sup>75</sup> See P.M. Holt, “Islamic Millenarianism and the Fulfilment of Prophecy: A Case Study,” in *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. Ann Williams (Essex: Longman, 1980); see also P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in Sudan 1881-1898: A Study of Its Origin and Overthrow* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1958); Farwell Byron, *Prisoners of the Mahdi* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967).



movements, especially Barkun's "colonial hypothesis"<sup>76</sup> and Aberle's theory of "state of deprivation".<sup>77</sup> The fundamental issue in this regard is that colonialism produces "deprivation" and the desire in colonized communities to change existing conditions. Barkun's "colonial hypothesis" suggests that, in general, contact between cultures often produces social change and social change in its turn often leads to millenarian movements.<sup>78</sup> According to Barkun's theory, social outbursts with millennial ideas are often the product of a situation of "decremented deprivation" which occurs when the group's expectations for changing existing conditions persists but cannot be fulfilled.<sup>79</sup> This is what happened in the Banten rebellion. In addition, in Banten there was a clear double emphasis which is typical in a millenarian movement. As Barkun points out, the millenarianism's double emphasis is proven to help the healing of desperation and anxiety<sup>80</sup> among the occupied Banten Muslims.

Barkun's thesis seems to be in line with Snouck Hurgronje's opinion in his report on Banten, especially about the Banten uprising in 1888. He stated that the majority of the "rebels" came from northern Banten. He distinguished the Banteneese into South and North Banteneese. The people of South Banten, he argued, are the people of Sunda who are the oldest core of the Banteneese people. Although they are Sundanese, their languages and customs differ somewhat from those of their relatives in the Priangan. Yet, they share the same strengths and weaknesses in character. As an example of their weakness, Snouck Hurgronje mentioned their lack of passion for

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<sup>76</sup> Michael Barkun, *Disaster and the Millenium* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 35–61.

<sup>77</sup> David F. Aberle, *Peyote Religion among the Navajo* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1983), 315–333.

<sup>78</sup> Barkun, *Disaster and the Millenium*, 34.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

rebellion.<sup>81</sup> He described the people of North Banten as a migrant community who had come from other areas and who were keen to fight and were open minded. He stated that in the history of Banten, under the reigns of their Sultans (who were also migrants), the community of North Banten gained more political and economic influence than the South. Living on the north coast, they interact much more often with other regions than the South so that they very easily and rapidly responded to change. Therefore, Snouck Hurgronje concluded that one of the causes of the 1888 rebellion was rooted in the social and economic conditions coupled with the nature of North Banten society itself that was derived from the mixing of immigrants and adventurers, strong religious fanaticism, and a strong relationship between teachers and students. This was also exacerbated by the disregard of the colonial administration for the problems in Banten, such as economic difficulties and social problems, and the number of outbreaks of diseases.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, these conditions caused the struggle of the Banten community in 1888 against the Dutch colonial administration and strengthened its anti-colonial attitude.

Finally, the Bantenese rebellion was essentially an anti-colonial struggle and, to some extent, a form of opposition to their fellow Muslims who were working for the colonial government. This was mainly due to the conviction that the Dutch colonials were infidels (*kuffār*) so that whoever attached himself to their government was in essence a member of the same group. The crystallization of the ideas that existed within the *umma* (in the religious community) became more persistent in intensive religious meetings in *tarekat*. Since some *tarekat* such as the

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<sup>81</sup> C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Berita Mengenai Banten, 1893," in *Kumpulan Karangan Snouck Hurgronje VIII*, ed. C. Snouck Hurgronje (Jakarta: INIS, 1993), 4.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 4–6.

Qadiriyya, Naqshabandiyya, and Shattariyya, had a strong foothold in Banten it is not excessive to say that they contributed significantly to these millenarian movements.

### C. Power and Authority Structure in Banten

Controversy and confusion about historical truths are inevitable. In response to this, Taufik Abdullah said that history is an image of the past that is considered significant (true) and belongs to a society and not the monopoly of a historian or a ruler.<sup>83</sup> In an academic venture, controversy about history is something natural. Apart from different understandings of the past and the misuse of history, controversy in history can also arise due to the question of the trustworthiness of the sources and techniques used or the specific features of the available historical sources; approaches in interpretation, and the motives and intellectual trends of the authors' worldviews, and so on.<sup>84</sup>

I am fully aware that although many books and articles have been written about the history of Banten, from the time of the Sultanate to the present, much is still to be done and much is still fragmented. Nevertheless, historical fragments can at least be used as supporting data for what I will describe in this dissertation. These historical fragments will also be used as an entry point for understanding Islamic traditions that were established as the logical consequence of Islamization and its encounter with local culture in Banten. Therefore, understanding and re-analysing the Islamization agencies—so-called “keepers of tradition”—in this region is a necessity. These creative agencies not only managed to hybridize the teachings of Islam with local traditions but also carried out the task of controlling, preserving, as well as re-evaluating the process for later re-creative hybridization of existing traditions through their authority and power.

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<sup>83</sup> Azyumardi Azra, *Hitoriografi Islam Kontemporer: Wacana, Aktualitas, dan Aktor Sejarah* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2002), 91.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

The word “authority” in the Oxford dictionary is defined as “the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience” and “the power to influence others, especially because of one's commanding manner or one's recognized knowledge about something”.<sup>85</sup> According to Seferta, the recognition of religious authority is fundamental to every religion, especially when it comes to “considering the finality of the source of that authority and its relation to the future of that religion”.<sup>86</sup> In addition, Kramer and Schmidtke also argue that religious authority is closely related to power, even if in the present both (authority and power) are not always easy to distinguish. Furthermore, they say:

“*Religious* authority can assume a number of forms and functions: the ability (chance, power, or right) to define correct belief and practice, or orthodoxy and orthopraxy, respectively; to shape and influence the views and conduct of others accordingly; to identify, marginalize, punish or exclude deviance, heresy and apostasy and their agents and advocates. In the monotheistic religions founded on revealed scripture, religious authority further involves the ability (chance, power, or right) to compose and define the canon of “authoritative” texts and the legitimate methods of interpretation.”<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, religious authority relies heavily on the existence of institutions that have the power and the authority to speak in the name of religion. Such institutions and

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<sup>85</sup> See the definition in <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/authority>. Accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018

<sup>86</sup> Yusuf Seferta, “The Concept of Religious Authority According to Muhammad ’Abduh and Rashid Ridha,” *Islamic Quarterly Journal* 30, no. 3 (1986): 159.

<sup>87</sup> Sabine Krämer, and Gudrun Schmidtke, “Introduction: Religious Authority And Religious Authorities In Muslim Societies. A Critical Overview,” in *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, ed. Sabine Krämer and Gudrun Schmidtke (Eds.) (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 1–2.

religious leaders can bind their community under the same interpretations, prophetic traditions, and religious teachings and thereby keeping them from religious conflicts and uncertainties. There were—and are—at least three most influential agents in Banten, namely the *Sultan*, *Kyai*, and *Jawara*. The Sultan and *kyai* were very influential in the time of the Sultanate and after the Sultanate collapsed, their religious role was continued by the *kyai* in *tarekat* organizations and in *pesantren* institutions. While the role of the *jawara*, though not special agents of religion, —especially during the colonial period after the Sultanate collapsed until the revolution—in sustaining and assisting the *kyai* with the power they possessed cannot be considered trivial, especially not in maintaining the long-standing religious traditions in Banten.

### 1. Religious Authority Agencies: Sultan and Ulama

In the early Sultanate of Banten until the reign of Sultan Agung Tirtayasa, the Sultan held the highest position in the realm.<sup>88</sup> He was considered to have a perfect disposition and character and because of that he had the

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<sup>88</sup> I have to say “until the reign of Sultan Agung Tirtayasa” because he was the last sovereign ruler of Banten, while the rulers after him had been controlled by the Dutch colonialists. After a long struggle with the people in Banten assisted by the army led by Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari, Sultan Agung Tirtayasa finally returned to the palace on the request of his son, Sultan Haji, but the day after—on March 14, 1683—he was detained by the Dutch. Although Sultan Agung had been arrested, Sheikh Yusuf continued his fight against the Dutch until finally the Dutch interned his wife and daughter named Asma. The Dutch strategy succeeded and Sheikh Yusuf surrendered to negotiate and he was finally arrested on December 14, 1683. A year later (December 12, 1684), the Dutch exiled him to Ceylon after which he was exiled to Cape of Good Hope, South Africa on July 7, 1693 where he remained until his death on May 23, 1699. After the signing of an agreement on 17 April 1684, Banten's sovereignty had officially ended. See Michrob and Chudari, *Catatan Masalalu Banten*, 158–164; Uka Tjandrasasmita, *Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa Musuh Besar Kompeni Belanda* (Jakarta: Nusalarang, 1967), 53.

authority and the power in politics, the military, the economy, and in social, cultural and also religious matters.

During the reign of the first king of Banten, Maulana Hasanuddin, the region was in a state of the formation and the affirmation of the sovereignty of the new Islamic kingdom, hence it was occupied with the development of regional security, the expansion of trade cooperation, and the dissemination and the consolidation of the people's belief in Islamic teachings became a priority. Because of the large number of Muslim traders who arrived in Banten and actively participated in spreading the teachings of Islam to the people, Banten became the gathering place of various *ulama* who then turned it into an Islamic educational center. Many students (*santri*) from outside the region came to Banten to study religious knowledge, so the local authorities provided for educational institutions with mosques at their centers, such as in Kasunyatan.

In Kasunyatan, the sultan built a mosque (which is older than the Grand Mosque in Banten [*Masjid Agung*] itself),<sup>89</sup> and the residential and religious activity center of Kyai Dukuh (who later earned the title of Pangeran Kasunyatan and was one of Prince Yusuf's teachers)<sup>90</sup>. In addition to building the Grand Mosque near the square, Maulana Hasanuddin also fixed the mosques in Chinatown and Karangantu.<sup>91</sup> The Grand Mosque and the mosque in Chinatown both have five overlapping roofs as was the case with ancient mosques in Java, such as the mosque in Demak and Sendang Duwur, and others.

The reign of Sultan Agung Tirtayasa heralded the heyday of the Sultanate of Banten during the second half

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<sup>89</sup> Muhammad, *Banten: Penunjuk Jalan dan Keterangan Bekas Kerajaan Kesultanan Banten*, 35.

<sup>90</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 163.

<sup>91</sup> Hasan Muarif Ambary, *Laporan Penelitian Arkeologi Banten 1976* (Jakarta: P3N, 1978), 1; Halwany Michrob, *Laporan Pemugaran Banten Lama 1983-1984* (Serang: DP4SPB, 1984), 5.

of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. One of the reasons was that the Sultan fully supported his two harbormasters in international trade and they managed and increased Banten's international trade by adjusting the trade system to respond to European traders in Southeast Asia. At the time, these harbormasters advised the Sultan to diversify the economy, to start direct commerce, re-establish traditional relations with China (a relationship that Dutch had disrupted for 50 years), and expand his commercial network to Europe for which Banten had to be opened up. These commercial innovations could only be profitable by offering open access to Banten to foreigners.

The country might never have previously welcomed so many foreigners from China, Taiwan, Japan, Tonkin, Cochin China, Campa, Siam, Bengal, Tamil, Gujarat, Persia, Turkey, Arabia and five European countries (Holland, England, France, Denmark, and Portugal). Therefore, Banten became a cosmopolitan harbor-city. It should be mentioned here that the longstanding Chinese community played a major role due to the support of its harbormasters. The international nature and position of the Chinese did not please everyone, especially not the nobles who were very traditional. Nevertheless, these nobles did not dare to express their dislike directly to the Sultan who was very authoritarian.<sup>92</sup>

Guillot has a particular reason for calling the Sultan "authoritarian". For example, before the Sultan entrusted economic affairs to his two Chinese harbormasters and gave them an elite position in the Sultanate, he required both to become Muslim. As Sultan with religious and political authority, he was very assertive towards Christian merchants, and especially to foreign missionaries.<sup>93</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>92</sup> Guillot, *Banten: Sejarah dan Peradaban Abad X-XVII*, 213.

<sup>93</sup> Resistance to missionary activity was certainly not a monopoly of Banten society, but occurred also in of the Archipelago. Henry Layman and Samuel Munson, two American missionaries, were found dead during their

Sultan Agung Tirtayasa saw Dutch-Christian traders as a threat and greedy competitors. The Sultan called the Dutch-Christians in Banten “cultural poison” to be expelled. This hostile theological stance against the VOC was also kept by Sultan Agung Tirtayasa’s son.

In the time of Dutch imperialism, especially after the pawn treaty was signed during the reign of Sultan Haji, the Dutch wielded “balanced” and even “dominant” power and Dutch-Christians were seen as “disliked partners”. In the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sultan Muhammad Shafiuddin forbade his offspring to marry a European. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, historical records show the various responses and reactions of Muslims in Banten to missionaries, specifically, and to Europeans, in general: such as the isolation of the Christian community, the poisoning of missionaries and the burning of churches.<sup>94</sup>

The presence of the *ulama* and the *kyai* as religious authorities/religious elites in Banten can be traced back to the early establishment of the Sultanate of Banten. From the earliest days of the Sultanate, the *ulama* already occupied an elite position in the palace supported by the Sultanate’s social-political system. The Sultan shared religious authority and power with a person who mastered Islamic knowledge and who enforced it on his behalf. This person was the *kadi* or Kiyahi Pekih Najmuddin (judge of the Shari’a court). Nurlaelawati said that Banten had a most reputable religious court during the era of the

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first missionary expedition in the Batak region in Sumatra in 1834. In 1868, Harthoom's wife, a private missionary, was murdered in Pamekasan, Madura, because of resistance to Christianization and something similar happened in Tabanan, Bali in 1860. See Alwi Shihab, *The Muhammadiyah Movement and Its Cotroversy with Christian Mission* (Pennsylvania: Dissertation at Temple University, 1995), 75.

<sup>94</sup> Mufti Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten* (Serang: Laboratorium Bantenologi, 2009), 154.



Sultanates.<sup>95</sup> The position of the religious court in the Sultanate of Banten was stronger than its counterparts in other Sultanates in the archipelago. In addition to its main duty of being a stakeholder in affairs pertaining to the law and administrative matters in the Sultanate, the *kadi* also has a significant political role. Therefore, Pekih Najmuddin, the formal title of the *kadi* at that time, held a strong position and was highly influential in the Sultanate.

The existence of a religious court made that Islamic law was implemented more comprehensively in this region and covered civil cases and, to some extent, criminal matters (*hudūd*).<sup>96</sup> The evidence of the Islamic court and its role in Banten is corroborated by the existence of the *Undhang-Undhang Banten*, a manuscript that belonged to the last Kiyahi Pekih Najmuddin, Faqih Haji Muhammad Adian.<sup>97</sup> Historically, along with the Islamization of the royal institution, the role of the *ulama* gained importance. In its heyday, especially under Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa (r. 1651-1682), for example, people from other countries such as Arabia (Mecca), Turkey, and Egypt came to Banten to invigorate Islamic teaching in the region. The Sultan of

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<sup>95</sup> Euis Nurlaelawati, *Modernization, Tradition and Identity: The Kompilasi Hukum Islam and Legal Practice in the Indonesian Religious Courts* (Amsterdam: ICAS / Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 43.

<sup>96</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Shari'a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate."

<sup>97</sup> This *codex unicus*, preserved in the Library of Leiden University, the Netherlands, was once part of the manuscript collection of C. Snouck Hurgronje, the leading Dutch scholar of Islam in Indonesia. The manuscript contains a hybrid text comprising of 11 texts bound together in one codex. Its diverse parts include a 65-page text in Javanese script that was written after 1755 and the remaining 162 pages in Arabic script were inscribed after 1815. The major part of the text, totalling 227 pages, is written in Javanese while 11 pages are written in Malay. It is a 'legal sourcebook' that contains the customary law (*dirgama*) of Banten's Javanese society, the judicial legacy of the Sultanate of Banten prior to the arrival of Islam, Islamic law (*agama/syarak*) and European law. See Ayang Utriza Yakin, "Undhang-Undhang Bantĕn: A 17th to 18th-Century Legal Compilation from the Qadi Court of the Sultanate of Bantĕn," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 44, no. 130 (2016): 365–388.

Banten even appointed Sheikh Yusuf of Makassar as mufti and government advisor. Sheikh Yusuf fought against the Dutch together with other *ulama* and the Bantenese people.<sup>98</sup>

The strengthening of Islam in Banten saw an enormous rise in enthusiasm for scholarship, especially for Islamic knowledge. This condition meant the emergence of prominent Bantenese *ulama* who played an important role in the struggle against the Dutch. Sheikh Nawawi al-Bantani (1813-1897), for instance, was a scholar from Banten of international standards, as acknowledged by Steenbrink.<sup>99</sup> As a charismatic and prolific *ulama*, Nawawi authored hundreds of books including *Tafsīr al-Munīr* and *Marāḥ Labīd* that were published in the Middle East and are still reference works for students in many *pesantren* today. After having lived in Mecca for 30 years, Nawawi had made a name for himself and was given titles such as *al-Faqīh* and the last *Hukamā'*, '*Ulamā' al-Hijāz*, and *Imām 'Ulamā' al-Haramayn*. Nawawi became a great master in Mecca and he had thousands of students throughout the Muslim world. His famous disciples in Indonesia were K.H. Khalil Bangkalan (Madura), K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari (Jombang/the founder of the Nahdlatul Ulama), K.H. Tubagus Mohammad Asnawi (Caringin, Banten), K.H. Raden Asnawi (Kudus) and various other charismatic *kyai* throughout the Archipelago. According to Lubis, it was Nawawi who encouraged his disciples to fight against Dutch colonialism in Banten.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Lubis, *Banten dalam Pergumulan Sejarah: Sultan, Ulama dan Jawara*, 55.

<sup>99</sup> Karel Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke 19* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), 117.

<sup>100</sup> Lubis, *Banten dalam Pergumulan Sejarah: Sultan, Ulama dan Jawara*, 99.

## 2. The Banten Ulama: *Abuya, Kyai, and Ustadh*

The word *ulama* is the plural form of Arabic *alim*, which means “one who knows”. In Indonesia, the word, “*ulama*” is used not only in the plural but also in the singular sense and tends to mean people (both singular and plural) who have a deep understanding of religious issues,<sup>101</sup> regardless of their scholarship level or position.<sup>102</sup> However, the Banten people rarely use the word “*ulama*” to designate people with deep religious knowledge and they often call them *abuya*, *kyai*, or *ustadh*. In daily usage they use the words in different contexts.

The difference in meaning of the terms *abuya*, *kyai*, and *ustadh* has been discussed by various scholars. Geertz, for example, says that *kyai* and *ulama* can be used interchangeably because both to refer to someone with profound religious beliefs.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, he identified *kyai* as cultural brokers who, in a certain way, connect the outer world with the peasant community. Although in social and economic terms they are seen as superior, they are also considered to have magical skills and can cure diseases and expel evil jinn. This is why the Javanese people generally regard them as powerful, influential, and as sacred leaders.<sup>104</sup> In Java, according to Dhofier, the term *kyai* has three meanings, namely: something or someone with supernatural powers; an honorific for the elders; and a title for a Muslim scholar who owns or is responsible for a *pesantren* and teaches Islamic classical texts.<sup>105</sup> He also

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<sup>101</sup> See <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/ulama>, accessed on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018

<sup>102</sup> Iik Arifin Mansurnoor, *Islam in an Indonesian World: Ulama' of Madura* (Yogyakarta: Gadjahmada University Press, 1990), xv.

<sup>103</sup> See the footnote in Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: The Free Press Glencoe, 1960), 134.

<sup>104</sup> Clifford Geertz, “The Javanese Kijaji: The Changing Role of a Cultural Broker,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, no. 2 (1960): 220–249.

<sup>105</sup> Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), 55.

said that *kyai* refers to a scholar with traditional Islamic views.<sup>106</sup>

Horikoshi distinguished between *ulama* and *kyai* based on the meaning given by the Sundanese in Cipari, a village in the southern part of West Java, as well as on their different forms of leadership and use of magical power. She argued that a *kyai* has a higher position than an *ulama* in terms of influence in society and depth of religious knowledge.<sup>107</sup> Iskandar criticized Horikoshi because her distinction between the terms is inconsistent with prevailing notions in West Java. He further supports Geertz's and Dhofier's views about *kyai* by saying that the word "*kyai*" is used to refer to Muslims (or persons) in a *pesantren* who have a certain number of students and who have performed the pilgrimage, while *ulama* are people who share the same characteristics with *kyai* and also have social influence but are not involved with *pesantren*.<sup>108</sup>

However, the opinion that the word "*kyai*" is only used for someone who is responsible for a *pesantren* is no longer generally accepted. In Banten, many people who with profound religious knowledge and who lead a *pesantren* are not referred to as *kyai*. This is due to various reasons. They are considered too young to be called *kyai*, or perhaps because they only have very few students (*santri*). In this case, they are often called *ustadh*.<sup>109</sup> Even so, unlike Dhofier and Iskandar, there are Bantenese people with deep religious knowledge who are called *kyai* even

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Hiroko Horikoshi, "Traditional Leaders in a Time of Change: The Kijaji and 'Ulama in West Java" (University of Illinois, 1976), 344.

<sup>108</sup> Mohammad Iskandar, *Para Pengemban Amanah: Pergulatan Pemikiran Kyai dan 'Ulama di Jawa Barat, 1900-1950* (Yogyakarta: Mata Bangsa, 2001), 24–25.

<sup>109</sup> I interviewed Uting Sirojuddin (38 years old) on May 6, 2018. He founded Pesantren Salafiyah "Asy-Syarif" in Ciruas (in the district of Serang) in 2007. He was called "*ustadh*" by the surrounding community and his *santri* although he mastered the classical Islamic literature commonly taught in traditional *pesantren* and had no less than 80 *santri*.

though they do not own or lead a *pesantren* and come from a Modernist Muslim (not Traditionalist Islamic) background.

Unlike *kyai* and *ustadh*, the word “*abuya*” is only given to few people in Banten. This word seems to refer only to a great and very influential *kyai*. Two of the most famous Bantenese *Abuya* are the late *Abuya Dimiyati bin Muhammad bin Amin al-Bantani* (d. 2003) who was a leader of *Pesantren Cidahu* in Pandeglang and the *murshid* of the *Shadhiliyya* and the *Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya* Orders; and the late *Abuya Ahmad Busthomi bin Ahmad Jasuta*, a charismatic figure from *Pesantren Salafiyya al-Hidayah*, Cisantri Pandeglang. Both were charismatic figures who lived a disciplined life according to Sufi principles and refused to have any dealings with politics to maintain their independence and the right atmosphere in their *pesantren*.

Apart from having different titles, *kyai*, *abuya*, and *ustadh*, were—and are—figures with real influence in Banten society. We may say that for a long time they had the same religious, social and cultural influence in Banten society. The collapse of the Sultanate of Banten in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the waning of religion in the colonial system did not lessen the role of *ulama* in Banten society; instead, the loyalty of the people turned instead to *ulama* who opposed the colonial government. It should be mentioned here that during the time of the Sultanate, *ulama* have been divided into two groups; there were: 1) *Ulama-penghulu* who lived in the palace and were part of the Bantenese elite; and 2) *Ulama-pesantren* who led a *pesantren*. The second group of *ulama* were more concentrated in rural Islamic community-based *pesantren* and still exist even though the Sultanate has collapsed.<sup>110</sup> In addition to religious authority, these *kyai* became independent figures

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<sup>110</sup> M. Hufad, “*Sosialisasi Identitas Kekerabatan pada Keluarga Inti di Menes Banten*” (Universitas Pajajaran, 2004), 133.

capable of competing with colonial bureaucrats. As a result, their influence extended not only among the ordinary people but also to members of the nobility in Banten.

In Banten, *ulama* are highly respected by the people, not only because of their religious authority, but also as teachers and role models who always take care of the community. During the struggle against Dutch colonialism, *ulama* became front-line fighters. According to Kartodirdjo,<sup>111</sup> scholars, such as Haji Wasid, Haji Abdul Karim, K.H. Tb Ismail, Haji Marzuki who rebelled against Dutch colonialism in Cilegon (1888) were charismatic *ulama* and the Dutch feared them. In fact, as Hamka pointed out, many of the great Banten scholars who had been detained by the Dutch were exiled to various regions where they started Muslim communities.<sup>112</sup> Haji Abdurrahman, for example, was exiled to Banda and until now his cemetery is visited by many people in Banda Naira. Haji Arsyad Tawil was exiled to Manado where he became a highly respected Islamic figure and Haji Haris was exiled to Bukit Tinggi where he became known as the *Engku Sheikh* of Banten and his name is immortalized in a street name in the City of Bukit Tinggi.

In addition to the struggle of *ulama* in Cilegon, Tb. K.H. Achmad Chatib (K.H. Asnawi Caringin's son-in-law) of Labuan, Pandeglang, K.H. Abdul Hadi of Bangko Menes Pandeglang, K.H. Ali Yasin and other *kyai* staged a rebellion against Dutch colonization in Banten in 1926.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, in the revolutionary period of Indonesia, one

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<sup>111</sup> Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*, 257–274.

<sup>112</sup> HAMKA, *Dari Perbendaharaan Lama* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1982), 107.

<sup>113</sup> Michael Charles Williams, *Communism, Religion and Revolt in Banten* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1990), 147.

*ulama* in Banten came to occupy a very important position. On September 2, 1945, Kyai Achmad Chatib became the first Resident in Banten. In addition, along with other *ulama*, such as K.H. Syam'un (the founder of Pesantren al-Khairiyyah), he became an important figure in the People's Security Agency (BKR/Badan Keamanan Rakyat) in Banten.

Arifin gives a clear explanation on *kyai* and their authority. In his book, he elucidates that the *kyai's* charismatic authority as Islamic religious leader in the *pesantren* tradition is transmitted to one of his sons, who is usually called *Gus*.<sup>114</sup> What is interesting about Arifin's analysis and which I regard is relevant here is his critique of Weber's concept of charismatic authority. According to Weber, charismatic authority contrasts with traditional and legal-rational authority, which are usually placed in binary opposition. Arifin does not accept this and in accordance with his research findings in a *pesantren* in Krapyak in Yogyakarta, Arifin states that in daily life in *pesantren*, the two forms of authority seem to be mixed. A "Gus", a *kyai's* son or a successor does not automatically inherit his father's charisma. To achieve charisma, according to Arifin, he should also be seriously involved in efforts to obtain it, such as by performing *riyāḍa* (spiritual exercise) to obtain *barakah* (God's blessing) and *karāmah* (supernatural power), and by making use of the role and the encouragement of elite members in his environment.<sup>115</sup>

Arifin's criticism of Weber's concept of charismatic authority seems relevant in view of the conditions of religious authority in Banten. In this region, a *kyai* sometimes has not only charismatic but also legal-rational authority, such as K.H. Achmad Khatib, who was a charismatic *kyai* as well as a regent (*bupati*). Some *kyai* are

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<sup>114</sup> Achmad Zainal Arifin, *Charisma and Rationalisation in a Modernising Pesantren* (Saarbroeck, Germany: Scholar's Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 154, 196–209.

not only charismatic but also wield traditional authority, such as *kyai* in *pesantren* who, in addition to their own charisma also have the authority they inherit from their charismatic fathers. Weber's concept of hereditary charisma is in line with the Banten people's proverb: "*ari kacang mah kumaha lanjahanana*"<sup>116</sup> (s. the bean tree will grow according to its wood) which means that a child follows in the footsteps of its parents. If his father was a *kyai* then his son would also become a *kyai* and if his father was a bureaucrat (*menak*) then his son would also become one because of the father's influence, position, and charisma. Even so, the proverb does not always work. In Banten the charisma that spoils over to the son is not always as large as in other areas in Java.

In some areas in Banten, the agency of religious authority and its extent may have slight differences. In general, especially in some areas in Serang where I did my fieldwork, people acknowledge influential religious figures such as *wali*, *abuya*, *kyai*, *ustadh*, *guru ngaji*, *kaom*, and *penghulu desa*. *Wali* is the highest level of *ulama*, after that follow *abuya*, *kyai*, and *ustadh*. In terms of master-servant relations or the degree of religious mastery, the *ustadh's* teacher is a *kyai*, the teacher of a *kyai* is an *abuya* and his teacher is a *wali*. However, this is not a golden rule because sometimes an *abuya* is also the teacher of an *ustadh* and not only of a *kyai*.

Among these agencies of religious authority, a *kyai* plays the most important role. This is because a *kyai* is believed to have *karamah* because of which many people from all over come to him and he also has students from different regions. With regard to their influence and activities, I can summarize my interviews with many Bantenese figures that, in Banten, *kyai* can be divided into four types, namely *kyai lembur*, *kyai tutur*, *kyai catur*, and

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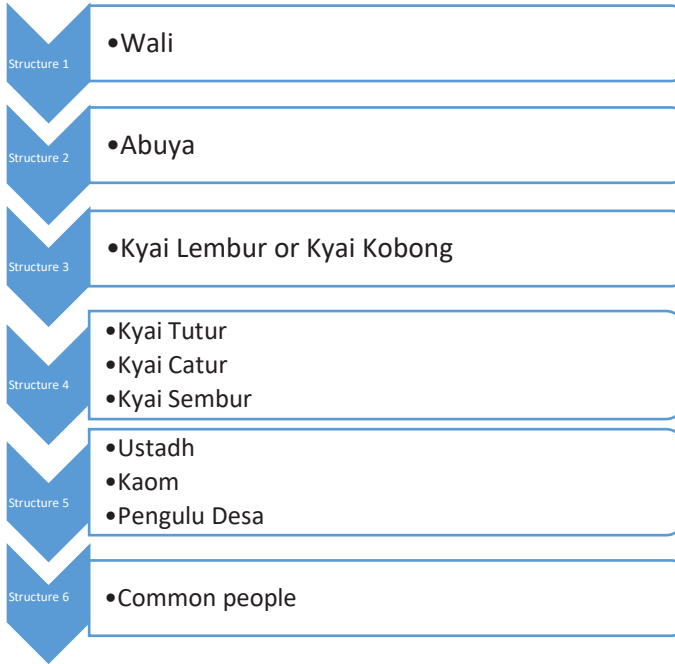
<sup>116</sup> Tihami, "*Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Studi tentang Agama, Magi, dan Kepemimpinan di Desa Pasangrahan Serang, Banten*," 93.



*kyai sembur*. A *kyai lembur* (*lembur*: s. village or house) is a *kyai* who spends most of his time in his *pesantren* and where he teaches his students, he is also commonly called *Kyai Bale Rombeng* (*bale rombeng*: s. simple and small house, usually made from bamboo and wood) or *Kyai Kobong* (*kobong*: s. same as *bale rombeng*). *Kyai tarekat* can also be classified into this category, because in Banten, a *kyai tarekat* almost always has a *pesantren* where he teaches his *santri* from classical Islamic books. *Kyai tutur* (*tutur*: s. speaking) is a *kyai* who spends much of his time preaching. *Kyai catur* (*i.* literally means chess, symbolizing politics) is a *kyai* who is more involved with politics. While a *Kyai sembur* (*sembur*: j/s. spray), or *kyai hikmah*, is a *kyai* who has spiritual and magical abilities and is able to do heal the sick so that much of his time is spent to attend to people who need his services or are in need of spiritual treatment. The first type of *kyai* receives the highest respect from the Bantenese people.

An *ustadh* actually is the closest to the people compared to a *kyai* but because an *ustadh* teaches about Al-Quran and in *majlis ta'lim*, his pupils only come from one kampong or village, so that their influence is restricted to merely one village. A *guru ngaji*, like an *ustadh*, has limited influence in his village because he is just a *Qur'an* teacher for children in the village while a *kaom* is a person who takes care of the mosque and ensures that it is well maintained and clean and he takes care of the call for the five daily prayers (*azan*) when the time has come to pray. In the rural communities in Serang, the *kaom* is usually a central figure who reads the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, while it is still the *kyai* who delivers the sermon and presides over prayers (*maca doa*). The *kaom* usually takes over the role of the *kyai* to lead the *tahlil* or *slametan* when the *kyai* is unable to attend. A *pengulu desa* usually acts as mediator between the community and the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama/KUA), and he is usually appointed

by the official leader of the village (*kepala desa*). The *pengulu desa* can simultaneously be an *ustadh* or a *kaom*. The structure of religious authority can be seen in the following figures:



**Table 1. Religious Authority Structure in Banten**

### 3. The Current Banten Elite

The explanations above illustrate the strategic role of the *ulama*. They have the power and the authority to mobilize the people. This condition makes them a charismatic local elite able to uphold the traditions and the religious culture that exist in Banten. To understand the political history in a certain place, it is always important to note the tension between power and authority because it is always inherent in political affairs. *Blackwell's Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, an authoritative dictionary and encyclopedia, is well aware of and concerned with this tension. It defines authority as the

right to act and make laws, while power is understood as the ability to enforce compliance.<sup>117</sup> Thus, law stands against coercion and a recognized ability against force or threat. Legitimacy goes against the struggle for power and democracy against dictatorship.

According to Weberian theory, authority is closely related to dominance (*Herrschaft*) which may be traditional, charismatic or legitimized. Especially charismatic leadership is based on personal authority that is specifically blessed like that of prophets, military princes, demagogues and party leaders. According to Weber, the state is determined by the means it monopolizes, namely physical coercion. Through it, the state can dominate, and some people can impose their power on others.<sup>118</sup> *The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, especially in the article on “authority” by Robert Peabody, agrees that the definition of this concept varies but he ultimately concludes that in authority “relationship” is foremost rather than “capacity”.<sup>119</sup> No one, according to Peabody, denied the claim that authority is the basis of human behavior.<sup>120</sup> Lasswell and Kaplan, in their book, equate authority with formal power.<sup>121</sup> However, the definition of power remains weak, not only in the polemics around it but also in almost all other

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<sup>117</sup> D. Miller, with J. Coleman, W. Connolly, and A. Ryan, eds., *Blackwell's Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 34–35.

<sup>118</sup> Max Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958), 494–495.

<sup>119</sup> Robert L. Peabody, “Authority,” *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. I* (New York: Macmillan/Free Press, 1968); Robert Bierstedt, “The Problem of Authority,” in *Freedom and Control in Modern Society*, ed. M. Berger, T. Abel, and C.H. Page (New York: Octagon Press, 1964), 67–81.

<sup>120</sup> Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Sovereignty: An Inquiry into the Political Good* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

<sup>121</sup> Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1950).

literature. Peabody, following Weber, says that it is legitimacy that distinguishes authority not only from coercion, force, and power, but also from influence, leadership, and persuasion.<sup>122</sup>

I perceive authority and power as fundamentally opposing principles related to the mutually exclusive ideal type of public affairs. Accordingly, power is closely identified with the state. State power means that decisions are taken on behalf of the whole of society by certain state institutions that depend on state monopolies on organized violence. In contrast, authority is legitimate without the support of power and is recognized by everyone voluntarily. Authority in principle does not require state power and the domination of some parties over others.<sup>123</sup> I argue that whenever people act with such authority when dealing with matters concerning human collectivism, its quality has been fundamentally better and its decisions more long-lasting and perfectly acceptable. In short, public affairs are dealt with in a more civilized way than when people in power represent the interests of the group. While authority is obtained with free public support and works by voice or consensus, power is the result of the use or threat of physical force and operates without the special support of the people.

In actual politics, however, authority and power are always present. In the day-to-day political process, this seemingly simple exclusive dichotomy of power and authority is far more complex. The obvious issue of both is the tension between them. The prevalence of authority means that the methods of power are less prominent, and vice versa. Bare force or strength in its very coarse form rarely survives. Conversely, pure authority without the

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<sup>122</sup> Peabody, "Authority."

<sup>123</sup> Peter Skalník, "Outwitting the State: An Introduction," in *Outwitting the State*, ed. Peter Skalník (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989), 8.

power to act is rarely desirable. Man has been fighting for centuries for the right mix of these two political materials.<sup>124</sup>

Therefore, it is not surprising that in many areas, including Banten, there are many influential informal leaders in the community. In the case of local politics in Banten, *ulama* and *jawara* are two informal leaders whose influence are enormous. In local terms, an *ulama* is someone who has deep Islamic knowledge and a *jawara* is someone who possesses martial abilities. Their different social and political roles can be read in previous research such as that done by Kartodirdjo who analysed the local political roles of both in the context of the peasant revolt in Banten in 1888 and their significant role in the struggle for independence from Dutch colonialism.<sup>125</sup> Tihami also analysed the connection between magic and religion that strengthened the role of *ulama* and *jawara* in Banten society,<sup>126</sup> while Hamid described how the New Order regime “used” *ulama* and *jawara* as political instruments.<sup>127</sup>

Like *ulama*, *jawara* in Banten play an important role in the people's lives. Initially, they were associated with the pre-Sultanate era in Banten. *Jawara* had been established in a military training base of the pre-Islamic Pajajaran kingdom under Pucuk Umun. They were intermediaries between the Pajajaran ruler and his subjects and their tasks included controlling community groups, levying taxes, and so forth which they sometimes did violently for the sake of the kingdom. After the king of Pajajaran—Pucuk Umun—

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<sup>124</sup> Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

<sup>125</sup> Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*.

<sup>126</sup> Tihami, “*Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Studi tentang Agama, Magi, dan Kepemimpinan di Desa Pasanggrahan Serang, Banten.*”

<sup>127</sup> Abdul Hamid, “*Memetakan Aktor Politik Lokal Banten Pasca Orde Baru: Studi Kasus Kyai dan Jawara di Banten,*” *Politika* 1, no. 2 (2010): 32–45.

surrendered to Sultan Hasanuddin, almost every loyalist *jawara* surrendered and became followers of Sultan Hasanuddin. They were not only proficient in martial arts and invulnerability skills, but they also studied Islamic teachings with *kyai* so that the actualization of their abilities was based on religious values and norms.<sup>128</sup>

In the nineteenth century, when the colonial government's pressure on the indigenous peoples increased, popular resistance arose centered in the circle of the Sultan and the *kyai*. Generally, a *kyai* divides his *santri* into two groups based on their propensities and aptitudes. The first are *santri* who have potential in the field of religious knowledge, so that they later would become *kyai* and they tend to display *kyaiship* rather than *jawaraship*; and the second are *santri* who tend to be talented in martial arts. The second potentially become *kyai-jawara* and display their *jawaraship*. Additionally, in Banten, there are *jawara* who only use black magic (s. *elmu hideung*), such as the skill to be invulnerable (s. *kadugalan*) which is not based on Islamic teachings.<sup>129</sup>

By the time Daendels had devastated the Sultanate of Banten in the nineteenth century, the situation in the region had become chaotic and the entire social order almost collapsed. In this situation, several prominent *kyai* and other informal leaders emerged. They ignited the spirit of resistance against the Dutch colonials and their government officers. Some parties used this chaotic condition to engage in robbery, plunder, and other criminal acts. In fact, around the 1880s there were robbers and bandits who had nothing to do with the resistance

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<sup>128</sup> Hufad, "Sosialisasi Identitas Kekkerabatan pada Keluarga Inti di Menes Banten," 211.

<sup>129</sup> Lubis, *Banten dalam Pergumulan Sejarah: Sultan, Ulama dan Jawara*, 127.

movement against the colonials<sup>130</sup> but through their behavior caused the defamation of the *jawara*. The colonial government exploited their rigorous actions to undermine the combatants' struggle by labeling them *jawara*-bandits. Therefore, the resistance in the form of social movements meant to oppose imperialism such as the one led by Ki Wasid (1888), were regarded as *onlusten* (riots), *ongeregeldheden* (disturbances), *complots* (conspiracy), *woelingen* (chaos), and *onrust* (turmoil).<sup>131</sup>

According to Tihami,<sup>132</sup> the Dutch colonial government had difficulties confronting the *jawara* who often sabotaged its interests. Through collaboration with the *santri* commanded by their *kyai*, the *jawara* became one of the keys in the consistent and the continuous struggle of the Bantenese against colonialism. In this positive view, *jawara* as individuals and as a group became the entrenched symbol and token of pride in Bantenese localized culture and were considered protectors and security guards. That is why, over time, the *jawara* became one of the pillars of socio-political and cultural power in Banten society.

The leadership of the *kyai* and the *jawara* play a strategic role in the social and cultural system in Banten. The *kyai* with his religious knowledge has become the main point of reference for solving social problems in the community. The *jawara*, by having economic and physical strength, ensured that the region remained safe. The leadership of the *kyai* and the *jawara* is an inseparable symbiotic mutualism in the social and cultural structure of

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<sup>130</sup> Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*, 156–164.

<sup>131</sup> Sunatra, “*Integrasi dan Konflik Kedudukan Politik Jawara dan Ulama dalam Budaya Lokal: Studi Kasus Kepemimpinan di Banten*” (Bandung: PPs Univeristas Padjadjaran, 1997), 180–181.

<sup>132</sup> Tihami, “*Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Studi tentang Agama, Magi, dan Kepemimpinan di Desa Pasangrahan Serang, Banten*,” 212.

Banten society. This role, Dewi argues,<sup>133</sup> was very clear in the pre-independence period when these two elite groups acted as the pioneers of the resistance against colonialism. Religion and culture became the sources of the political power of the leadership of the *kyai* and the *jawara*. Backed by religious and cultural power, according to Weber's leadership categorization, they displayed a very strong leadership style.<sup>134</sup>

In the findings of the research conducted by Sunatra<sup>135</sup> and Hudaeri,<sup>136</sup> they argue that the *jawara* have a more dominant role and position than the *ulama*. The strengthening the *jawara*'s political role, especially in the reform era (*Era Reformasi*), has become a trending topic in the research conducted by Alamsyah,<sup>137</sup> Hamid,<sup>138</sup> Bandiyah,<sup>139</sup> Pribadi,<sup>140</sup> and Alkhudri,<sup>141</sup> who did their studies after Banten had become an autonomous province separated from West Java. This means that Banten has a direct impact on strengthening the local political position of the *jawara*, although their strategic role did not start at

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<sup>133</sup> Kurniawati Dewi, *Kepemimpinan Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Pengaruhnya terhadap Good Governance* (Banten: LSPB, 2003), 243.

<sup>134</sup> Doyle Paul Johnson, *Teori Sosiologi Klasik dan Modern I* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1986), 229–231.

<sup>135</sup> Sunatra, “Integrasi dan Konflik Kedudukan Politik Jawara dan Ulama dalam Budaya Lokal: Studi Kasus Kepemimpinan di Banten.”

<sup>136</sup> Mohamad Hudaeri, “Tasbih dan Golok: Studi Tentang Kharisma Kyai & Jawara di Banten,” *Istiqro* 2, no. 1 (2003): 57–87.

<sup>137</sup> Andi Rahman Alamsyah, *Islam, Jawara & Demokrasi: Geliat Politik Banten Pasca-Orde Baru* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2009).

<sup>138</sup> Hamid, “Memetakan Aktor Politik Lokal Banten Pasca Orde Baru: Studi Kasus Kyai dan Jawara di Banten.”

<sup>139</sup> Bandiyah, “Evolusi Jawara di Banten (Studi Evolusi dari Bandit Menjadi Pejabat),” *Jurnal Interaktif Universitas Brawijaya* 1, no. 2 (2010): 111–171.

<sup>140</sup> Yanwar Pribadi, “Strongmen and Religious Leaders in Java: Their Dynamic Relationship in Search of Power,” *Al-Jamiah* 49, no. 1 (2011): 159–190.

<sup>141</sup> Ahmad Tarmiji Alkhudri, “Kepemimpinan Elit Lokal di Pedesaan pada Era Desentralisasi: Studi Kepemimpinan *Jawara* di Pesisir Tangerang” (Sekolah Pascasarjana IPB, Bogor, 2013).



the start of the formulation of Banten as an autonomous province.<sup>142</sup>

Indonesia's independence contributed greatly to the dynamics of the role of the *ulama* and the *jawara* in Banten. In their research, Asep Muslim et al.<sup>143</sup> analysed and ranked the political role of the *ulama* and the *jawara* from the time of the Sultanate until today. According to them, at the time of the Sultanate of Banten, the *ulama* made a major contribution to local politics because they dominated the government structure, while the *jawara* accompanied them as government leaders. During the Dutch colonial era, the Dutch took over the function of government and the *ulama* became the main actors of the resistance movement accompanied by the *jawara* as their guardians. At the start of the era of independence, the *ulama* occupied local government positions and K.H. Achmad Khatib was appointed as resident of Banten. This is a clear example of a society that strongly believes in the *ulama* not only as religious leaders but also as bureaucrats. Meanwhile, the *jawara* maintained their relationship with the *ulama* as guardians, but they turned into national soldiers for the defense of the independence of the state.

In the New Order era, the *jawara's* dominance got an important boost because the New Order regime accommodated them in the political system as subordinate elements of the ruling party (the government party). The *jawara* also came to play a role in several government economic development projects. In this era, the *jawara* were transformed into entrepreneurs. They dominated the economy and the people supported them not only as

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<sup>142</sup> Y.M.A Aziz, "Elite dan Masyarakat Sipil dalam Gerakan Sosial Pembentukan Provinsi Banten," *Paradigma Polistaat* 4, no. 7 (2002): 48–58.

<sup>143</sup> Asep Muslim, Lala M. Kolopaking, Arya H. Dharmawan, Endriatmo Soetarto, "The Shift of Power Structure in Rural Banten: A Case of Local Leadership Typology of Ulama and *Jawara* in Pandeglang," in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 6, no. 7 (2016): 180–181.

keepers of the tradition but also because government also used them as their main vote getters. Meanwhile, although the government also accommodated the *ulama* as vote getters, they did not participate in government projects.

In the era of regional autonomy, the democratic process and decentralization opened ways to all elements of civil society to participate in the process. The *jawara* are given the opportunity to strengthen their political power by entering the system of governance. Moreover, they dominate the local political system with their economic abilities, so the *jawara* could easily dominate not only the economic field but also all levels of the governmental structure. The *ulama* also contribute greatly to the political system, but they keep a distance. They are only involved in strategic matters such as in the formulation of local laws. Asep Muslim et al. summarize the dynamics of the socio-political role of the *ulama* and the *jawara* in the following table:<sup>144</sup>

No.	Government Period	Social-Political Role	
		<i>Ulama</i>	<i>Jawara</i>
1.	Sultanate of Banten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Government high-ranking officials</li> <li>✓ Religious advisors (<i>kadi</i>)</li> <li>✓ Actors of <i>syiar/dakwah</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Guardians of <i>ulama</i></li> </ul>
2.	Dutch Colonial Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Main actors of resistance movements</li> <li>✓ Successors of the rural elite leadership</li> <li>✓ Actors of <i>syiar/dakwah</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Guardians of resistance movements</li> <li>✓ Rural government high-ranking officials (as <i>Jaro</i>)</li> <li>✓ Social bandits</li> </ul>
3.	Beginning of Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Government high-rank officials</li> <li>✓ High-ranking military</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Teachers of Qur'an reading and instruction</li> <li>✓ Martial art</li> </ul>

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Unifying elements of the nation-state</li> <li>✓ Heads of the soldiers for the protection of independence</li> <li>✓ Actors of <i>syiar/dakwah</i></li> <li>✓ Teachers of supernatural knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teachers</li> <li>✓ Experts of traditional medicine</li> <li>✓ Soldiers for the protection of independence</li> </ul>
4.	New Order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Vote getters for government politicians</li> <li>✓ Actors of <i>syiar/dakwah</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Teachers of Qur'an reading and instruction</li> <li>✓ Martial art teachers</li> <li>✓ Experts of traditional medicine</li> <li>✓ Vote getters for government politicians</li> </ul>
5.	Regional Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Vote getters for political parties</li> <li>✓ Actors of <i>syiar/dakwah</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Martial art teachers</li> <li>✓ Experts of traditional medicine</li> <li>✓ Vote getters for political parties</li> <li>✓ Political brokers</li> <li>✓ Economic brokers</li> <li>✓ High-rank politicians</li> </ul>

**Table 2. The Dynamics of the Socio-Political Role of Ulama and Jawara**

In addition to *ulama* and *jawara*, today *umaro* (formal leaders and members of the bureaucratic elite) in Banten also play an important role. The emergence of bureaucratic elites is related to education and Banteneese literate people. These new middle classes have their power base at the village, sub-district, district and provincial levels. Nevertheless, their formal power in government goes hand

in hand with that of the *kyai* and *jawara* as informal leaders who have become deeply entrenched in the local culture.

Bureaucrats are people who work in the bureaucracy and the government in power uses them to carry out public services in accordance with the aspirations of the people. A bureaucracy is a type of organization that is meant to perform administrative tasks by systematically coordinating the work of many people.<sup>145</sup> Originally, a bureaucracy was established through which government decisions could be systematically implemented through state apparatuses. Political decisions can only benefit every citizen if the government has a responsive, systematic and efficient bureaucracy. Max Weber, as quoted by Sunatra, suggested that a bureaucracy has four main features, they are (1) the existence of a hierarchical structure involving the top-down delegation of authority in an organization; (2) positions with each having clear duties and responsibilities; (3) the existence of rules, regulations, and formal standards governing the organization and the conduct of its members; (4) technically qualified persons employed on a career basis, with promotions based on qualifications and appearance.<sup>146</sup>

In contrast to *ulama* and *jawara*, the leadership style of the *umaro* in Banten, following Weber's theory, can be classified as rational leadership or legal-rational authority. The power of this type of leadership mainly lies in the position or status owned by persons as their legal-rational authority. In legal-rational authority or leadership, he/she is in charge in a legal way, and his/her followers only follow rules that have become constitutional decrees.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Wahyudi Kumorotomo, *Etika Administrasi Negara* (Jakarta: PT RajaGrafindo Persada, 2002), 62.

<sup>146</sup> Sunatra, “*Integrasi dan Konflik Kedudukan Politik Jawara dan Ulama dalam Budaya Lokal: Studi Kasus Kepemimpinan di Banten*,” 67.

<sup>147</sup> Arifin, *Charisma and Rationalisation in a Modernising Pesantren*, 10–11.

That is why there are virtually no blind obedient followers or subordinates in this leadership style.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Khoerul Rosyadi, *Mistik Politik Gus Dur* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jendela Kacamata, 2004), 145.



### CHAPTER III.

## SHEIKH ‘ABD AL-QADIR AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE *WAWACAN SEH* TRADITION



In the previous Chapter, I explained the history of the early Islamization process in Banten up to the moment it had become a political force, the Sultanate of Banten. This chapter deals with the impact of Islamization and the impact of early Islamic politics in Banten on the formation of new cultures and traditions rooted in Islamic teachings. Some Islamized areas, such as Banten, produced not only a new dynasty but also a variety of cultural traditions. Some of these traditions came into being because of the birth of new cultures inspired by Islamic teachings, although most of them had strong roots in local culture and tradition.<sup>1</sup>

One of the Islamic teachings that attracted much attention from the local Banten community at the beginning of the spread of Islam is the concept of sanctity. In fact, throughout the history of religion and humankind, sanctity is a general concept manifest in the form of culture, tradition, and ritual, including in Islam.<sup>2</sup> The concept of sanctity not only refers to God who is considered the most sacred entity but also refers to places and people who are considered sacred and to have supernatural qualities. Most of the new traditions are the result of a meeting between local culture and Islamic teachings in which the concept of sanctity is its melting point. In Banten, studying the role of the mystical figure of Sheikh AQJ is one of the entrances to understand Banten's hybrid cultures. The Bantenese believe that AQJ was a holy man endowed with supernatural qualities and believing in him is a kind of "Islamic" replacement of the old concept of sanctity able to mediate between society and God.

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<sup>1</sup> Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since C. 1200*, 59.

<sup>2</sup> For a further explanation of the concept of sanctity in Islam see Chodkiewicz, "*Konsep Kesucian dan Wali dalam Islam*."

In anthropology, according to Rapport and Overing, in the 1960s there was a movement away from the initial emphasis on culture as customary or patterned behavior to an emphasis of culture as a system of ideas, or a structure of symbolic meaning. Every culture is understood, in later assessments, as a system of shared mental representations.<sup>3</sup> David Schneider sees culture as consisting of “elements defined and distinguished in certain societies as representations of the total realities of life in which people live and die.”<sup>4</sup> In this perspective, culture is not just shared entity; it is divided intersubjectivity.<sup>5</sup>

In the systemic Parsonian/Weberian view, the ‘symbol—and meaning—centered’ concept of culture has become the core of the unified theory of action designed to provide authoritative theoretical relationships between all social sciences.<sup>6</sup> Culture, as a conceptual structure consisting of representations of reality, is understood to orient, direct, and organize actions in the system by providing each with its own logic. Culture provides goals to the social system and ensures their balances. It is the nature of a culture—which maintains balances—that makes it dynamic, not static. The dynamic nature of culture is determined by its reaction when it is faced with a new, other culture and perspective. It then produces at least three actions: i.e. maintaining, adjusting, or replacing it.

The subject of anthropology has gradually changed over the last twenty years. Today, anthropologists rarely seek a stable or authentic cultural form; they are usually more

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<sup>3</sup> Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing, *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 95.

<sup>4</sup> David Schneider, “Notes Toward a Theory of Culture,” in *Meaning in Anthropology*, ed. K. Basso and H. Selby (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 206.

<sup>5</sup> See Roy D’Andrade, “Cultural Meaning Systems,” in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*, ed. R. Shweder and R. LeVine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> See Johannes Fabian, *Moments of Freedom: Anthropology and Popular Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 3–4, 6.



concerned with revealing how local people respond to historical change and global influence. The growing literature on the flow of transnational ideas, global institutions, and cultural mixtures reflects this shift in attention. The rising awareness of cultural interpenetration has, in turn, been instrumental in criticizing earlier conceptions of “culture” that made it too stable, limited and homogeneous to be useful in a world characterized by migration (voluntary or forced), cheap travel, international marketing, and telecommunication. Contemporary social theory has shifted its focus to phenomena such as globalization, transnational movement, nationalism, and the situation of diaspora communities.

In today's digital era, many concepts in anthropology and sociology are challenged by rapid social and cultural changes which led to many new debates on sociological and anthropological issues. If in the previous decade the diaspora and the displacement of people became a factor of social and cultural change as in the history of the development of religious reform in Indonesia, as illustrated in Azra's dissertation,<sup>7</sup> open telecommunications and information now provide significant new instruments of movement. The fundamental issue of cultural and social change is the way people think in the face of reality. In fact, understanding these changes requires not only deep study of the concepts of globalization, modernity, and identity but also a more detailed account of how “religion” is continually defined in new ways and this is important as “religion” plays a significant role in the process of social and cultural change in Indonesia.

In a recent critique of colonial studies, Frederick Cooper questioned the utility of the sacred trinity of “identity”, “globalization” and “modernity”. He demands a higher level of specificity in academic discourse and demands a study that reads colonialism not as a story that is told against the

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<sup>7</sup> Azra, *The Origin of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*.

backdrop of the rise of modernity, but rather as encounters where concepts such as “nation”, “modern”, and “religion” are given meaning.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, an explanation of the history of religious development is necessary, including how society interprets religion. Therefore, more specifically, the discussion in this chapter will focus on: 1) the process of forming new cultures and traditions that are the results of cultural adjustments between local culture and Islamic teachings, as well as the shift of the Bantenese worldview; 2) the sacred teachings of ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani and their role in the formation of the *Wawacan Sch* and other traditions in Banten; and 3) the vernacularization and transmission of the *wawacan* text in Banten.

### A. The Popularity of Abd al-Qadir

For Indonesian Muslims, Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani (AQJ) is and has been very famous. He was known throughout the country both in Sufi circles and among those who were not at all interested in Sufism. His name is mentioned in almost every traditional religious ceremony and people read the *al-Fātiḥah*<sup>9</sup> in his name and his name is mentioned after that of the Prophet and his companions. It seems that, even though he died hundreds of years ago and never set foot in Indonesia, his influence is still essential in the minds of the Indonesian Muslims, including the Bantenese people.

Sheikh AQJ died in Baghdad in 1166 AD / 561 H. The attribution of “al-Jailani” or “al-Kaylan” refers to the place where he was born.<sup>10</sup> Many scholars think that Gilan is a

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<sup>8</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> *Al-Fātiḥah* is the name of the first *surah* in the *Qur’an*. Besides being a *surah* that must be read in prayer, Muslims will usually read it to pray for someone who has died. They believe that by doing so the one who prays will be blessed by God and his sins would be reduced. Therefore, the reading of *al-Fātiḥah* is also called *hadiah* (*i.* a gift).

<sup>10</sup> Ibn al-Imad, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab, Jilid VI* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1993), 330–336.

region in northern Iran but according to van Bruinessen, the Kurds claimed that he was born in the Gilan region in South Kurdistan, 150 kilometers northeast of Baghdad. Therefore, many people call him *Gawth al-Kurdi* (the Kurdish Succor). The Qadiriyya Order had many followers in Kurdistan and there is a family of a *tarekat* sheikh who claims to be AQJ's direct descendants.<sup>11</sup>

Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani was born and educated in a Sufi family. At the age of 18, he went to Baghdad to study (1095 M / 488 H). He attended *fiqh* lessons from several scholars of the Hanbali School such as Abu al-Wafa' b. 'Uqayl, Abu al-Khattab, Abu al-Husayn Muhammad b. al-Qadhi Abi Ya'la and Abu Sa'd al-Mubarak al-Mukharrimi (the leader of Hanbali School of Law) until he obtained his certificate from his teacher. Since 1127 he taught and issued fatwas (in the Hanbali School of thought) to the public until the end of his life. Seven years later, in 1134, he received the blessing of his best friend and Sufi teacher, Yusuf al-Hamadani, to establish a *madrasa* and a *ribāth*, a place to perform *sulūk* and Sufi exercises in Baghdad. Until he died, he used his *ribāth* as a place to live with his family as well as a place to teach students who also lived with him.<sup>12</sup>

Among the Sufis, Sheikh AQJ is recognized as *gawth* (succor) or *quthb al-awliya* (Pole of the Saints), who has reached the highest level of sainthood. Many scholars have narrated his teachings and the miraculous events surrounding his life. Even Sheikh Mawfiq al-Din testified that there were few stories about the *karāma* (a. miraculous event or supernatural power) of others that were more extraordinary than those of Sheikh AQJ and that almost no saint was venerated more than he.<sup>13</sup> His glorification and the abundant stories of his *keramat* shaped the people's belief that he is the

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<sup>11</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 211.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Imad, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab*, Jilid VI, 331–332.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

greatest saint who was given the authority to help other people in distress. The people admired and loved no other saint as much as Sheikh AQJ. Everywhere, parents tell stories about his *keramat* to their children, and in almost every traditional religious ceremony people present their reading of *al-Fātiḥah* to pray for him.

The Sheikh's popularity spread widely over the Islamic world. Although his teachings were not as much discussed as those of other Sufis such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi, they attracted the curiosity of scholars who tried to find the answer to the puzzling question of his success and his popularity and how and why exactly Sheikh AQJ became so popular throughout the Islamic world.<sup>14</sup> If looked at closely, his popularity in Indonesia was caused by two interrelated and reciprocal phenomena, namely the influence of the spread of the Qadiriyya Order and the tendency of the Indonesian people to pay much attention to mystical matters. The Qadiriyya Order, especially the Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN), from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, gained many followers in all parts of Indonesia. In addition, stories about the Sheikh's *keramat* are considered able of providing for the needs of traditional societies for supernatural powers. Both of these explain perfectly why he was and is so popular in Indonesian society, even today.

### 1. Abd al-Qadir and His Keramat Influence

The popularity of AQJ in Indonesia cannot be seen in isolation from the distinctive characteristics of the Indonesian people, including the Bantenese. The distinctive characteristics of Indonesians can be seen from the great attention they pay to invulnerability and

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<sup>14</sup> See J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Order in Islam* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 40–41; Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 182–183; Drewes and Poerbatjaraka, *De Mirakelen van Abdoelkadir Djaelani*, 24–30.

supernatural powers.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps, the considerable attention of the Javanese to supernatural phenomena departs from *kebatinan* (j. esoteric), the esoteric values that are patterned into their beliefs and philosophy of life. This is in line with Niels Mulder's view that Javanese life is represented in *kebatinan* and its practices which he termed "Javanism" which means the Javanese view of life that emphasizes inner tranquility, harmony, and balance, the attitude of *nrimo* (j. acceptance) of all that occurs while placing individuals under society and society under the universe.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, this *kebatinan* attitude, according to Mulder, is often regarded as the essence of Javanism. It means that the lifestyle of the Javanese people is *kebatinan*. He explained the function of *kebatinan* in life by stating that it includes the implementation of all forms of Javanese culture which also have meaning beyond material nature. For example: believing in forecasting, believing in the possibilities that influence future events, interpreting symbols, and believing in the supernatural powers of sacred objects and graves.<sup>17</sup>

The attitude of the Indonesian people, especially of the Javanese, towards sacred objects and supernatural powers certainly provided room for the presence of Islamic teachings and figures with the same attributes. Many scholars acknowledge that the key of accepting Islam as a new religion in archipelago society was the existence of aspects in Islam that were similar to earlier community beliefs. Thus, the arrival of Islam is not regarded as the entrance of a new religion which completely replaced the practices of previous beliefs, for example, the tradition of the pilgrimage to shrines, praying for the ancestors, and the

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<sup>15</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 210.

<sup>16</sup> Niels Mulder, *Kepribadian Jawa dan Pembangunan Nasional* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1973), 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

*slametan* tradition (j. ritual, collective meal). Of course, when Islam was accepted in society, the local rituals and traditions were reinterpreted and adapted to Islamic doctrine. For example, the prayer and readings during a *slametan* and the pilgrimage tradition to shrines were replaced by Islamic traditions; non-Islamic songs were replaced by hymns taken from Islamic literature that tell of the Prophet Muhammad and the heroic stories of the piety of Islamic figures commonly called *manāqib* (hagiography), including the hagiography of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani.

The substitution of hymns from local literature with the hagiography of Muslim figures, and especially the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ which includes stories about his sacredness and piety, are what later made him a popular figure in society. In Banten, many parents told stories about the sacred figure of AQJ to their children. In fact, in some areas of Banten, there was a “song” attributing honor to AQJ that was sung through the mosque’s loudspeakers every time before *azan isya* and *subuh* (taking turns with the reading of *tarhim*) while waiting for people to come to the mosque.

The story of the saintliness of Sheikh AQJ which is full of sacredness and magical power was handed down from generation to generation and has entered the collective memory of Muslim communities in the world, including Indonesia. These people react to AQJ’s saintliness in various ways, either by wholehearted acceptance in ritual forms or by total rejection because it is considered an excessive cult of a person. His tomb, from the past until now, is still crowded with pilgrims from all over Muslim majority countries.

For most Muslim communities, especially in Java, a saint (*wali*) is regarded as the person closest to Allah and is His beloved, so he is believed to have obtained the gift of supernatural power called *keramat*. Saints are highly

respected by the community even after they have died. We can observe this from the way the Indonesian people treat the *wali* and from the large number of pilgrims who regularly visit their shrines, such as pilgrimages to the nine *Wali Sanga* who are believed to have been *wali* who lived in Java.

Sheikh AQJ, as the leader of the saints, has an enormous charisma. Therefore, narratives about his greatness and supernatural power spread widely among the people. The extraordinary stories about Sheikh AQJ's life which are often told by the public seem to be excessive. According to van Bruinessen, the first life story can be found in *Bahjat al-Asrār*, written by Ali b. Yusuf al-Shattanaufi (d. 713/1314 or one and a half century after AQJ's death). The book contains many supernatural action stories about AQJ. The next author who doubted many excessive stories of him was al-Dhahabi (d. 1348) in *Ta'rikh al-Islām*. Shortly thereafter, 'Afifuddin al-Yafi'i (d. 1367) compiled the hagiography (*manāqib*) that established AQJ's name as the greatest miracle expert: *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir fī Ikhtīṣār Manāqib al-Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir*. This book has become the basic reference for many *manāqib* circulating in Indonesia. After al-Yafi'i, other scholars wrote *manāqib* which were written in more "extreme" ways, the most prominent of which is *Lujjayn al-Dānī* by Ja'far b. Hasan al-Barzanji (d. 1766), the author of the most famous *mawlid* book in Indonesia.<sup>18</sup> In addition, many *fiqh* scholars presented the story of his supernatural power as evidence of the *keramat* a *wali* possesses.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 211.

<sup>19</sup> See for example: Ibn Hajar al-Haytami, *Al-Fatawa al-Hadithiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, n.d.); Taj al-Din al-Subki, *Thabaqat al-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubra* (Cairo: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiya, 1964); Muhammad Mahfudh al-Tarmasi, *Bughyat al-Adhkiyā' fī Baḥthi 'an Karāmāt al-Awliyā'* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 2008).

The discussions of AQJ's supernatural stories and authority and the existence of evidence of *keramat* in classical *fiqh* books indicates two important points. *First*, the supernatural power or *keramat* of the Sheikh is not only recognized by Sufis but also by *fiqh* scholars. *Second*, his supernatural power is considered a historical reality rather than a myth. This is not the place to discuss and prove whether AQJ's supernatural stories are based on historical facts or mystical but for Indonesians both (historical facts and myths) are mixed and very difficult to separate or it is probably more apt to say that they do not care about this and simply prefer to believe them. The excessive supernatural power of the legends offer more psychological satisfaction and supernatural power to those who believe it. According to the oral traditions of the people in Cirebon and Banten, Sheikh AQJ has once been to Java. According to van Bruinessen, in the *Serat Centhini*, one of its figures, Danadarma, claimed to have studied with "Seh Kadir Jalena" in a college (*j. padepokan/peguron*) in Gunung Karang, Banten.<sup>20</sup>

The community's belief in the greatness of AQJ's *keramat* and supernatural power gave birth to various rituals and traditions. The community performs these rituals for specific reasons, some of which are: to get the *luberan* (*j. overflow*) from AQJ's *keramat*,<sup>21</sup> to gain supernatural power and invulnerability (such as in *pencak*

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<sup>20</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 209.

<sup>21</sup> I heard this term from Sukri, one of the residents of Tirtayasa whom I interviewed shortly after we attended the *maca seh* ritual one day before the circumcision of a boy. According to him, the *manaqib* reading or *maca seh* is an effort to get "*luberan*" (overflow) from Kangjeng Seh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. The *luberan* he meant is the abundance of *keramat* and the dignity and piritual power of the sheikh, which he believes, will avoid all distress and magical disturbances during the circumcision process and its celebration. "Of course, with Allah's permission," he added. Interview with Sukri (53) on June 24, 2018 at Tirtayasa.



*silat* and *debus*),<sup>22</sup> to avoid danger such as in the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual on the last Wednesday of the month of Safar,<sup>23</sup> to get business success, and to honor him. In this case, it is clear that in the beginning of the Islamization process in Indonesia, the Sufi doctrine of the sainthood could be adapted to the characteristics of Indonesian society which indeed is inclined towards magic and is obsessed with supernatural power (j. *kesakten*) and invulnerability (j. *kekebalan*).

## 2. Abd al-Qadir and the role of His *Tarekat*

The spread of the stories of AQJ's spiritual power cannot be seen separated from the role of the Sufi order's sheikhs and followers, especially Sufi orders that have affiliations or genealogical chains with him such as the Qadiriyya, Naqshabandiyya, and Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya Orders. The Qadiriyya Order was founded by Sheikh AQJ whereas the Naqshabandiyya was founded by Baha' al-Din al-Naqshabandi al-Bukhari (d. 1389 M / 791 H). According to Trimmingham, the Qadiriyya Order became one of the largest *tarekat* in the Muslim world, with millions of followers in Yemen, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, India, and Africa.<sup>24</sup> It is not known exactly how the Qadiriyya Order came to Indonesia, but what we do know is that Hamzah Fansuri from Barus, North Sumatra was a follower of the Order and that he had many students.<sup>25</sup> Probably, the earliest reference to Sheikh AQJ in an Indonesian work and indirectly to the Qadiriyya Order may

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<sup>22</sup> See Gabriel Facal, *Keyakinan dan Kekuatan Seni Bela Diri Silat Banten* (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat*; G. F. Pijper, *Beberapa Studi tentang Sejarah Islam di Indonesia, 1900-1950* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1984), 153–165.

<sup>24</sup> Trimmingham, *The Sufi Order in Islam*, 43–44.

<sup>25</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Some Aspects of Sufism as Understood and Practised among the Malays*, ed. Shirle Gordon (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1963), 51.

is in the poems of Fansuri, who lived in Aceh in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century:

*Hamza nin asalnya Fansuri  
Mendapat wujud di tanah Shahr Nawi;  
Beroleh khilafat 'ilmu yang 'ali  
daripada 'Abdu'l-Qadir Sayyid Jailani*  
(Hamzah is originally of Fansur,  
He acquired his existence in the land of Shahr-i-Naw;  
He achieved his lofty spiritual knowledge  
From 'Abdu'l-Qadir Sayyid Jailani)

*Sheikh al-Fansuri terlalu 'ali,  
Beroleh khilafat di benua Baghdadi...*  
(The sheikh Fansuri is most lofty [in learning]  
He attained to his spiritual knowledge in the land of  
Baghdad...)

*Hamzah nin 'ilmunya zahir  
Ustaznya syeikh 'Abdu'l-Qadir...*  
(Hamzah's knowledge [learning] is clearly manifest,  
His teacher was sheikh 'Abdu'l-Qadir...)<sup>26</sup>

From his poems we can draw the simple conclusion that Hamzah Fansuri affiliated himself with the Qadiriyya Order and may even have been a caliph of the *tarekat* (*khalifa*). However, he never completely or exactly explained the concept behind or the *tarekat*'s technique and there is no indication that he had ever taught it (his name, for example, is not listed in the genealogy of the known Qadiriyya Order in the archipelago).<sup>27</sup> Also, in explaining his more systematic metaphysical experience of mysticism he never mentioned Sheikh AQJ or the Qadiriyya but referred to Abu Yazid al-Bistami, Junayd al-

<sup>26</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970), 11.

<sup>27</sup> See al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*; G.W.J. Drewes and L.F. Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* (Dordrech-Holland: Foris, 1986).

Baghdadi, al-Hallaj, Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, Ibn ‘Arabi, Abd al-Rahman Jami’, Farid al-Din Attar, and other figures. In addition, the following caliph, Shams al-Din Pasai, also never referred to Sheikh AQJ.

The same thing happened to Sunan Gunung Jati, the founder of the Banten Sultanate who was never reported to have been initiated in the Qadiriyya Order. Sunan Gunung Jati, according to Laffan, was a student of Hamzah Fansuri before he departed for Banten and founded the Islamic kingdom.<sup>28</sup> Although there is no clear record of his initiation in the Qadiriyya Order from Hamzah Fansuri, in fact in almost every *hadrot* reading (usually during *slametan* events) in Banten, the name Sunan Gunung Jati and his son, Maulana Hasanuddin, are mentioned after Sheikh AQJ. Different information can be found in the *Sajarah Banten* which tells that Sunan Gunung Jati took his son, Hasanuddin, to Mecca before founding the Islamic Kingdom of Banten to perform the *haji* and to have him initiated into the Naqshabandiyya Order.<sup>29</sup>

Sunan Gunung Jati, known as one of the nine saints in Java (*Wali Sanga*), is a historical figure who became a prominent *ulama* in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and who founded the Islamic Kingdoms of Banten and Cirebon. According to van Bruinessen, the stories in the *Sajarah Banten* chronicle, especially regarding Hasanuddin’s allegiance to the Naqshabandiyya Order and Sunan Gunung Jati who followed the Kubrawiyya, Shadhiliyya, Syattariya and Naqshabandiyya Orders, were only stories designed for the sake of the political-spiritual legitimacy for the Sultanate he founded.<sup>30</sup> He said that the

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<sup>28</sup> Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 34–36; Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Van Bruinessen, “Shari’a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate,” 265–267.

Naqshabandiyya Order had not spread massively when Sunan Gunung Jati and Maulana Hasanuddin visited Mecca and Medina and there has never been any other information that confirmed that Sunan Gunung Jati followed the *tarekat*.

Nonetheless, it is possible that the founders of the Banten Sultanate had indeed joined several other *tarekat*. In fact, rumors about Sheikh AQJ's magical power and *keramat* that were widespread in the Banten sultanate's territory proved that the Qadiriyya Order and its influence had been there for a long time. Some historians, including van Bruinessen, acknowledge that the Qadiriyya Order is a *tarekat* that was spread in the archipelago and the first person to join this *tarekat* was Hamzah Fansuri.<sup>31</sup> This makes it highly likely that the two founding fathers of the Banten Sultanate were members of the Qadiriyya Order, moreover, the names of both are always mentioned after that of Sheikh AQJ during the *hadorot* or the *al-Fātiḥah* ritual in Banten society.

There is not much information about the development of the *tarekat* in the Banten Sultanate after Sunan Gunung Jati and Hasanuddin came to power, until the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> Sultan of Banten, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, when Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari became his spiritual advisor. This happened because at that time the *tarekat* was an exclusive spiritual association among court circle; or perhaps the Sultans thought that Sufism, as embodied in the practice of the *tarekat*, was not the only form of Islamic learning that had to be highlighted given that it was still a period of the early Islamization in Banten.

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<sup>31</sup> See Van Bruinessen, "*Tarekat Qadiriyyah dan Ilmu Syaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani di India, Kurdistan, dan Indonesia*," 69; Atlas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*, 11; Drewes and Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri*; Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*, 11.

In addition, it is interesting to quote van Bruinessen's argument on this matter. He said that Javanese chronicles from Cirebon and Banten tell how the founder of the Islamic kingdom visited the Arab land and followed a number of *tarekat*. *Tarekat* are seen as sources of spiritual power for legitimizing and strengthening the position of the Sultan. It is clear that the Sultans were not interested in efforts that gave them the same supernatural power as their subjects, in other words, their *tarekat* and spiritual power became exclusive to courtiers.<sup>32</sup>

The development of the Qadiriyya Order in Banten which influence became increasingly significant can be identified since the existence of intellectual-spiritual relations between Banten and Mecca in the 1630s, or since Abu al-Mafakhir Mahmud Abd al-Qadir came to power (the fourth ruler of the Banten Sultanate).<sup>33</sup> In the first contact between Mecca and Banten, the Banten Ruler received the title "Sultan" for the first time to legitimize his power. In addition, he also received spiritual-religious guidance both by receiving the *ijaza* of the Qadiriyya Order and the answers to several theological questions related to Sufism in relation to the books of Hamzah Fansuri and al-Ghazali.<sup>34</sup>

The legitimacy of power received from Mecca continued and became a tradition for the rulers of Banten after Sultan Abu al-Mafakhir. At the time of the sixth Banten Ruler, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Banten was in its heydays and at the same time heralded the end of its glory. It was during this period that historians usually see an early indication of the emergence of *tarekat* practices that were associated with supernatural power (*kesakten*) and

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<sup>32</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Shari'a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate."

<sup>33</sup> Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 196–197.

<sup>34</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Shari'a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate," 167.

invulnerability (*kekebalan*). During the time of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, one of the scholars who guided and taught Islamic knowledge was Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari. Aside from being the religious teacher of the crown prince—Sultan Haji, the son of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa—he also became the religious advisor of the Sultanate and the Sultan’s son-in-law. Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari mastered the knowledge of Islam and he became the *murshid* of several *tarekat*, such as the Qadiriyya, Khalwatiyya, Naqshabandiyya, Shattariyya, and Ba'alawiyya Orders.<sup>35</sup>

During the time of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Sheikh Yusuf’s influence was immense in the field of Islamic teaching and he had great spiritual power. This is understandable because at that time the Sultanate of Banten faced its first major confrontation with the Dutch colonialists and to confront them, Sheikh Yusuf taught spiritual power and invulnerability to the soldiers with techniques taken from *tarekat* teachings. However, it is interesting to reveal that, at that time, there was no significant evidence of the existence of *debus* as an immunity technique combined with *pencak silat* (martial arts) and publicly staged musical performances. According to Djajadiningrat, the editor of the *Sajarah Banten* chronicle, at that time the ruler of Banten only had few artistic hobbies such as *raket* and *dedewaan* but there was no information about *debus* held in the public sphere.<sup>36</sup>

Although during Sheikh Yusuf’s time the *tarekat* had not yet become the spiritual organization we know today, its role and influence in the practices of spiritual power and

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<sup>35</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 168; Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 40–45.

<sup>36</sup> According to Djajadiningrat, *raket* is the Bantinese term for the *wayang wong* (theatre with people who act like “puppets”) performance art. He could not explain the meaning of *dedewaan*. See Djajadiningrat, *Tinjauan Kritis tentang Sejarah Banten: Sumbangan bagi Pengenalan Sifat-Sifat Penulisan Sejarah Jawa*, 58.

invulnerability were increasingly widespread and they were taught to the people throughout the Banten region. This was done because it was part of the strategy to strengthen the fighting spirit of the soldiers and to invite the people in Banten to join forces against the Dutch. This is confirmed by a statement by Atsusi Ota who said that the spread of Islam to the interior or remote areas of Banten only occurred at the end of the seventeenth century.<sup>37</sup>

Of course, this is an interesting fact because it turns out that the tradition of supernatural power and invulnerability, such as in *debus* and *pencak silat*, had a flow of “motion close to the source” rather than a “motion away from the source” as stated by some observers.<sup>38</sup> The reason is the fact that what was first taught to the Banten community was not a *tarekat* with all the strictness of its spiritual method and its organization, but pragmatic teaching, such as the techniques to obtain spiritual power and invulnerability that were “borrowed” from *tarekat* teachings.

The influence of the *tarekat* and the tradition of teaching spiritual power did not stop after the arrest of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa and Sheikh Yusuf. Even so, after Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari and Sultan Agung Tirtayasa’s deaths, there are no reliable historical data to identify whether the Qadiriyya Order still developed dynamically or that it remained influential among the Banten aristocratic elite. Because of the lack of data, it makes sense that no

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<sup>37</sup> Ota Atsusi, “Orthodoxy and Reconciliation: Islamic Strategies in the Kingdom of Banten, C. 1520-1813,” in *Islam in Contention: Rethinking Islam and State in Indonesia*, ed. Ota Atsusi (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2010), 409.

<sup>38</sup> See Kiki Muhamad Hakiki, “Debus Banten: Pergeseran Otentisitas dan Negosiasi Islam-Budaya Lokal,” *Kalam: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 1 (2013): 1–20; Huriyudin, “Ekspresi Seni Budaya Islam di Tengah Kemajemukan Masyarakat Banten,” *Jurnal Lektur Keagamaan* 12, no. 1 (2014): 257–296; Hasani Ahmad Said, “Islam dan Budaya di Banten: Menelisik Tradisi Debus dan Maulid,” *Kalam: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam* 10, no. 1 (2016): 109–138.

studies were conducted to examine whether the Qadiriyya Order was still practiced during the reign of Sultan Abu al-Nash ‘Abd al-Qahhar or Sultan Haji (r. 1683-1687), Sultan Abu al-Fadl Muhammad Yahya (r. 1687-1690), Sultan Abu al-Mahasin Muhammad Zain al-‘Abidin (r. 1690-1733), Sultan Abu al-Fath Muhammad Zain al-‘Arifin (r. 1733-50), and Sultan Abul Mahali Muhammad Wasi Zain al-‘Alimin (r. 1752-3). This 70-year period can be seen as a “historiographical gap” in the history of the Qadiriyya Order in Banten. The lack of historical data in this period means that the notion that Sultan Haji himself was a student of Sheikh Yusuf’s *tarekat* is left without substantiation.

Seventy years after Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa death, the “historiographical gap” ended by the discovery of a manuscript from Banten written in 1186/1772 and kept in the Leiden University Libraries Special Collections (Cod.Or. 1842). This text is referred to by Voorhoeve as ‘*Risalah Qadiriiah*.’ The manuscript describes the various meanings of Sufi terms, the method of remembrance, and the significance of obedience to Sufi sheikhs. The final paragraph of the manuscript contains recommendations to the reader to present the reading of the *al-Fātiḥah* to genealogical sheikhs. In the colophon of the text is stated that a Meccan Sheikh, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭabarī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shāfi‘ī, authorized the Sultan of Banten, Arif Zain al-Ashiqin (ruling 1753 -1777), to spread the contents of the teachings in the manuscript. In awarding the *ijaza*, the Sultan was referred to by the author as *al-Khalīfah al-Sulṭān ibn al-Sulṭān Abū al-Naṣr Muḥammad ‘Ārif Shifā’ Zayn al-‘Āshiqīn al-Qādirī al-‘Alwānī al-Rifā‘ī al-Bantanī al-Shāfi‘ī*.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Petrus Voorhoeve, *Codices Manuscripts VII Hand List of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Collections in the Netherlands in Bibliotheca Universitatis Lugduni Batavorum* (The Hague: Leiden University Press, 1980), 463.



The title of the manuscript explains not only the spiritual position of Sultan Arif Zayn al-Ashiqin in the Sufi lineage as the caliph of the Qadiriyya Order, but also the level of influence the *tarekat* had in Banten. Martin van Bruinessen speculated about the cause of the Sultan's interest in becoming a member of the Qadiriyya Order. According to him, he was interested in following the *tarekat* because of the socio-political context at that time in which Banten was in a very precarious position facing *vis-a-vis* the Dutch, who had sent his father into exile and were to completely abolish the Sultanate in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the Sultan's interest in Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani who had a reputation as a spiritual powerful protector. Therefore, it is not surprising that Sultan Muhammad Arif Zayn al-Ashiqin has always been associated with spiritual power (*kesaktian*) and invulnerability (*kekebalan*) techniques known as *debus*, in which the supernatural assistance of Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani and Ahmad Rifai was invoked.<sup>40</sup>

The role and influence of the Qadiriyya Order under Sultan Arif Zayn al-Ashiqin is inseparable from the figure of the great Banten *ulama* of his time who was also a royal family member but who lived outside the palace, Sheikh ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani. Van Bruinessen called him one of the “two great *ulama* of Banten” next to Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari because of his role and influence in the Banten sultanate court.<sup>41</sup> Abdullah was actually a family member of the Sultan, his mother was the granddaughter of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Nyai Aishah, and his father was an *ulama* from Mecca, ‘Abd al-Qahhar. With the depth of his knowledge of Islam he often acted as Sultan Arif Zayn al-‘Ashiqin’s personal religious advisor. Abdullah wrote two of his works on the Sufi question

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<sup>40</sup> Van Bruinessen, “*Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia*,” 367.

<sup>41</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 267.

about the *Wujudiyya* to answer the Sultan's questions. The two works are *Mashāhid al-Nāsik fī Maqāmāt al-Sālik* and *Fath al-Muluk li Yashila ilā Mālik al-Mulk 'alā Qā'idah Ahl al-Sulūk*.<sup>42</sup>

Abdullah al-Bantani is listed as the *murshid* of the Shattariyya,<sup>43</sup> Qadiriyya,<sup>44</sup> Naqshabandiyya,<sup>45</sup> and Rifa'iyya Orders.<sup>46</sup> Abdullah al-Bantani received the same *ijaza* of the Qadiriyya Order as Sultan Arif Zayn al-'Ashiqin (or he was even the one who took the Sultan to Mecca to meet Muhammad ibn Ali al-Tabari) as Voorhoeve said.<sup>47</sup> The interesting thing about his

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<sup>42</sup> The first text that I used here is a part of manuscript I got from a resident of Pontang. Now, the manuscript is stored in Laboratorium Bantenologi, UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. The second text I took from a copy of the text stored in National Library of Indonesia (Perpustakaan Nasional) with the code MS. A III. See 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): 275–302; However, for other Abdullah al-Bantani's works, Brockelmann mentions two works: *Risālat Shurūṭ al-Ḥajj* and *Kitāb al-Masā'il*. See Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte Der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden: Brill, 1949), 422.

<sup>43</sup> Abd Allah b. Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani, *Mashāhid al-Nāsik fī Maqāmāt al-Sālik* (Serang, n.d.).

<sup>44</sup> Abd Allah b. Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani, *Fath al-Mulūk li Yašila Ilā Mālik al-Mulk 'alā Qā'idat Ahl al-Sulūk*, MS. A III (Jakarta, n.d.).

<sup>45</sup> He received the *ijaza* of the Naqshabandiyya Order from Sayyid Ibrahim al-Madani b. Muhammad Thahir al-Madani. See Kurniawan, "Konsep Tajalli 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Abd al-Qahhar al-Bantani dan Posisinya dalam Diskursus Wujudiyah di Nusantara."

<sup>46</sup> Bayu Suryaningrat, *Sajarah Cianjur Sareng Raden Aria Wira Tanu Dalem Cikundur, Cianjur* (Jakarta: Rukun Warga Cianjur, n.d.), 122.

<sup>47</sup> In this case, Voorhoeve notes: "(6) f.315v – 382r. A Qādiriyah-tract, dated H. 1186, ending on f.377v. At the beginning there is an Igaza from Muḥammad b. 'Ali al-Tabri (al-Tabari?) al-Husain (i) al-Safī'I to Sulṭān Abu n-Nasr Muḥammad 'Arif Zaen l-Ashiqin of Banten. f. 378r – 379r another igaza of the same. (this shaikh lived in Mecca; he was the teacher of 'Abd Allah b. 'Abd al-Qahhar of Banten, who resided in Tjiandjur (Western Java), cf. or 6586 p.312). f. 379r – 382r the formula of admission into the tariqa. \*CCo 2845\* Or. 1842." See Voorhoeve, *Codices Manuscripts VII Hand List of Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the University of Leiden and Other Collections in the Netherlands in Bibliotheca Universitatis Lugduni Batavorum*, 463.

relationship with the Sultan and his position in the *tarekat* is that even though he was a family member of the Banten Sultanate, historical data recorded that he decided to stay in Cianjur rather than reside in the palace.<sup>48</sup> There is no record that he taught the *tarekat* or invulnerability techniques and supernatural powers in Banten.<sup>49</sup>

After the period of Sultan Arif Shifa Zayn al-‘Ashiqin and the great *ulama* Abdullah al-Bantani, there is not much evidence of the spread of the *tarekat* in Banten. This is probably because the *tarekat* was still growing in a limited scope, i.e. among palace circles. Some Banten rulers after Sultan Arif Shifa Zayn al-‘Ashiqin were still greatly interested in Islamic knowledge, particularly Sufism and “*ngelmu Tuan Syeh*” or the supernatural powers and invulnerability techniques taken from the teachings of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. After Sultan Arif Shifa Zayn al-‘Ashiqin’s reign, his son, Sultan Abu al-Mafakhir Muhammad Aliyuddin or Sultan Aliyuddin I succeeded him and he was known as a Sultan who copied plenty of books in the form of *wawacan* dealing with Islamic teachings, the history of the Islamic struggle, and stories about prophets and saints. In addition to copying, he also

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<sup>48</sup> Abdullah al-Bantani married R. Modjanagara, a daughter of Raden Adipati Wira Tanu Datar IV (Raden Sabirudin), Adipati of Cianjur. Adipati Wira Tanu Datar IV was known as a good official. He was a pious person and has good mastery of religious knowledge. From this marriage, Abdullah had several children: 1) Raden Aria Mangkupraja who later became *Patih* of Cianjur and his descendants gave birth to many government officials in Cianjur; 2) Raden Muhammad Husein who later became *Pangulu Gede* in Cianjur; and 3) Nyi Bodedar, who later became the richest woman in Cianjur and she gave endowments of several hectares of land for religious reasons, one of the endowments that we can still find today is the Great Mosque of Cianjur. See Suryaningrat, *Sajarah Cianjur Sareng Raden Aria Wira Tanu Dalem Cikundur, Cianjur*, 122–124.

<sup>49</sup> There are three students mentioned in his work, *Fatḥ al-Mulūk*. They are: Qadhi Muḥammad Ṭāhir from Bogor, Haji Muḥammad ‘Alī from Cianjur, and Haji Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Hārūn al-Jālis from Cianjur. None of them were from Banten. see Bantani, *Fatḥ al-Mulūk li Yaṣila Ilā Mālik al-Mulk ‘alā Qā’idat Ahl al-Sulūk*; Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 270.

wrote about Sufi techniques such as *dhikr besar* (the great remembrance). It was a treatise on prayers, remembrance to Allah and prayers to the Prophet Muhammad (*salawat*).<sup>50</sup> Yet, there is no information about what Sufi practices he did.

The fall of the Banten Sultanate at the hands of the Dutch at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided a new direction for the spread of Islam in Banten, namely Islamization from the city to the countryside or from the center to the periphery. The destruction of the Banten court dispersed the Banten royal family and the *ulama* who had originally lived in the palace environment to remote areas of Banten, where they spread Islam massively. This process was also accompanied by the spread of palace-style Islamic traditions and developed in the new acculturation process of religious traditions.

The period of the most massive spread of the *tarekat* in Banten, in terms of acceptance among the public, was preceded by many waves of Banten students who returned from religious studies in Mecca in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such as Nawawi al-Bantani, Abdul Karim Tanara, Kyai Marzuki, Kyai Asnawi Caringin, Mama Bakri Sempur, Abuya Muqri and others. At that time, the Sufi Orders in the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina were expanding. The development of the *tarekat* was inevitable considering the context of the renewal of Islamic discourses which caused many new *tarekat* to emerge and which were usually derivative forms of earlier large and popular *tarekat*.<sup>51</sup>

In this regard, Trimmingham explained that many *tarekat* are derivative forms or the results of adaptations

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<sup>50</sup> Tb. Roesjan, *Sedjarah Banten* (Djakarta: Arif, 1954), 42.

<sup>51</sup> Regarding the relationship between the development of *tarekat* and Islamic reform, see Azyumardi Azra, *Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah dan Kepulauan Nusantara Abad XVII dan XVIII: Melacak Akar-Akar Pembaruan Pemikiran Islam di Indonesia*, IV. (Bandung: Mizan, 1998); Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*.

from the Qadiriyya Order which spread in various countries. He detailed the following: seven in India,<sup>52</sup> six in Turkey,<sup>53</sup> six in Yemen,<sup>54</sup> five in North Africa,<sup>55</sup> two in

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<sup>52</sup> (1) The Tarekat Banawa was active in Dekkan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; (2) Tarekat Ghawthiyyah, established by Muhammad Ghawth, Muhammad ibn Syah Mir ibn Ali (d. 1517). He claimed to be a descendant of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani through the line of Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1196); (3) Tarekat Junaidiyyah, established by Baha' al-Din al-Junaidi (d. 1515) in India. His oath (*bai'at*) into Tarekat Qadiriyya was taken with Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn al-Hasan, and then he claimed to be a descendant of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani; (4) Tarekat Kamaliyyah, established by Kamal al-Din al-Khitali (d. 1563-4); (5) Tarekat Miyan Khel, established by Mir Muhammad who was called Miyan Mir (l. Sind 1550, d. Lahore 1635) and the subject of a biography by Dara Shikoh entitled *Sakinat al-Awliya*; (6) Tarekat Qumaisiyyah, established by Abu al-Hayat ibn Mahmud (d. 1584), who claimed to be a descendant of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir, Abd al-Rahman (d. 1226); (7) Tarekat Hayat al-Mir, called after its founder. See Trimmingham, *The Sufi Order in Islam*, 271–273.

<sup>53</sup> (1) Tarekat Hindiyah, founded by Muhammad Gharib Allah al-Hindi; (2) Tarekat Khulusiyyah; (3) Tarekat Nawsyahi, spiritually from Makruf Chisti Qadiri but the name was given by Haji Muhammad (d. 1604-5) a disciple of *khalifa* Syah Makruf, Sulayman Syah; (4) Tarekat Rumiyyah, established by Isma'il al-Rumi, *Pir Thani* or 'the second teacher' (d. Istanbul in 1631), he was narrated to have founded more than 40 *Qadiri khaṅqah* in Turki and introduced a remembrance in a standing manner in which participants, with their arms stretched to the other's shoulders, read litanies, swinging from right to left; (5) Tarekat Nabulsiyyah; and (6) Tarekat Waslatiyyah. See *Ibid*.

<sup>54</sup> (1) Tarekat Ahdaliyyah, founded by Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Umar al-Ahdal, who was buried in Yemen; (2) Tarekat Asadiyyah, established by Afif al-Din Abd. Allah ibn Ali al-Asadi, who was also buried in Yemen; (3) Tarekat Musyariyyah was founded in Yemen in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; (4) Tarekat Urabiyyah, founded by Umar ibn Muhammad al-Urabi in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; (5) Tarekat Yafiiyyah, founded by Afif al-Din Abd Allah ibn As'ad al-Yafii (718-768 H/1318 1867 M); and (6) Tarekat Zaylaiyyah, established by Safi al-Din Ahmad ibn Umar al-Zaylai. See *Ibid*.

<sup>55</sup> (1) Tarekat Ammariyyah, founded by the Moroccan scholar, al-Hajj Mubarak al-Bukhari (the attribution referred to the connection with the black Sultan's bodyguard). In 1815, he himself served at the tomb of Bu Hammam in Algeria from Ammar Bu Sena (w.1780). He made determined efforts which attracted many followers and he established caliphs in many branches in Algeria and Tunisia; (2) Tarekat Bakaiyyah, founded by Ahmad al-Bakai al-Kunti (d. 1504 M). This *tarekat* spread to the west of Savana and the Sudan, as well as in the west of sub-Sahara Africa; (3) Tarekat Bu Aliyyah, centered in Nefta (where Bu Ali, its founder, was buried). It was active in Algeria, Tunis and Egypt (4) Tarekat Manzaliyyah, the name

Syria,<sup>56</sup> two in Egypt,<sup>57</sup> and one in Albania.<sup>58</sup> However, it is peculiar that Trimmingham does not mention the Qadiriyya branches that developed elsewhere, especially the Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) which had many followers and was very influential since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Indonesia and in Southeast Asia in general.

Hamid Algar also discussed hybrid *tarekat*, particularly in the case of the Qadiriyya and Naqshabandiyya Order. He discussed the case of Yusuf al-Hamadani (d. 536/1141) who began his career as a *fiqh* scholar who had studied in Baghdad under the guidance of Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi (a famous teacher of the Shafi'i School), although he himself was a follower of the Hanafi School. While in Baghdad, he interacted with Sheikh AQJ. This interaction contributed greatly to his intellectual evolution from *da'i* (Islamic proselytizer) and *faqih* (Islamic jurist) to a Sufi. The relationship between the two is also reflected in the relationship between the two, large universal Orders (*tarekat*), the Naqshabandiyya and the Qadiriyya. In a number of ways, the various branches of the Naqshabandiyya and Qadiriyya are interwoven, providing growth for different congregations. One branch was formed by Sheikh Muhammad Sadiq Arzinjani (d. 1210/1795) and his followers in Turkey; another is from

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taken from Ali ibn Ammar al-Manzali al-Syuaib—it was established in the 18<sup>th</sup> century—spread in Algeria and Tunis; and (5) Tarekat Jilaliyah which came to Maroko from Spain. Its founder claimed himself to be a descendant of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir, and he left Granada before it fell by Christian soldiers in 1492. See *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> (1) Daudiyyah was established by Abu Bakr ibn Dawud (w. 806 H/1403 M) in Damascus; (2) Samadiyyah, the founder was Muhammad al-Samadi (w. 997 H/1589 M). See *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> (1) Faridiyah; and (2) Qasimiyah. Faridiyah was inspired by the poet Umar ibn al-Farid (w. 1234 M), it was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while Qasimiyah was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> There was the Zinjiriyah Order in this area. The founder was Ali Baba of Crete. He was also a follower of the Qadiriyya Order. See *Ibid.*

Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas (d. 1875) in Indonesia and Malaysia.<sup>59</sup>

The Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) is a combined Sufi order, like the Sammaniyya Order,<sup>60</sup> and the spiritual techniques of the Qadiriyya and Naqshabandiyya are its main elements besides elements from outside the two. Today, this *tarekat* has many followers in Indonesia, in addition to the Naqshabandiyya Khalidiyya Order. This *tarekat* is the only one among the *ṭarīqa mu'tabara* (a respectable *tarekat*) which was founded by a native Indonesian *ulama*, Ahmad Khatib Sambas (from East Kalimantan). Ahmad Khatib spent part of his life in Mecca and he was known as a prominent *ulama* who mastered various Islamic sciences, such as Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic theology, Sufism and various Sufi practices. The depth of his knowledge, authority, and mystical practices attracted many followers who made him the great teacher of the new Tarekat Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya which replaced the popularity of the Sammaniyya which had already been popular in Indonesia.

Ahmad Khatib merged the two *tarekat* for several reasons. Both *tarekat* have a core of complementary teachings, especially the type and method of its

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<sup>59</sup> Hamid Algar, "A Brief History of the Naqsyabandi Order," in *Naqsyabandis: Cheminements et Situation Actuelle d'un Ordre Mystique Musulman*, ed. Marc Gaborieau (Istanbul-Paris: ISIS Yayincilik Ltd., 1990), 7.

<sup>60</sup> The founder of this *tarekat* was Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim al-Samman (d. 1775). He was the guardian of the graves of the Prophet and author of several books on Sufi metaphysics. The Sammaniyya Order is a combination of many *tarekat*, such as Khalwatiyya, Qadiriyya, Naqshabandiyya, and Shadziliyya Orders. In addition to making this combination, he also developed an ecstatic new way of remembrance and compiled *ratib* or litanies—readings containing prayers and verses from the *Qur'an*. This *tarekat* was introduced to Sumatra (Palembang) and Aceh through the efforts of 'Abd al-Samad b. Abdullah al-Palimbani (d. 1800), a disciple of its founder. Regarding the *ratib* and *manaqib* of Sheikh Samman in Malay see Ahmad Purwadaksi, "Ratib Samman dan Hikayat Syekh Muhammad Samman" (Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, 1992).

remembrance (*dhikr*), both of which tend to emphasize the importance of the shari'a and to oppose *waḥdat al-wujūd*. The Qadiriyya Order teaches the *dhikr jahr naḥī ithbāt* method, while the Naqshabandiyya Order teaches the *dhikr sirr ism al-dhāt* method so that the combination of the two is considered an effective and efficient method for achieving the highest level of spirituality. Actually, as mentioned in the *Fath al-ʿArifin* by Ahmad Khatib himself, the TQN is not only a combination of two *tarekat* but also includes elements of other Sufi teachings, such as from the Anfasiyya, Junaydiyya, and Sammaniyya Muwafaqah Orders. However, because the teachings of the Qadiriyya and Naqshabandiyya Orders were the most dominant, the new *tarekat* was called Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN). This *tarekat* stresses four main teachings, namely the perfection of *sulūk* (*a.* spiritual path), *adāb* (*a.* ethics), *dhikr* (*a.* remembrance), and *murāqaba* (*a.* Sufi meditation).<sup>61</sup>

Towards his death, Ahmad Khatib called ʿAbd al-Karim of Banten and appointed him as his caliph to replace him as the supreme Sheikh of the Order. ʿAbd al-Karim welcomed his teacher's call by immediately departing from Banten to Mecca to replace the Sheikh's in his position. In fact, other than ʿAbd al-Karim, there were several other main figures besides Ahmad Khatib Sambas's caliph, they were Kyai Tolhah of Cirebon, Kyai Ahmad Hasbullah of Madura, Muhammad Ismail ibn Abd al-Rahim of Bali (the copyist of *Fath al-ʿArifin*), Abd al-Latif bin Abd al-Qadir of Serawak, Haji Ahmad of Lampung, Syeh Yasin of Kedah (Malaysia), Sheikh Nuruddin who actively preached in the Philippines in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Muhammad Sa'd of Sambas. ʿAbd al-Karim was the last central leader of the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN). After he died, his *tarekat* was divided into a number of distinct

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<sup>61</sup> Ahmad Khatib Sambas, *Fath al-ʿArifin* (Surabaya: Bungkul Indah, n.d.).



branches originating from the three main caliphs ('Abd al-Karim, Kyai Tolhah, and Kyai Ahmad Hasbullah).

'Abd al-Karim Tanara was the most influential of Ahmad Khatib's students. He was born in 1840 in the village of Lempuyang, Tanara, Banten. According to Tanara's elders, he was an uncle of Nawawi al-Bantani even though they were about the same age. 'Abd al-Karim went to Mecca at a young age and studied there and served in Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas's house. After several years, 'Abd al-Karim received the *tarekat's ijaza* from Sheikh Sambas. His first assignment was as a servant of a *tarekat* teacher in Singapore, a position he held for several years.<sup>62</sup> In 1872, he returned to his home in the village of Lempuyang and settled there for 3 years. In 1876 he returned to Mecca to answer his teacher's call to carry out his duties as Sheikh Sambas's *khalifa*.

Like Nawawi al-Bantani, 'Abd al-Karim was also very influential in Banten. His profound religious knowledge and especially his fame as a Sufi made him a highly respected figure in Banten. His teachings and sermons had a very strong influence on the Bantenese people. In one of his sermons, he said that there was a need for the intensive purification of religious beliefs and practices. For him, *dhikr* had to become the focus of revitalizing the faith. In many places in Banten, remembrances started in mosques at specific moments in time. People were convinced that 'Abd al-Karim was a saint (*waliyullah*) who had inherited a certain glory (*barakat*) and had the ability to do miraculous deeds (*keramat*). Furthermore, because of his wider

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<sup>62</sup> Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily Life, Customs and Learning. The Moslems of the East-Indian Archipelago*, 277; Claude Guillot, "Abd. Al-Karim Banten," in *Dictionnaire Biographique Des Savants et Grandes Figures Du Monde Musulman Périphérique, Du XIXe Siècle à Nos Jours: Fascicule 11*, ed. Marc Gaborieau (Paris: EHESS, 1992), 25.

influence, he was better known as Kyai Ageng.<sup>63</sup> For three years he settled in Banten and many local *ulama* used his presence to dig deeper into Islamic knowledge and Sufi teachings. Among his famous students were H. Sangadeli of Kaloran, H. Asnawi of Bendung Lempuyang, H. Abu Bakar of Pontang, H. Tubagus Ismail of Gulacir, and H. Mardjuki of Tanara, who was his most influential student, especially in relation to Islamic activism in 19<sup>th</sup> century Banten.

Haji Mardjuki was born in Tanara, Banten, in 1820. He went to Mecca for the first time in 1858 to study Islamic knowledge. In Mecca he became a Qadiri (follower of the Tarekat Qadiriyya) because of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Karim Tanara. In fact, he also taught *nahwu* and *ṣaraf* (syntax and Arabic grammar) and also *fiqh* (Islamic law) in Mecca. In his hometown, Tanara, he founded a traditional educational institution, *pesantren*. He traveled extensively to other countries in Southeast Asia to preach. From February 1877 until June 1888 he taught at Tanara. He visited many scholars and members of the Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN). Two important Banten scholars, Ki Wasid and Tubagus Ismail often consulted with him to discuss religious issues and the Islamic movement to fight colonialism. These discussions encouraged the Bantenese people to fight the Dutch colonialist in what became known as “*Pemberontakan Petani Banten*” (Banten Peasant Rebellion) in 1888.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> There were two events that were seen as indications of the supernatural deeds of ‘Abd al-Karim. *First*, when he was rescued from the water of a flooding of the Cidurian River in Tangerang; *Second*, shortly after he was arrested and imprisoned, the resident was removed from his position. For other supernatural stories of ‘Abd al-Karim, see Snouck Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily Life, Customs and Learning. The Moslems of the East-Indian Archipelago*, 277–278.

<sup>64</sup> Claude Guillot, “Mardjuki Ou Marzuki,” in *Dictionnaire Biographique Des Savants et Grandes Figures Du Monde Musulman Périphérique, Du XIXe Sijcle, a Nos Jours: Fascicule 1*, ed. Marc Gaborieau

In the 1970s there were four important TQN centers on the island of Java: Rejoso (Jombang) under the leadership of Kyai Romly Tamim; Mranggen (close to Semarang) under the leadership of Kyai Muslikh; Suryalaya (Tasikmalaya) with Abah Anom as its leader; and Pagentongan (Bogor) under the leadership of Kyai Thohir Falak. Rejoso represented the branch from Ahmad Hasbullah, Suryalaya from Kyai Tolhah Cirebon and the others from the lineage of Sheikh Abd al-Karim Tanara and his caliphs.<sup>65</sup>

The Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) in Banten in the 19<sup>th</sup> century can be seen as a group that required the total commitment of both leaders and members. Because of their position and authority, the *ulama* appeared as charismatic leaders and the members of the *tarekat*, who were mostly farmers, were very respectful and obedient to their teachers (*murshid*). The teachings of the TQN in Banten in the 19<sup>th</sup> century developed under the unofficial institutions of the *tarekat* called *khanaqah* or *zawiyya* or *padepokan*, where *murshid* and *tarekat* students gathered to *dhikr* together and where religious advice was given. In the *padepokan*, the Sheikh and a number of students lived together under strict rules and regulations.<sup>66</sup> The farmers who followed the *tarekat* generally worked as usual, but there was a certain time for them to gather to follow the teachings of the *murshid* of the *tarekat*.

In traditional society, life remained full of myths and belief in supernatural powers and sacredness. Therefore,

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(Paris: EHESS, 1992), 32; Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*.

<sup>65</sup> Dealing with the TQN center in Rejoso, Martin van Bruinessen mentioned Kyai Romly Tamim's son, Musta'in Romly. While Dhofier added one TQN center in Tebuireng, Jombang. See van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 216–218; Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kyai*, 90.

<sup>66</sup> Harun Nasution, *Islam Rasional* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996), 366.

the authority of a *kyai*, as a charismatic figure in traditional Islamic society, was closely related to sacred elements. In addition, as traditional religious leaders, the *kyai* became central figures of obedience and role models for the community and they often played roles as political figures.

In Banten, 'Abd al-Karim had a caliph, named Kyai Asnawi of Caringin, whose charisma had been exploited by communist rebels in Banten in 1926.<sup>67</sup> After his death, the *tarekat* teaching was continued by his son, Kyai Kazhim, who taught this *tarekat* in Menes (Labuan) and after him it was continued by his son named Ahmad and another student named Abah Sukanta of Labuan. The Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya was also still developing in Cibeber (Cilegon) and was taught by Abd al-Lathif bin Ali who received the *tarekat's ijaza* from Kyai Asnawi Caringin. After he died, the expansion of the TQN in Cibeber was continued by his son, Kyai Abd al-Muhaimin. At present, the TQN in Cibeber is continued by Kyai Suhaemi of Palas, Cilegon (a student of Kyai Abd al-Muhamin). Until the end of 1988, Kyai Asnawi's nephew, Kyai Armin, was the famous caliph of the TQN in Cibuntu (Pandeglang). Although he studied the *tarekat* for the first time from his uncle, Ki Armin claimed to have studied with several scholars in Mecca and Baghdad.

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<sup>67</sup> One of the *ulama* leaders involved in this rebellion was Ahmad Khatib who, in the post-independent Indonesia was appointed Resident of Banten. Ahmad Khatib was the son-in-law of the most charismatic *murshid* in Banten, Kyai Ageng Asnawi of Caringin. Ahmad Khatib not only involved Kyai Asnawi's son, Emed, but also many students from Kyai Asnawi in the rebellion. For more information about this rebellion see Michael Charles Williams, *Sickle and Crescent: The Communist Revolt of 1926 in Banten* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962); Else Ensering, "Banten in Times of Revolution," *Archipel* 50, no. Banten. Histoire d'une région (1995): 131–163.



**Illustration 1.** *Kyai Suhaemi of Palas (left). The last murshid of the TQN of Ki Abdul Latief lineage*

Mufti Ali added an important figure to the *tarekat*'s lineage of 'Abd al-Karim, namely K.H. Abd al-Hamid Ilyas Muhammad Muqri al-Quty (known as Buya Muqri, d. 1959), who was also an important exponent in Islamic activism in Banten, especially in the Banten rebellion in 1926. From Buya Muqri's diary, Mufti Ali derived important information related to this figure and the influence of the TQN and its activism in Banten, especially about the rebellion in Banten in 1926.<sup>68</sup> According to

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<sup>68</sup> Ali, *Peran Tokoh Tarekat dalam Pemberontakan Muslim Banten 1926: Studi Kasus K.H. Abdul Hamid Ilyas Muhammad Muqri al-Quty Labuan (1860-1959)*.

Williams, the Banten Muslim rebellion in 1926 was different from the Banten peasant rebellion of 1888 led by Ki Wasid. It was a pure peasant rebellion led by several Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia/PKI) members and a number of *ulama* who wanted to escape the shackles of colonialism. According to him, the Banten Muslim rebellion in 1926 was a rebellion triggered by the dissatisfaction of the people in Banten, especially the peasants, with colonial policies pertaining to taxation, price regulation, and high inflation. The rebellion was a form of a two-power alliance, namely communists and the followers of the Sarekat Islam.<sup>69</sup>

The Marxist approach Williams used, which emphasized economic factors such as inflation, the colonial policies of the colonial government, and the oppressive attitude of the *priyayi*, had encouraged him to conclude that the Banten Muslim rebellion in 1926 was a peasant rebellion triggered by external structural factors. Mufti Ali criticized the Marxist perspective Williams used and he said that Williams excluded theological factors, non-economic material such as the desire to replace the un-Islamic governmental system with Islamic rule, the desire to escape colonialism, longstanding resentment of a number of Bantenese Muslim militant leaders to the colonial government, and other resistant attitudes based on theological factors.<sup>70</sup>

Williams saw the Banten communist alliance that was represented by the active role of its activists, such as Puradisastra, Tubagus Alipan, Ahmad Bassaif, and activists of the Sarekat Islam, K.H. Ahmad Khatib in the rebellion to overthrow the colonial government in Banten as a strategic and rational alliance. Banten Communism,

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<sup>69</sup> Williams, *Communism, Religion and Revolt in Banten*, 186.

<sup>70</sup> Ali, *Peran Tokoh Tarekat dalam Pemberontakan Muslim Banten 1926: Studi Kasus K.H. Abdul Hamid Ilyas Muhammad Muqri al-Quty Labuan (1860-1959)*, 3.

according to him, was part of national and international communism that wanted to change the oppressive capitalist system with a system of socialism that sided with the “*wong cilik*” (j. proletariat; non-elite people), such as peasants and workers. The dissatisfied feeling of K.H. Ahmad Khatib to the colonial government system and his progressive desire to gain independence from colonialism had pushed him to enter into an alliance with the revolutionary communist movement. Based on research done by Mufti Ali, the *tarekat* played a very strategic role as a means for consolidating the activists’ loyalty to the Banten rebellion in 1926 because of the communication network that exists between the *murshid*, the caliph, and *tarekat* followers. His opinion is based on the personal diary of a *tarekat* figure who was actively involved in consolidating the masses at that time (Buya Muqri). In addition, it was also influenced by the *murshid-murīd* relationship of several prominent figures in the Banten 1888 rebellion, namely Sheikh ‘Abd al-Karim Tanara and K.H. Mardjuki, as well as the *ḥizb* (a. litany or prayer) and the *wirid* (a. litany) they gave to their followers to fight the Dutch colonial infidels.

Furthermore, Mufti Ali summarized at least two important pieces of information from Buya Muqri’s diary. *First*, information about 77 students of the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya who had received the *ijaza* from Buya Muqri and who originated not only from Indonesia but also from Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Interestingly, Buya Muqri not only recorded the origin and addresses of his students but also gave information about the year and the place where his students got their *ijaza* from him.

*Second*, the text also includes various *awrād*, *ḥizb*, and supernatural formulas along with the names of the teachers who give licenses. With the *ijaza*/license he had obtained, Buya Muqri had the right to practice and teach his

students, who mostly worked as *ahli hikmah* (supernatural experts) in various places in Banten and other regions. This diary also includes several prayers to be said during circumcision, prayers that make people complacent (*sirep*), and prayers to expel jinn, demons, and other spirits. In addition, the diary contains Buya Muqri's summary and notes of the *Tafsīr al-Jawāhir* by Sheikh Tanthawi Jauhari and on the teachings of the Shadziliyya, Tahawiyya, and Idrisiyya Orders.<sup>71</sup>

Obviously, the role Buya Muqri and several TQN *murshid* in Banten played provides a very clear picture of the pattern of relationships between the *tarekat* and Islamic activism. The same pattern can be seen in the relation between the *tarekat* and the spread of “*ngelmu tuan syeh*”, such as magic, spiritual power, and invulnerability techniques that are based on Sheikh AQJ. The *tarekat*, Sheikh AQJ, and *ilmu hikmah* (supernatural techniques) seemed to have an inseparable connection in the collective memory of the Bantenese people. If we trace this further, this magical tendency can be seen in earlier uprisings, for example, that of Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari who led the rebellion by teaching his students magical techniques using the *tarekat* remembrance method; a rebellion led by Ki Mas Jakaria who made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Kyai Santri before he took up arms; in the rebellion in Cikande Udik where the masses first made a pilgrimage before starting their rebellion.<sup>72</sup> About the 1850 rebellion was often told of the great magical power of Haji Wakhia who simply caught bullets with his turban; and the Banten peasant uprising in 1888 when, according to Sartono Kartodirdjo, *jimat-jimat* (j/s. amulets) were distributed to the people

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 16–17.

<sup>72</sup> In the Cikande Udik rebellion, the rebels dressed in white as a symbol that they were engaged in a holy war. See Teuku Ibrahim Alfian, “Semangat Keagamaan Banten Dalam Mempertahankan Kemerdekaan,” in *Banten Menuju Masa Depan*, ed. Mansyur Muhyidin (Serang: Yayasan Kiyai Haji Wasid, 1999), 86.



before the rebellion started, which also happened in the rebellion in Banten in 1926.

According to Ignatius F.M. Chalid Salim, the younger brother of Haji Agus Salim, the Banten combatants in 1926 “danced in front of Dutch troops, they thought that they were invulnerable.”<sup>73</sup> This is not impossible because Buya Muqri was known as a famed *ahli hikmah* like Kyai Ageng Asnawi Caringin. He was known not only as an *ulama* who had profound knowledge of Islamic sciences, but also known to the public as a saint who was believed to be able to bring up *keramat* (supernatural power given by God).

### B. The Emergence of the *Wawacan Seh* Tradition

The spread of the *tarekat* and the tendency of the Indonesian people to believe in the magical-spiritual realm paved the way for AQJ’s popularity. He is known not only as an influential figure and Muslim prominent *ulama* who deserves respect but also as a magical symbol whose supernatural powers are often sought after by the people. The Bantenese people described Sheikh AQJ as a *tarekat* leader or a saint and in terms of his supernatural power (*keramat*). The respect of the Bantenese for this figure and also the efforts they make to beget spiritual strength based on this figure gave rise to various cultural expressions in the form of popular traditions and rituals, one of which is the *Wawacan Seh*.

The *Wawacan Seh* is the ritual reading by the Bantenese of Sheikh AQJ’s hagiography (*manāqib*) periodically (weekly, monthly, or yearly) or on specific occasions and for specific reasons. It is a ritual that has become a tradition because it was passed down from generation to generation. Julian Millie called it *tali paranti*, which he took from the Sundanese lexicon and whose literal meaning is “the rope of the old traditions.” According to Kusnaka Adimiharja, *tali paranti* is

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<sup>73</sup> Ignatius F.M. Chalid Salim, *Lima Belas Tahun Digul, Kamp Konsentrasi di Nieuw Guinea Tempat Persemaian Kemerdekaan Indonesia* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1977), 29.

defined as “the corpus of prohibitions and injunctions, handed down from the ancestors that regulate social life and behavior.”<sup>74</sup> As a tradition, the *Wawacan Seh* is a ritual whose existence has been maintained by society from generation to generation in the tradition of *tali paranti* or life-cycle ritual. However, it does not mean that it is immune to changes in the way it is performed or with respect to its ritual symbols. The ritual continues to change and the *tali paranti* seems to be a counterweight to the pace of these changes.

Although the readers of the *Wawacan Seh* acknowledge that this ritual cannot be separated from the role of the *tarekat*, yet in its development the *tarekat* was also one of the modifying factors in the changes that occurred in the ritual practice and the meaning of its symbols. Therefore, in Banten today, we can observe the difference between the *Wawacan Seh* and *Manakiban*, even though both are ritual readings of the Sheikh's hagiography. One distinction between the two is that they are in different languages. The *Wawacan Seh* ritual is performed by reading the *manāqib* in Banten-Javanese language using poetic meters (*macapat*) such as *Kinanti*, *Sinom*, *Asmarandana*, *Dandanggula*, *Durma*, *Lambang*, *Pangkur*. In some areas in Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* is also called *Mamacan* and *Maca Seh*. Whereas *Manakiban* is ritual reading of the Arabic text of Sheikh AQJ's hagiography. Therefore, to perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, readers are required to have a good voice and to understand the poetic meters and their melodies (*pupuh / dangding*) even though they are not required to be *tarekat* members.

Kyai Uting Sirojuddin, a *pesantren* leader in the Ciruas area, said that to read the *manāqib* in Arabic one must have a specific license from a sheikh but one was not required to become a *tarekat* member. According to him, reading the *manāqib* with a teacher's license is more important than reading it on one's own initiative. In fact, he said that there is

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<sup>74</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 14.

a great difference in the efficacy of reading the *manāqib* with or without a teacher's license.<sup>75</sup> Sufyan who used to lead *Manakiban* rituals in the Taktakan sub-district in Kota Serang said about the same thing. He received a license for reading *al-Nūr al-Burhānī* written by Muslih of Mranggen. Sufyan added that usually the licensing was also accompanied by taking the oath (*bai'at*) as TQN member.<sup>76</sup> Whereas in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, a license is sometimes not required. Even so, a *Wawacan Seh* reader must first learn how to recite the *manāqib* text in Banten-Javanese language and the rhythms of the *macapat* meters. The difference between the two can also be seen in the reading process. A *Wawacan Seh* ritual requires various offerings, while in the *Manakiban* the offerings are not an absolute must and often absent.

The reading of the *Wawacan Seh* using *macapat* meters is a cultural expression of in Banten that cannot be separated from its past culture which is very closely related to the tradition of *dangding*. For the Sundanese people—and Banten is part of Sunda—*dangding* is often used in rituals. Rhythmic reading is believed not only to be an artistic expression but also contains specific magical powers.<sup>77</sup> *Dangding* is a form of

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<sup>75</sup> Kyai Uting Sirojuddin got an *ijaza* for the *manāqib* reading of *Jawahir al-Ma'ani fi Manāqib al-Syaikh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani* by al-Shaikh al-Hajj Ahmad Jauhari Umar, Tanggulangin, Pasuruan, from his teacher from Cikande, Serang. He illustrated the comparison of the efficacy of licensed *manāqib* readings with unlicensed ones as 1: 1000. That is, the efficacy of 1000 unlicensed *manāqib* readings is equal to 1 licensed *manāqib* reading. Interview with Kyai Uting Sirojuddin, October 8, 2018 in Ciruas.

<sup>76</sup> Ust. Sufyan is often invited to read / lead the reading of an Arabic language *manāqib* text when a person has a certain need for it, for example, to build a house or to hold a wedding ceremony. According to him, he received a license for reading *al-Nūr al-Burhānī* from his teacher in Central Java. Interview with Ust. Sufyan, October 10, 2018 in Taktakan, Serang City.

<sup>77</sup> For more information about the Sundanese *dangding*, especially Hasan Mustapa's *dangding* and his role in forming Sundanese Islamic local identity see Jajang A. Rohmana, "Sundanese Sufi Literature and Local Islamic Identity: A Contribution of Haji Hasan Mustapa's *Dangding*," *Al-Jami'ah* 50, no. 2 (2012): 303–328.

oral culture and therefore it must be sung, either individually or collectively.<sup>78</sup> Collective readings are performed for life-cycle rituals and ceremonies, such as the birth of a child, *cukuran* / *ekahan* (shaving a baby's hair), *sunatan* (circumcision), and weddings.<sup>79</sup>

Now the question arises, when exactly did the *Wawacan Seh* ritual appear and spread in Banten (and in the archipelago)? Historians differ in their answers to this question. Some scholars associate the emergence of this ritual with the spread of the Qadiriyya Order in the archipelago starting in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The reason is that at that time the Qadiriyya Order had already spread throughout the archipelago as Hamzah Fansuri wrote in his poem—as I already mentioned above—although there is no more detailed information about whether he also distributed the *tarekat* among his students.<sup>80</sup> In any case, the spread of the *Wawacan Seh* and *Manakiban* traditions in Indonesia seems to have reached its peak in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Sheikh Ahmad Khatib Sambas popularized the combined *tarekat* of Qadiriyya and Naqshabandiyya and popularized the reading of Sheikh AQJ's *manāqib*.<sup>81</sup>

Drewes and Poerbatjaraka argued that the ritual reading of the *manāqib* appeared in Banten in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They based their arguments on the *Wawacan Seh* texts they found in several places in Banten and Cirebon. According to them, the language of the text was an ancient 17<sup>th</sup>-century form of the Banten-Javanese language. It is assumed that when the

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<sup>78</sup> Th.C. van der Meij, *Puspakrema: A Javanese Romance from Lombok* (Leiden: CNSW Publications, 2002), 194.

<sup>79</sup> Ajip Rosidi, *Mencari Sosok Manusia Sunda* (Bandung: Pustaka Jaya, 2010), 31–32.

<sup>80</sup> Al-Attas, *Some Aspects of Sufism as Understood and Practised among the Malays*, 51; Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri*, 11; Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*, 11; Drewes and Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri*; van Bruinessen, “*Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia*.”

<sup>81</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 98.

manuscript spread over Banten at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the *manāqib* was known and ritualized along with the official relationship of the Sultanate of Banten with the Haramayn (Mecca and Medina) and the Middle East in general.<sup>82</sup> The *manāqib*, which contains the hagiography of Sheikh AQJ, was adapted into Banten-Javanese and performed as a ritual during major celebrations.<sup>83</sup>

Van Bruinessen refutes this argument and considers it to be overly speculative. According to him, the *manāqib* reading tradition became popular in Banten since around the 1880s along with the intensity of the spread of the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) and in his explanation he referred to the popular practice of the Sheikh of the Qadiriyya who translated and adapted various *manāqib* texts into the local dialects where his followers lived.<sup>84</sup> This argument leaves a number of problems. For example, when was the *manāqib* text first translated and adapted into Banten's local language? Who is the Sheikh who first took the initiative to do it?

It is difficult to find definite answers to these questions in Drewes and Poerbatjaraka's writings and in van Bruinessen's works. This may be due to the historical premise about whether the emergence of the Qadiriyya Order is directly proportional to the development of *manāqib* reading tradition which can also not be definitively established. Although not free from speculation, Millie tried to give definitive answers to these two questions.<sup>85</sup> According to him, the Banten Sultanate's palace was a place for translating Arabic texts into local languages, including texts that narrated

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<sup>82</sup> Drewes and Poerbatjaraka, *De Mirakelen van Abdoelkadir Djaelani*, 10–13; Muhammad Sholikhin, *17 Jalan Menggapai Mahkota Sufi Syaikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani* (Yogyakarta: Mutiara Media, 2009), 65.

<sup>83</sup> Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya, Kajian Sejarah Terpadu. Bagian II: Jaringan Asia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama bekerjasama dengan Forum Jakarta-Paris dan École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2008), 136.

<sup>84</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 274–276.

<sup>85</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 22–24.

the sacred, the glory and the struggle of the *tarekat* priests of the Banten Sultans and Sheikh AQJ. Millie explained that in the catalog of manuscripts compiled by Voorhoeve, there is a translation of the Hikayat Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. The text is a copy of the *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir* written by al-Yafi’i. This manuscript comes from the library of the Banten Palace which was destroyed by Daendels in 1813. It was brought to Jakarta (Batavia) and became part of the collection of the *Bataviaasch Genootschap* in 1835. According to Voorhoeve, as quoted by Millie, the text was written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>86</sup>

To confirm his argument, Millie stated that the Banten Palace was very important in the transmission of the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ. It was also an ideal environment where Arabic religious authoritative texts were translated into and adapted to local languages for scientific and religious reasons.<sup>87</sup> In short, the oldest *manāqib* in Banten was written in Javanese in 1789. The oldest text of the *manāqib* in the Sundanese language was written in 1882 and is a translation of the Javanese text.

### C. The Text of the *Manāqib*

The writing of Sheikh AQJ’s hagiography (*manāqib*) is closely related to its popularity among Muslims. In the Islamic world, Sheikh AQJ’s popularity almost exceeded that of any other Muslim figure which is certainly due to his charisma. Extraordinary stories about AQJ’s quickly spread among Muslims and that they often were referred to as *karāma* or *keramat*, seem to be the main attraction for many Muslims, although often these stories challenge the limits of rationality and orthodox religious practices. Therefore, these stories frequently led to polemics among Muslims although these controversies were not aimed at AQJ’s rational thoughts

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

but at the people who wrote about AQJ's life because they described him in a too exaggerating way.

Van Bruinessen describes the polemic briefly. He said that the first life story of AQJ can be found in the *Bahjat al-Asrār* by 'Alī bin Yūsuf al-Shattanaufi (d. 713/1314, which is one and a half centuries after AQJ's death) in which we find many stories of AQJ's miracles. The next author is al-Dhahabī who criticized him in his *Ta'rikh al-Islām*. In his work, al-Dhahabī doubted many stories about AQJ because he thought they were too excessive. Shortly thereafter, 'Abdullāh bin As'ad al-Yāfi'ī (d. 1367) authored the *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhīr fī Ikhtisār Manāqib al-Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir*, a *manāqib* that established AQJ as the greatest miracle expert. This book is the basis of several other *manāqib* books that are scattered in Indonesia. After al-Yāfi'ī, other scholars compiled "*manāqib*" which were written in an even more "extreme" way, the most important of which is *Lujjayn al-Dānī* by Ja'far bin Ḥasan al-Barjanzī (d. 1766), a writer in Indonesia very famous for his *mawlid* book.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to these works, there are still many hagiographies of AQJ written by contemporary *ulama* and scholars and they are spread widely over the Muslim world. Some writers offer a lot of information ranging from Sheikh AQJ's intellectual biographies and thoughts, stories of the role model he is, his spiritual achievements and piety, as well as his sacredness. The number of AQJ's hagiographies is very large because they were written not only in the form of books, but are also scattered in collections of biographies and encyclopedic works in various languages, such as: *Ta'rikh al-Islām* (17 volumes),<sup>89</sup> *al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt* (29 volumes),<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 211.

<sup>89</sup> Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa al-A'īlām*, Jilid 12 (Beirut: Dar al-Ghurab al-Islami, 2003), 252–263.

<sup>90</sup> Shalahuddin Khalil al-Safadi, *al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt*, Jilid 19 (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 2000), 26–28.

*Jāmi' Karamāt al-Awliyā'* (2 volumes),<sup>91</sup> *Shadharāt al-Dhahab* (10 volumes),<sup>92</sup> *al-Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābila* (5 volumes),<sup>93</sup> *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (11 volumes),<sup>94</sup> *al-'Ibar fī Khabar man Ghabar* (4 volumes),<sup>95</sup> *Mir'at al-Zamān fī Tawārīkh al-A'yān* (23 volumes),<sup>96</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Islam*,<sup>97</sup> and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.<sup>98</sup>

Some specific hagiographies about AQJ written in Arabic are the following:

1. *Bahjat al-Asrār* (The Beauty of Secrets) by Ali bin Yusuf al-Shattanaufi (d. 713/1314) from Egypt.<sup>99</sup> This is the first and foremost work which later became the reference for many subsequent writers.
2. *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir fī Ikhtiṣār Manāqib al-Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir* by 'Abdullah bin As'ad al-Yafi'i al-Qadiri (w. 768/1367).<sup>100</sup> This work mostly refers to the work of 'Alī bin Yūsuf al-Shattanaufi.
3. *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir* (Necklaces of Gems) by Muhammad bin Yahya al-Tadifi al-Hanbali (w.

<sup>91</sup> Yusuf al-Nabhani, *Jāmi' Karāmāt al-Awliyā'*, *Jilid 2* (Gujrat: Markaz Ahlussunnah Barakat, 2001), 200–207.

<sup>92</sup> Al-Imad, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab*, *Jilid VI*, 330–336.

<sup>93</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman, *al-Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt al-Hanābila. Juz 2* (Riyadh: Maktaba al-'Abikan, 2005), 187–212.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, *Jilid 9* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1987), 482.

<sup>95</sup> Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *al-'Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar. Jilid 3* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1985), 36.

<sup>96</sup> Shams al-Din Abi al-Muzaffar, *Mir'at al-Zamān fī Tawārīkh al-A'yān. Jilid 21* (Damascus: al-Risalah al-Alamiyya, 2013), 77–130.

<sup>97</sup> W. Braune, "'Abd Al-Qādir Al-Djilānī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Brill, 1960).

<sup>98</sup> Bruce Lawrence, "'Abd-Al-Qādir Jilānī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Encyclopaedia Iranica Foundation, 1982).

<sup>99</sup> Ali bin Yusuf al-Shathanaufi, *Bahjat al-Asrār wa Ma'dan al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Bāz al-Ashhāb* (Fez, Morocco: Al-Munazamah al-Maghribiyya li al-Tarbiya wa al-Thaqafa wa al-Ulum, 2013).

<sup>100</sup> Abdullah bin As'ad al-Yafi'i, *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir fī Manāqib 'Abd al-Qādir* (Srilanka: Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya, 2006).



963/1556).<sup>101</sup> In this work, al-Tadifi noted more than 40 Imams and Grand Sheikhs. It has been translated into English by Muhtar Holland.

4. *Lujjayn al-Dānī* by Ja'far ibn Hasan ibn 'Abd al-Karim bn Muhammad al-Barzanji (w. 1766).<sup>102</sup> He is the author of a *maulid* book that is very popular in Indonesia.
5. *Tafriḥ al-Khāṭir Tarjamat al-Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir* by 'Abd al-Qadir bin Muhy al-Din al-Irbili.<sup>103</sup>
6. *Al-Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* by 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kaylani.<sup>104</sup>
7. *Iṭḥāf al-Akābir fī Sīrah wa Manāqib al-Imām Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī al-Ḥasanī al-Husaynī wa Ba'd Mashāhīr Dhurriyatihī Ūlī al-Faḍl wa al-Ma'āthir* by al-Syaikh 'Abd al-Majid bin Taha al-Duhaybi al-Jaylani al-Qadiri.<sup>105</sup> This book gave me more information about many other works dealing with AQJ's hagiography. Some of them are as follows:
8. *Bahjat al-Abrār fī Manāqib al-Gawth al-Kaylānī* by Sheikh of *tariqa al-Suhrawardiyya*, al-Imam Abu Hafis Umar al-Suhrawardi.

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<sup>101</sup> Muhammad bin Yahya al-Tadifi, *Qalā'id al-Jawāhir fī Manāqib Tāj al-Awliyā' wa Ma'dan al-Ashfiyā' wa Sulṭān al-Awliyā' al-Quṭb al-Rabbānī al-Shaikh Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* (Cairo: Mathba'a 'Abdulhamid Ahmad Hanafi, n.d.). The text of *Futūḥ al-Ghayb* of AQJ is attached in the printed edition of this book.

<sup>102</sup> Ja'far bin Hasan al-Barzanji, *Lujjayn al-Dānī fī Manāqib al-Quthb al-Rabbānī al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī* (Semarang: Maktabah al-'Alawiyya, n.d.).

<sup>103</sup> This book has influenced many *manāqib* adaptations in Indonesia. Unfortunately, both versions (print and electronic) that I have, do not lists the place of publication, publisher and year of publication.

<sup>104</sup> 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kaylani, *al-Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī: al-Imām al-Zāhid al-Qudwa* (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, 1994).

<sup>105</sup> 'Abd al-Majid al-Duhaybi al-Jaylani, *Iṭḥāf al-Akābir fī Sīrah wa Manāqib al-Imām Muḥy al-Dīn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī al-Ḥasanī al-Husaynī wa Ba'd Mashāhīr Dhurriyyatihī Ūlī al-Faḍl wa al-Ma'āthir* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, n.d.).

9. *Al-Sharaf al-Bahīr fī Manāqib al-Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Quthb al-Din al-Yunini al-Ba’labaki Musa bin Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.
10. *Durar al-Jawāhir fī Manāqib al-Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by al-Imam Ibn al-Mulaqqan Siraj al-Din Abu Hafis Umar bin Ali bin Ahmad.
11. *Al-Durr al-Fakhīr fī Manāqib Sayyidī ‘Abd al-Qādir* by ‘Abd al-Qadir bin Syaikh al-‘Aydarusi al-Yamani.
12. *Rawḍat al-Nadhīr fī Tarjamat Sayyidinā al-Gawth ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Abu Thahir Majd al-Din Muhammad bin Ya’qub al-Fayruzabadi. He was also the author of a famous Arabic dictionary.
13. *Ghibṭat al-Nadhīr fī Akhbār Sayyidinā ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Shihab al-Din Ahmad bin Hajar al-‘Asqalani.
14. *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Manāqib al-Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Abu al-‘Abbas Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Qasthalani.
15. *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Manāqib al-Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Ibrahim bin Ali bin Ahmad bin Yazid al-Diri.
16. *Al-Bahīr fī Manāqib al-Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Husayn bin ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Muhamad al-Yamani (Ibn al-Ahdal).
17. *Al-Sharab al-Nayfī fī Wilāyat al-Jifī* by Muhammad bin Ibrahim al-Halabi.
18. *Nuzhat al-Khāṭir fī Tarjamat Sayyidī al-Sharīf ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Mulla Ali bin Sulthan Muhammad al-Qari.
19. *Tuḥfat al-Abrār wa Lawāmi’ al-Anwār fī Manāqib al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir wa Dhurriyatuh al-Akābīr* by al-Sayyid ‘Ala al-Din al-Jaylani.
20. *‘Uqd al-Jawāhir al-Ma’ānī fī Manāqib al-Sheykh al-Jaylānī* by Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-Qadir.
21. *Dzayl Tuḥfat al-Abrār wa Lawāmi’ al-Anwār* by al-Sayyid Muhammad Sa’di al-Azhari al-Kaylani. He was a *mufti* and sheikh of Qadiriyya Order.
22. *Nuzhat al-Nadhīr fī Akhbār al-Sheykh ‘Abd al-Qādir* written by an expert of islamic jurisprudence (*al-*

- Faqih*) and the expert of *ḥadīth* (*al-muhaddith*), Abu Muhammad ‘Abd al-Latif bin Hibat Allah al-Hasyimi al-Baghdadi.
23. *Anwār al-Nadhīr fī Ma’rifat Akhbār al-Sheykh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Abu Bakr Abdullah bin Nasr Hamzah al-Bakri al-Shiddiqi al-Baghdadi.
  24. *Rawḍ al-Nadhīr fī Manāqib Sayyidī ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Muhammad bin Sa’id bin Dzari’ al-Zunjārī.
  25. *Manāqib al-Sheykh ‘Abd al-Qādir* by Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Ahmad al-Kaylani al-Tunisi.
  26. *Rawḍ al-Basātīn fī Akhbār Maulānā ‘Abd al-Qādir Muḥy al-Dīn* by Muhammad al-Amin al-Tunisi.
  27. *Al-Sayf al-Rabbānī fī ‘Unuq al-Mu’taraḍ ‘alā al-Gauth al-Jaylānī* by Muhammad al-Makki bin al-Sayyid Musthafa bin Muhammad ‘Azūz, he was a *mufti* of Tunis.
  28. *Sulṭān al-Adzkār fī Manāqib Gawth al-Abrār* by al-Syaikh Maulana Syah Muhammad.
  29. *Zubdat al-Asrār min Manāqib Gawth al-Abrar* by ‘Abd al-Haq al-Dihlawi.

#### D. Vernacularization and Reproduction of the Text

The large number of works that contain Sheikh AQJ's hagiography as stated above are proof that AQJ is a very popular Muslim in the Islamic world. In addition to the works I mentioned above, there are still many other AQJ hagiographies in languages other than Arabic, such as in Turkish, Urdu, English, Indonesian, as well as Indonesian local languages. The works about Sheikh AQJ written by Indonesian *ulama* (both in Arabic, Indonesian, or in local Indonesian languages) are often versions of adaptations of earlier *manāqib* texts written in Arabic. The most influential Arabic *manāqib* and the most widely used by Indonesian writers are 1) *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhīr*; 2) *Lujjāyn al-Dānī*, and 3) *Tafriḥ al-Khāṭir*.

In fact, apart from these three Arabic-language *manāqib* works, there are many vernacularizations and translations written by Indonesian scholars. I will focus on some of the works that circulated widely and came to be used in the ritual tradition of the *manāqib* reading or the *Wawacan Sch* in Banten. Some of these works are:

1. *Ghawth al-Dānī fī Wawacan Syekh Abdulkadir Jaclani* (written in Banten-Javanese language) it was written by Muhammad Zuhdi Alawi bin Ali Ahmad al-Fasyuni (w. 1982) of Cisantri, Baros, Serang.
2. *Kitāb Wawacan Sch Abdulkadir al-Jaclani Qaddasallahu Sirrahu al-‘Azīz* (written in Banten-Javanese language) it was written by Khayruddin bin Muhammad Salwan from Kampung Bagawati, Serang, Banten.
3. *Manāqib al-Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī bi al-Lughat al-Sundawīyya* (written in Sundanese) it was written by Ahmad Khaerudji from Kampung Cikadu Tenjo, Serang, Banten.
4. *Tijān al-Jawāhir fī Manāqib al-Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir* (written in Sundanese) it was written by H. Muhammad Juwaeni bin Haji Abdurrahman from Parakan Salak, Cianjur, Jawa Barat.
5. *Al-Nūr al-Burhānī fī Tarjamat al-Lujjayn al-Dānī* (written in Arabic with Javanese annotations) by Muslih ibn Abdurrahman al-Maraqqi of Mranggen, Jawa Tengah.
6. *Jawāhir al-Ma’ānī fī Manāqib al-Sheykh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī* (written in Arabic) it was written by haji Ahmad Jauhari Umar from Pesantren Darussalam, Pasuruan, Jawa Timur.

The first three are adaptations from *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhīr* of al-Yafī'i, the fourth work (*Tijān al-Jawāhir*) is an adaptation of *Tafīrīkh al-Khāṭir* by al-Irbili, and the last two works which were written in Arabic (with Javanese

annotations) are adaptations of a more recently written book, namely *Lujjayn al-Dānī* of al-Barzanji. It seems that the adaptations in Banten-Javanese have always been based on al-Yafi'i's book while the works written more recently are mostly versions of al-Barzanji's work.

The first two works written in the Banten-Javanese language appear to be works that were re-copied by their authors from a *Wawacan Seh* book that was written anonymously and was studied by Drewes and Poerbatjaraka. This can be seen from the language which was used which seems to be old Banten-Javanese which is rarely found in Banten society today. This is in line with the recognition of Hj. Bahriyah, K.H. Muhammad Zuhri's wife, who copied the *Gawth al-Dānī*. She said that the *Gawth al-Dānī* was not her husband's work but a manuscript left by his father, K.H. Ali Ahmad. Zuhri re-wrote and reproduced the manuscript in wood print in as many as 1000 copies per year for Tuan Qosim, the owner of a bookstore in Pasar Serang (the traditional market of Serang). Muhammad Zuhdi's did this, according to Hj. Bahriyah, to earn money to pay for the operation costs of the *pesantren* he fostered throughout his life. K.H. Muhammad Zuhri himself died in a traffic accident on July 29, 1982, at the age of 51.<sup>106</sup>

It is interesting to look at the title Muhammad Zuhri gave to his version: *Gawth al-Dānī fī Wawacan Syekh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jaylānī al-Mu'tabar wa al-Mustafad li al-Istighāthah bi Ahl al-Bantanī*. The sentence "li Ahl al-Bantanī" (a. for the Banteneese) explains that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is a tradition that has been around for a long time in Banten. In this book, Zuhri openly states that his work is an adaptation of al-Yafi'i's *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir*.

In his work, Zuhri begins with the reading of the *hadorot* lineage, namely the reading of "ilā ḥaḍarati..." and continues with an invitation to recite *Surah al-Fātiḥah* together and

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<sup>106</sup> Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Syekh Abdul Qadir Jaelani pada Masyarakat Banten*, 28–29.

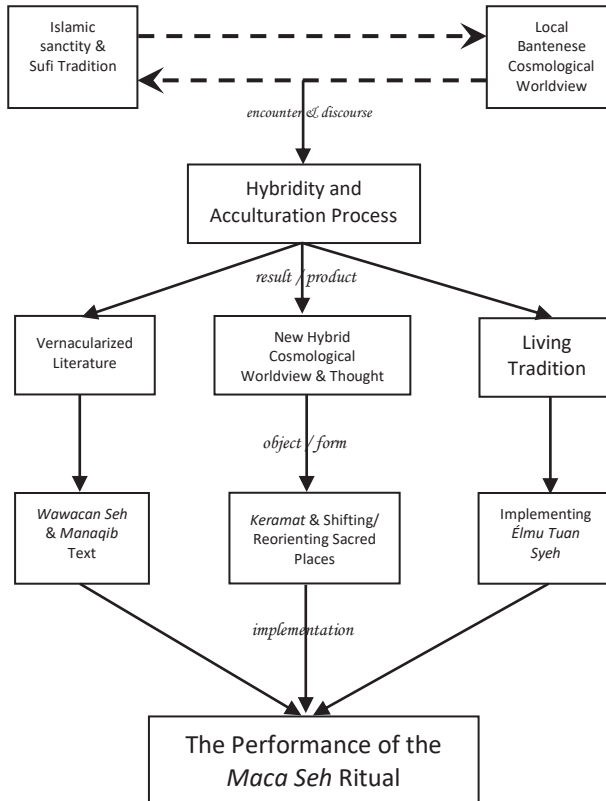
address it to the Prophet Muhammad, *al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn* (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali), the Prophet's family, Hasan and Hussein (grandchildren of the Prophet), righteous saints (*al-awliyā' al-ṣāliḥūn*), followers of the teachings of the Prophet (*tābi'īn*), *al-Quṭb al-Rabbānī wa al-Gawth al-Ṣamadānī*, Muhy al-Din 'Abd al-Qadir, Ahmad al-Rifa'i, Maulana Ibrahim al-Khalīfah, and both parents (*ābāinā wa ummahātinā*), and then to state one's intention (*khuṣūṣan li ṣāhibi hādhan-niyyah*). It ends with the sentence *li al-salāmah wa al-'āfiyah*.

Furthermore, the book includes a preamble in which Zuhri explains that it is adapted from al-Yafi'i's *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir*. As with many other works, this book also opens with an introduction of the Sheikh and his kin lineage which shows that he is a descendant of the Prophet; his family names (including that of his aunt, Aisha, who was also his teacher, his famous brother, Abi Ahmad Abdillah, his well-known children such as 'Abd al-Razzaq, 'Abd al-Jabbar, Isa, Ibrahim, and Muhammad), his teachers (in the fields of Qur'anic studies, theology, *fiqh*, language and literature, and Sufism), as well as about supernatural power (*keramat*) to which the readers and listeners of the *Wawacan Seh* reading ritual pay special attention.

Almost all adaptations have the same sequence and begin with the reading of the “*hadorot*” or *tawassul*, and continue with the life story of the sheikh, starting from a description of his genealogy, intellectual genealogy and *tarekat*, extraordinary stories, the time of his studies, becoming an *ulama*, being the Pole of the Saints (*quṭb al-awliyā'*), and his death. They usually end with prayers and the *al-Fātiḥah* or the *tawassul* for the Prophet, the family of the Prophet, the companions of the Prophet, the angels and all the prophets, the martyrs in the way of Allah (*shuhadā'*), the saints (*awliyā'*), pious people (*shāliḥīn*), the followers of the Prophet and those after him (*tābi'īn wa tābi' al-tābi'īn*), Hasan and Hussein, Khadijah al-Kubra, Fatimah al-Zahra, Aisha al-

Ridho, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani, Abi Yazid al-Busthami, Abi al-Qasim al-Junayd, Baha'uddin al-Naqshabandi, both parents, *mu'minīn* and *mu'mināt* (a. men and women believers), and Muslims.

Each of these works explains the benefit one gets from reading a *manāqib* for those who read it, especially in Arabic adaptations such as *al-Nūr al-Burhānī* and *Jawāhir al-Ma'ānī*. What distinguishes these works, besides the language used (Arabic, Banten-Javanese, and Sundanese), is the number of stories they offer and how they are told. The number of episodes (saga) presented in the *manāqib* translations of *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir* varies. One text contains 7 sagas, the other 10, and yet others 40 sagas while the adapted and translated version of the *Tafriḥ al-Khāṭir* offers 53 episodes. The books in Banten-Javanese and Sundanese (books 1-4) are poems written in *macapat* meters. The transition of one canto to the next is clearly indicated in the text so that *juru maos* (*pewaca*/person who leads the *Wawacan Seh* ritual) can easily adjust the melody of the canto he or she reads. The fact that the texts are in *macapat* poetic form indicates that they are vernacularizations of Arabic versions into the local traditions called *dangding* or *macapatan* and form an embodiment of a popular oral/vocal art tradition in Banten.



**Diagram 1.** *The process of acculturation and the emergence of the Wawacan Seh tradition*

An explanation of the process of the formation of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition can be seen in diagram 1 in which I illustrate that the appearance of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual tradition began with an encounter between two traditions or cultures, namely the teachings of Islam, especially the Sufi tradition (or more specifically the sainthood of Sheikh AQJ) and the Bantene existing tradition and cosmological worldview. Both cultures interact in the hybridization and acculturation process which produced three main products, namely literature, a new worldview and thoughts about reality, and a new living local tradition.

The literature that was produced by the encounter between the two cultures is the vernacularized form of the



*manāqib* text of Sheikh AQJ. This text is highly unique because it was written by someone who wanted Islam to be accepted by the Bantenese community with a local taste. This vernacularized text was compiled by way of translating it from Arabic into the Banten-Javanese language following the very strict formulas of the *pupuh macapat*. It was thus not just translated but also interpreted and adapted in the form of *macapat* poetry which requires a strict adherence to poetic formulas that were already known among the local communities.

In order to give it a very strong local taste, in this vernacular literature almost the entire Arabic vocabulary was translated into the local lexicon as it was known at the time. For example, the word “Allah” is translated by the word “*Sang Hyang Widhi*”. Because this literature was written in *macapat* poetic form, these texts were not treated as we treat books today. The vernacularized text became an intercessionary literary product or text which was also used for ritual reasons, in this case, in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

The second product of the cultural encounter was a new hybrid cosmological worldview and way of thinking. It was a new way of looking at reality and a shift to a new paradigm over sanctity in the perspective of society. This new perspective is called *keramat*. *Keramat* was actually a new way for the people to see the reality of holiness and sanctity. A long time ago, before Islam came to Banten, the people believed that old and large trees, mountains, caves, seas, forests, and other places had supernatural sacred powers. Other than places, they also believed that ancestor spirits had magical powers that could bring disaster or good luck and they were called *Ki Buyut* or *Karuhun*. The Bantenese people used to make offerings at these sacred places and for the spirits to ask for salvation, supernatural power, and also political legitimacy. The encounter between this kind of perspective and Islamic teachings resulted in cultural negotiation, namely a change in the perspective on reality and

sanctity. The changes and shifts that occurred from previously leaning on large trees and caves shifted to places sanctified by Muslims, namely Mecca and Medina. While the spirits that they believed in before shifted to Islamic figures, namely *wali* (of course with the added belief that the supernatural power they had come from God) who had many supernatural powers that anyone could who needed them because they were believed to be the persons nearest to God other than the Prophet. The third form as a result of the encounter between the two cultures was a new Bantenese living social, cultural, economic tradition, and, of course a new religious life. One of the most prominent is the magical tradition. The encounter of the two cultures gave rise to the two schools of black and white magic. Black magic still used non-Islamic formulas and techniques and was used for evil reasons while white magic had been “licensed” by the teachings of Islam and was only used for goodness. One white magic that resulted from this encounter was *Elmu Tuan Syeh* (j/s. literally meaning: the teachings of Sheikh AQJ) which is usually associated with invulnerability techniques, magical power, healing, and so on. Ultimately, the three products from the encounter integrated into one tradition, namely the tradition and the ritual of the *Wawacan Seh*.

The *Wawacan Seh* became a popular tradition and one of the oral/vocal art performances in Banten that maintained its sacred ritual form. Although it has been debated among scholars when the first *Wawacan Seh* or *Manakiban* tradition was held in Banten, some researchers such as M. Athoullah Ahmad,<sup>107</sup> Ruby Ach. Baedhaw, <sup>108</sup> and Julian Millie<sup>109</sup> agree that the *Wawacan Seh* (or commonly called *Manakiban*) was closely related to the dissemination of the Qadiriyya and/or

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<sup>107</sup> M. Athoullah Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jaclani pada Masyarakat Banten* (Serang, 1987).

<sup>108</sup> Baedhaw, *Wawacan Seh: Praktek dan Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten*.

<sup>109</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*.

Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) Orders. In this sense, I agree with previous researchers that the tradition is part of the Qadiriyya Order (and other, derived orders) that had turned Sheikh AQJ into a central role figure so that his followers often presented him with a “gift” or a *tawassul* and recited his genealogy and hagiography.

At this point, the *Manakiban* with its tradition of praying, *tawassul*, and spiritual connection became a tradition whose practice was the same in all regions in Indonesia because everybody involved in it was an equal member of the *tarekat*. However, differences began to emerge when it turned into a folk tradition and became detached from its original source, which was the *tarekat* tradition. It became a distinct tradition that came to be performed and led by people who were no longer members of any particular *tarekat*. Over time, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual also became an indispensable part of many, other local traditions in Banten, such as *debus*, *rudat*, *pencak silat*, *beluk*, and so forth. The tradition and the ritual performance underwent many changes and were accommodated to the local culture. This cultural and traditional appropriation attracted many scholars, especially anthropologists and social scientists, to do research on the topic. They sometimes refer to it as a new product of acculturation and as a syncretic and hybrid culture.



## CHAPTER IV. THE PRACTICE OF THE *WAWACAN SEHRITUAL*



The *Wawacan Seh* is a ritual that had its own unique features ever since it appeared for the first time. It is a distinctive blend of Islamic teaching (especially from the Sufi tradition) and local tradition. It is a blended living artifact that signifies a combination and a shift in the meaning of sanctity in Banten society. Paradoxically, this shift and the subsequent fusion are currently judged negatively by Puritan Muslims because they consider it a form of *bid'a* or a non-Islamic tradition. They base their judgement on the claim that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual utilizes many pre-Islamic cultural elements. Yet, other Muslims, especially Moderates, think that the tradition of the *manāqib* reading, such as the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, is a form of creative syncretism the early Muslim preachers performed in their effort to Islamize the Bantenese.

This form of cultural formation and fusion is called creative syncretism because Islamic preachers in Banten consciously and deliberately cultivated syncretizing traditions into the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. This is evidenced by the existence of literature in the Banten-Javanese language which was written in the poetic meters of *pupuh macapat*. It is not easy for lay people to compose literature that follows *pupuh macapat* formulas. Therefore, the existence of this literature signifies the early Muslim preachers' earnest effort in Banten to make Islam acceptable to the people not only as a theological and worship system but also as a new social and cultural order.

In line with the spread of Islam in Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual became a tradition that was performed simultaneously with other traditional ceremonies or done by someone for a specific reason. So in this chapter, I will explain in more detail the basic conception of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual for the Bantenese people, the general pattern of the

performance of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, and the conditions in which rituals are commonly performed by the Bantenese people along with their varied practices.

### A. The Definition and the Basic Conception of *Wawacan Seh*

The term *Wawacan Seh* consists of two words, “*wawacan*” and “*seh*.” *Wawacan* comes from the word “*wawacaan*” rooted from the word “*waca*”, which means “to read”. So, the word *wawacan* means “reading” and *Wawacan Seh* means “reading the Sheikh.” The *Wawacan Seh* ritual is the intentional reading of Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani’s hagiography (led by one or more members of the community) and it is performed for a specific reason. The *Wawacan Seh* is the reading of extraordinary stories about Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani from Banten-Javanese or Sundanese texts which themselves are adaptations of Arabic originals. The text is written in Javanese-Arabic script (*Arab Pegon*). To read the text, the reader does not have to pay attention to the recitation rules of Al-Quran (*tajwid*), but his or her reading must be in accordance to the melodic rules of the *pupuh macapat* poetic meters.<sup>1</sup>

The people who perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual believe that Sheikh AQJ is a person who can help them and that the ritual gives them much benefit. It is closely related to their belief that a saint (*wali*) is the closest friend or beloved of God and they consider him an intermediary between heaven and earth, so through the mediation of His beloved they expect the requests they make in their prayers to God to be easily answered.<sup>2</sup> Above all they believe that Sheikh AQJ is

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<sup>1</sup> When I was doing my field-research, Dulyani, a reader of the *Wawacan Seh* or *juru maos*, showed me the text of the *Wawacan Seh* written in Banten-Javanese language (although he and his community in the neighborhood speak Sundanese). While showing me the text, he always reminded me not to read it according to the recitation rules of the *Qur’an* (*tajwid*), but in accordance with the rules of the *pupuh* (such as *kinanti*, *sinom*, *dandanggula*, *pangkur*, etc.). Interview with Dulyani, May 10, 2018

<sup>2</sup> Chodkiewicz, “*Konsep Kesucian dan Wali dalam Islam*,” 19.

the pole of the saints (qutb al-awliyā') and their leader. As pole of the saints and succor (*gawth*), the Bantenese people believe that he is capable of causing a “*luberan*” (overflow) of his blessings and *keramat* for anyone who reads his *manāqib* and listens to it. *Luberan* is an expression in Bantenese society that refers to the abundance of Sheikh AQJ's goodness and the people think of the sheikh as a cup and his goodness and blessings are likened to the water that bubbles over it. The people in Banten believe that this outpour of goodness and blessing is given to anyone who always remembers the sheikh and prays to Allah through his intermediation. To remember the sheikh, they perform the ritual of the recitation of the sheikh's hagiography which is called *Wawacan Seh*.<sup>3</sup>

In some areas in Banten, the people have slightly different names for this ritual. In southern Banten, they used to call it *Wawacan Seh* and *Mamacan*. In northern Banten, they usually call it *Wawacan Seh* and *Maca Seh* or *Memaca*. They all refer to the recitation of Sheikh AQJ's hagiography in Banten-Javanese or Sundanese in *macapat* melodies and by making offerings based on the local traditions that have been handed down from generation to generation. To be allowed to chant the text, the reader or *juru maos* does not require a license from a *tarekat murshid* or to have taken an oath (*bai'at*) into the Qadiriyya Order or the TQN. In fact, in many places, it does not require a reader of a specific gender (it can be led by a man or a woman) and they do not need to possess in-depth religious knowledge like a *kyai*. Therefore, the task of reading the prayer at the end of the ritual is often given to a *kyai* or an elder (someone who has in-depth religious knowledge) if a *kyai* or elder is present during the event. In other words, the reader of the *Wawacan Seh* is required to be able to perform the melodic chanting in a nice voice so that the listeners can enjoy the reading. Of course, it is different from the *Manakiban* ritual.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Sukri (53 years old), June 24, 2018 in Tirtayasa, Kabupaten Serang, Banten.

*Manakiban* for the Bantinese people refers to the ritual performed by someone who already has a license (*ijaza*) from a *kyai*. In a *Manakiban*, the people read the *manakib* text written in Arabic which is not in poetic *macapat* meters and the recitation is done according to the recitation rules of Al-Quran (*tajwid*). In addition, a *Manakiban* does not require offerings as the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. A *Manakiban* still has a close connection with the tradition of the Qadiriyya Order or TQN, even though the reader who has a license does not have to be a follower of the *tarekat*.

According to Ustadh Uting Sirojudin, there are three types of readers: 1) a person who can lead the ritual reading and has the right to give a license (*ijaza*) to others. This type of reader is required to have in-depth knowledge of the shari'a and the *tarekat* (and may even be a *murshid* or *tarekat* member); 2) a person who can lead a ritual reading but does not have the right to give a license to others. This type of reader is also required to have religious knowledge; and 3) a person who can only read the *manāqib* by himself. This type usually consists of common people who are not required to have in-depth religious knowledge but are required to be able to recite in accordance with the recitation rules of Al-Quran (*tajwid*) correctly.<sup>4</sup>

Although the *Wawacan Seh* and the *Manakiban* are both rituals for reciting and chanting the hagiography of Sheikh AQJ, it is clear that they differ in an anthropological sense in terms of the thoughts and perspectives of their performers, both towards the sheikh in particular and in the notion of sanctity in general. However, both the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and the *Manakiban* are closely linked because of the concept of sanctity. Anthropologically, the reason the Bantinese people still perform the *Wawacan Seh* and the *Manakiban* can be seen from its three basic principles, namely maintaining tradition, *tawassul*, and *nyareat*.

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ustadz Uting Sirojuddin, May 6, 2018



## 1. Maintaining Tradition

The *Wawacan Seh* ritual has existed for a long time in Banten and has been passed down from generation to generation. In fact, the *Wawacan Seh* is a ritual that is almost required in other Banten traditions, such as *debus*, *rudat*, *beluk Banten*, *pencak silat*, *Rebo Wekasan*, *prah-prahan* or *ruwat desa*, and other *tali-paranti* life cycle rituals in Banten society (such as *lahiran*, *ekahan*, circumcision, marriage, etc.). Therefore, it can be said that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual represents the people's mindset about the idea of sanctity, especially in the period after the Islamization of Banten. In this case, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual can be an analytical object and a conceptual tool in order to understand the changing worldview of the Bantenese from the perspective of the change from a pre-Islamic society to an Islamic community.

Regarding the shift of the Bantenese worldview as I explained in the previous chapter, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual clearly illustrates the syncretic pattern of the change. For the people in Banten, known as members of religious communities, the word "syncretic" has a pejorative connotation and is almost unacceptable. The word "syncretic" seems to be a mockery for people who have a strong religious character because it indicates "less religious". It means that a society with a syncretic religion is the opposite of a pious religious community, as illustrated in the descriptions of scholars such as Geertz<sup>5</sup> with his trichotomy (*abangan*, *priyai*, and *santri*), as well as

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<sup>5</sup> Geertz, *The Religion of Java*.

other anthropologists such as Hefner,<sup>6</sup> Woodward,<sup>7</sup> Bowen,<sup>8</sup> and Beatty.<sup>9</sup>

People who perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual refuse to be called *abangan*. They believe that their tradition is not syncretic but rather part of the Islamic religious tradition, namely remembrance of Allah, respecting the friends of Allah (*awliyā' Allāh*), and to take a part in praying through the intermediary of God's beloved.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, some Bantenese people, especially Universalist Muslims, question the tradition and deem it not truly Islamic, especially when dealing with the offerings and the cult of the Sheikh. Yet, this phenomenon is merely a problem of religious interpretation and expression.

In explaining *keramat*-reading in the Bandung area (in Banten: *Wawacan Seh*), Julian P. Millie called it part of the *tali-paranti* tradition. The literal meaning of *tali paranti* is 'the rope of the old traditions', in which cycles of ritual celebration dominate accounts of Sundanese tradition.<sup>11</sup> As part of the *tali paranti* tradition, *keramat*-reading or *Pangaosan Layang Seh* (or in Banten, *Wawacan Seh*) are performed as it was usually done as an existing local tradition by providing several offerings like the people's ancestors did for a long time. According to Millie, it provoked a debate between Traditionists and Puritans. Puritan Muslims consider the *keramat*-reading as non-Islamic. However, Millie added that not every Sundanese

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<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Hefner, *Hindu Javanese: Tengger Tradition and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> John R. Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Beatty, *Varieties of Javanese Religion: An Anthropological Account* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Sukri (53 years old) in Tirtayasa, June 24, 2018 and Abah Salkin (70 years old) in Anyer, May 10, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*, 14.

who performs a *keramat*-reading in Bandung uses the *tali paranti* as point of reference to determine the shape, form, and timing of the ritual:

“...Some reject the ‘rope of the old traditions’. For this reason, the *tali paranti* provides a suitable entry-point for gaining a comprehensive understanding of *keramat*-reading in North Bandung. Notably, it appears to have been rejected in the *Manakiban* rituals held by the TQN, which are not generally held in accordance with the Sundanese ritual cycles. Gone also are the characteristic accouterments of the ritual meal. The presiding experts are no longer the ritual specialists armed with the knowledge of the *tali paranti*, in which food preparation and ritual decorum are connected with efficacy. Rather, the hierarchy of the *tariqa* perceives their organization to have an important role in the modern state of Indonesia, and they, therefore, make some effort to conform to the understandings that dominate public discourse. The *tali paranti* sits uneasily with public orthodoxy in Indonesia, so its problematic elements are not so obvious at these rituals.”<sup>12</sup>

In his explanation, Millie saw the *tali paranti* as a problem so he analysed it by using a discursive framework. He said that in writing about Islam in West Java, the time-honored framework invoked is always a binary one, commonly expressed as Islam on the one hand contrasted with *adat* (customs, cultural traditions) on the other. Certainly, what Millie did was anthropologically valid, although, in this case, he sees both types of rituals (*keramat*-reading in society and *Manakiban* in the TQN *pesantren*) as separate entities. This method of analysis produces a binary oppositional viewpoint, between rituals in the form of *adat* and of Islam (or something Islamic).

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

What Millie views as the existence of a binary opposition, I see what happens in Banten as part of a dynamic ritual rather than as a binary opposition. The two entities of a *keramat*-reading also occur in Banten, there is the ritual of the *Wawacan Sch* which still holds on to local customs and traditions and the *Manakiban* ritual which is more “Islamic” as part of the Sufi/*tarekat* tradition. Unlike Millie who witnessed the *Manakiban* or *keramat*-reading rituals in the TQN Pesantren Suryalaya, I saw that this tradition has also become a pop culture in society that not only replaces the *Wawacan Sch* but also replaces the shape and timing of the ritual as it is done in the *tarekat* environment. This condition then led me to see that the dynamics of both rituals are similar. Rituals can be dynamic, they can change and be able to include religious meaning and are influenced by religious interpretation and understanding, and belief itself.

In the study of rituals, scholars agree that there is a strong relationship between the belief system and the ritual. Many scholars view rituals as “windows” on cultural dynamics by which people make and remake their worlds.<sup>13</sup> They also consider ritual as a definitive component of the various processes that are thought to constitute a religion, or society, or culture. Moreover, despite the variety of avowed methodological perspectives and their ramifications, there is a surprising degree of consistency in the descriptions of ritual: ritual is a type of critical juncture wherein some pairs of opposing social or cultural forces come together. Examples include the ritual integration of belief and behavior, tradition and change, order and chaos, the individual and the group, subjectivity and objectivity, nature and culture, the real and the imaginative ideal. Whether it is defined in terms of ‘enthusiasm’ (fostering *groupism*) or ‘formalism’ (fostering the repetition of the

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<sup>13</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

traditional), ritual is consistently depicted as a mechanistically discrete and paradigmatic means of sociocultural integration, appropriation, and transformation. Given the variety of theoretical objectives and methods, this consistency is surprising and interesting.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, seeing the *Wawacan Seh* as a ritual can give us a window in the cultural dynamics in Banten society. The appearance of this ritual signifies the creation and the remaking of a new world, namely not only the process of Islamization at the religious level of the community but also the Islamization of existing local cultures and traditions. Through Sheikh AQJ who is well known and recognized in Islamic orthodoxy, this ritual managed to replace the salvation of the Bantenese ancestors (*Karuhun* or *Ki Buyut*), who were usually “asked for help” in pre-Islamic rituals.

Before Islam spread and developed, the inhabitants of the archipelago paid much attention to spiritual matters, including the Bantenese. This is related to their cosmological worldview. They generally believe that the cosmic centers—namely: the meeting points between the world of mortals (our world) and supernatural nature—play an important role in their lives. The cosmic centers that are believed to have supernatural powers are ancestor graves, mountains, caves and forests, and other places that are considered sacred. Visiting sacred places to gain supernatural power has long been an important part of religious life in this region. These places are not only pilgrimage sites visited as a form of worship but also visited to seek knowledge (*ngelmu*), i.e. magical power and political legitimacy.

After the inhabitants of this country embraced Islam there was a change in their orientation of the cosmic

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

center. The holy places in Islam, such as Mecca and Medina, are seen to be the main cosmic centers and Mecca is seen as the center of the world and the source of *ngelmu* (the source of magical power), wisdom and political legitimacy.<sup>15</sup> The sanctified Muslim figures have been given their place and their stories turned into songs the people chanted in every performance and ritual, including the *Wawacan Seh*. Thus, the *Wawacan Seh* symbolizes the important change from a pre-Islamic culture and traditions to an Islamic one, including how the model of cultural change for the first time took hold in the new civilization of Islam in Banten.

Ritual as part of a community tradition, especially ritual in non-Western societies, has always been seen as an impression — to both the indigenous people and foreign observers—of unchanged matter with deep structures.<sup>16</sup> In this case, anthropologists often view ritual as something that is naturally very difficult to change because of its traditional nature, which has been preserved and passed down from generation to generation. Some anthropologists and religious historians advocate the primacy of ritual practice in its dialectic with religion. Rituals are not seen as preserving or enacting stable sets of religious beliefs, but rather as constructing, creating and modifying religious beliefs.<sup>17</sup>

Although a specific ritual may remain the same over long periods of time, its meaning for society is constantly re-contextualized. People transform and change underlying religious beliefs through the creation and practice of rituals. Rather than focus on stable meanings of ritual

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<sup>15</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, “Mencari Ilmu dan Pahala di Tanah Suci: Orang Nusantara Naik Haji,” *Ulumul Qur’an* II, no. 5 (1990): 42–49.

<sup>16</sup> Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, 210.

<sup>17</sup> See Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*; Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*; and C. Humphrey & Laidlaw J., *Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

actions, practice theorists emphasize the experiential aspects of ritual and the effects ritual has on the social relations between ritual participants. As such, the practice approach tends to focus on ritual change and what ritual does rather than on what it means, although it is important not to overplay this point.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual as a tradition has a dynamic character. The ritual was originally a non-Islamic ritual which was later Islamized in line with the process of Islamization in Banten society. The container of the pre-Islamic rituals was retained but the contents of the ritual and to whom the ritual was intended were adapted to Islamic teachings. In a more recent development it turns out that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual has also undergone many changes. Many areas replaced the *Wawacan Seh* (rituals that still use the local language) with *Manakiban* (which uses Arabic and is considered more Islamic). This fact shows that the ritual dynamism of the *Wawacan Seh* follows the process of contextualizing the development of Islamic thought in society.

To analyse the *Wawacan Seh* and *Manakiban* rituals they should therefore not be approached in binary opposition but as cultural facts of change and ritual dynamics in society. In some areas in Banten they can be seen as a form of evolution from ritual traditions. The *Wawacan Seh* can be considered a replacement of the pre-Islamic *macapat* or *kidung* (j. traditional chanting) vocal-magical ritual for an Islamic one—or as an Islamized ritual—that uses prayers (*doa-doa*) and the hagiography from the Muslim saint Sheikh AQJ.

Subsequently, along with the increase of the Bantenese people's religious knowledge, they replaced some non-Islamic elements with Islamic ones. One obvious element that changed are the offerings (*sesajen*) and ritual

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<sup>18</sup> Lars Fogelin, "The Archaeology of Religious Ritual," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 36 (2007): 58.

symbols, such as *ancak-ancak* (a kind of *sesajen* placed at the intersection of the village road after the ritual is completed) and words that are considered un-Islamic (*Sang Hyang Widhi*) in the *manāqib* text. Furthermore, some Bantene people went further and replaced the *Wawacan Seh* ritual for the *Manakiban* which is considered Islamic because it uses Arabic and is considered a Sufi tradition.

Yet, in other areas in Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and the *Manakiban* go hand in hand so that it cannot be regarded a form of ritual evolution. Both are two different rituals that are used by the community and they believe that they have the same efficacy. In this case, the *Wawacan Seh* is considered part of the old Banten Islamic tradition and Traditionalists Muslims and the local government expect it always to survive, while the *Manakiban* is a new tradition created by the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2. *Tawassul, Istighātha, and Tabarruk*

Those who still perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual recognize it as a Bantene Islamic tradition and consider it an implementation of Islamic teachings, such as *tawassul* (intercession), *istighātha* (*du'a* or appeal for aid), and *tabarruk* (seeking God's blessing), all of which are recognized in Islamic orthodoxy. Of course, at the practical level, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is not the only form of *tawassul* in Banten. Traditionalist Muslims in Banten, as in other places in Indonesia, can also perform *tawassul* with other rituals, such as *ziarah* (visiting a grave) and visiting a *kyai* and asking him for prayers, *slametan*, *maca silsilah*, and so on.

The terms *tawassul*, *istighātha*, and *tabarruk* no longer have only single meaning. At present, especially after the wave of Puritan Muslims who see scriptural Islamic traditions as a universal tradition, the *tawassul* as it already exists in the community has become the topic of polemics



because it is considered *bid'a* (unlawful religious innovation). Polemics in religious matters is a universal phenomenon and can be found in almost every religion.<sup>19</sup> In his writing on *tawassul*, Millie wrote that the findings of his field research in West Java present an account of six understandings people bring to the event. He also acknowledged that the practice of *tawassul* often led to religious polemics in society, especially among Puritans although the practice of *tawassul* is a very popular religious practice in Indonesia.<sup>20</sup>

For the Bantenese people, the *Wawacan Seh* is part of their spiritual efforts to perform *tawassul*, *istighātha*, and *tabarruk*, and it may be said that the core of a *Wawacan Seh* event is *tawassul*. *Tawassul*, in this case, is interpreted as a prayer offered to God through the intercession of a *wali* and God's beloved one. The Bantenese still believe that saints are holy people who mediate between ordinary people and Allah so that Allah answers their intentions and desires. Their intention can be worldly or heavenly, such as wanting to be promoted, advances in trade, companies, agriculture, and so on. For this reason, the Sheikh AQJ is included who is the mainstay of their intentions. About this, Abah Ubed, a *jurumaos* (one who leads the ritual) of the *Wawacan Seh* from Kresek, Tangerang, said:

*“Menurut pitutur saking wong bengen sing kula terima sing kaitane maring kanjeng Syekh Abdul Qodir Jaelani, yakni deweke pernah sewaktu masih uripe nawaraken maring wong kang katah kanggo ngejalukaken ning Allah kelawan doane napa napa*

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<sup>19</sup> Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society*, 229–288; Geertz, *The Religion of Java*; Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*; and Jajang Jahroni, “Ritual, Bid’ah, and the Negotiation of the Public Sphere in Contemporary Indonesia,” *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 25, no. 1 (2018): 1–35.

<sup>20</sup> Julian Millie, “Supplicating, Naming, Offering: Tawassul in West Java,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 39, no. 1 (2008): 107–122.

*sing dikarepi lan dimaksud kelawan wong katah niku, lan napa sing diomongaken niku enggih kebuktosan. Ikulah salah sewiji saking keramate kanjeng Syekh”<sup>21</sup>*

Even though Sheikh AQJ has passed away a long time ago, the Bantenese still perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual as *tawassul*, to reach Allah through the Sheikh’s intercession. This is because they are convinced that a *wali*’s existence stays the same whether he is dead or alive. They believe that *awliya* (s. *wali*) are still able to act as intermediaries to convey their prayers to be answered by Allah, whether they are still alive or after they have died. Regarding the role of holy saints and their abilities to provide help is also in line with the opinion of Ustadh Supyan, one of the readers of the *Manakiban* in Taktakan sub-district, Kota Serang:

*“Ari para wali mah matine lan uripe pade bae. Ngomongaken para wali mah pada bae kaye kite-kite jejagongan kelawan deweke, mangkane ning tiyap-tiyap doa tahlilan atawa maca seh kuen dijuluk kehadiran kelawan maca ila hadoroti. Sing mengkonon kuh karena kite wong kabeh iki yakin bahwa deweke milu hadir ingdalem majlis kuen.”<sup>22</sup>*

However, the ritual also means *istighātha* (appeal for aid) and *tabarruk* (seeking blessing). What is meant by

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<sup>21</sup> “According to the elders who once told me about Shaykh Abdul Qodir Jaelani, that sheikh AQJ when he was alive had offered to people to pray for them to Allah from whatever they wished to be granted by Allah. Apparently, what he prayed for was proven. That is one proof of the sheikh’s *keramat*.” Interview with Abah Ubed (74 years old), one of the *jurumaos* of the *wawacan seh* who also works as a farmer and religious teacher in a *madrasah* in a village in Kresek, Tangerang, August 12, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> “For *awliyā*’, their life and death are the same. Talking about *awliyā*’ is like talking to them. Therefore, in every *doa tahlilan* (the ritual meal) or *maca seh* ritual we often ask for his presence by reading *ila hadhoroti...*’ We do this because we all believe that the *awliya* could be present in the assembly.” Interview with Ust. Supyan from Taktakan, Kota Serang. He is one of the readers of the *Manakiban* and works as a farmer, October 18, 2018.

*istighātha* here is a ritual that is performed as a prayer to ask Allah for help. In the *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir* and its adapted versions there are illustrations of Sheikh AQJ's *keramat* told in successive stories related to the extraordinary events in which the closeness and special relationship between the Sheikh and Allah is manifested. For example, the story of the merchant who lost his camel and he managed to find it shortly after he called the name of Sheikh AQJ. The story closes with the utterance of the Sheikh, "If anyone seeks my help [*istighātha bī*] when in distress, I will bring light to them. If anyone calls me by name, I will give them solace. If anyone uses me as *wasīlah* to Almighty Allah [*tawassala bī*] when in a state of need, I will grant their request."<sup>23</sup>

For the people in Banten, *tabarruk* in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is also referred to as *ngalap berkah* (j. to seek someone's blessing), or by performing the *Wawacan Seh* ritual they attempt to receive the overflows (*leluberan*) or splashes (*faḍāil* and *barokah*) of the dignity and the special position of the *wali*. Because Sheikh AQJ is considered the leader of the saints of Allah, when they perform the ritual reading of the Sheikh's hagiography the people expect these splashes and an abundance of blessings because of his superior, dignified and special position. Those who still perform the ritual illustrate *ngalap berkah* in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual with a glass with overflowing water.

The Sheikh is considered a saint, pious, and Allah has given him a lot of *keramat* so that by doing *tabarruk* all the advantages of the saint are expected to "splash" onto those who ask for it by performing the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. Ustadh Sukri, a reader of the *Wawacan Seh* in the sub-district of Tirtayasa compared it to offering the *salawat* to the Prophet. He said that it was like a person who says a prayer to the Prophet Muhammad (*salawat*), even though

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<sup>23</sup> *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir, hikayat 54*

we know that the Prophet Muhammad is still and always will be protected by Allah with or without our prayers for him. However, because we need the splashes and overflows of blessing (*leluberane*) we are also ordered to say the prayer for him in the expectation that the reward of the *salawat* will return to those who read.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. *Nyareat*

Besides being believed to be *istighātha*, *tawassul* and *tabarruk* which have become a tradition passed down from generation to generation, the Bantenese people also believe that a *Wawacan Seh* ritual is a form of *nyareat*. *Nyareat*, in the Banten-Javanese/Sundanese language means an effort to achieve a certain objective which can make the soul and heart restful. It is a coincidence that when I was interviewing Ustadh Uting for this study, a man of around 30 years old came and asked Ustadh Uting for ‘*air doa*’ (i. blessed water or water over which a prayer has been said) for the recovery of his mother who was being treated in hospital. I asked the man why he did that and he replied, “*arane gah nyareat kang, usaha-usaha sampun dilakoni. Menawa-menawa digae slamet lan waras saking gusti Allah. Nyareat mah kudu, anepon hakekate lha nggih keduene gusti Allah.*”<sup>25</sup> After the person had left, I asked Ustadh Uting about *nyareat* and he explained that *nyareat* is a form of inner (*batin*) and outer (*Jahir*) effort. What is done by the man would not be called *nyareat* if he only prayed without also having made medical efforts, and vice versa.<sup>26</sup>

In line with what has been said above, Ulumi stated that *nyareat* can be done in two ways (*wasilah*), namely

<sup>24</sup> Interview with Sukri in Tirtayasa, June 24, 2018

<sup>25</sup> “It is *nyareat*, brother. I have done all (medical) efforts. May God give salvation and healing (for my mother). *Nyareat* is a must, while the *hakekat* (essence) (of healing) is God's prerogative.”

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ust. Uting in Ciruas and someone I had no chance to ask his name, May 6, 2018.

*barokah* (God's blessing) and *hikmah* (wisdom; in the case of the Bantenese it refers also to magical and supernatural power). The *barokah* way can be done by visiting a *kyai* and ask for his blessings or to ask for prayers and it can also be done by certain remembrances (*dhikr*) or litanies (*wirid/awrād*) taken from Al-Quran. The *hikmah* way can be done with the use of various intermediaries in the form of magical or supernatural efforts.<sup>27</sup> The people in Banten believe that *nyareat* is the essence (*hakekat*) and that people can only try while the results are entirely up to Allah. *Sareat* and *hakekat* must always go hand in hand and cannot be separated and the people in Banten believe that when they are separated it will be considered a form of associating partners with Allah (*shirk*), which is a mortal sin.

Almost every *juru maos* I interviewed said that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is nothing but a form of *nyareat*. Abah Ubed, a *juru maos*, further explained that what is done during the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is nothing but prayer or *menawa-menawa* (hope) directed to God. For example, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is performed by a person on the eve of his wedding ceremony as an inward or spiritual attempt after all the physical preparation has been taken care of. The ritual is performed so that the wedding would proceed without any physical and magical disturbances. According to him, after the ritual of the *Wawacan Seh*, there is a special prayer so that the desired intention may be achieved. This ritual is a form of *nyareat* or effort with prayer, while the results will be left entirely to Allah, so that it is not as a form of pressure on Sheikh AQJ, let alone on Allah.<sup>28</sup> In short, for the people in Banten, *nyareat* combines three elements, namely *ikhtiar* (endeavor), *sabar*

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<sup>27</sup> Helmy Faizi Bahrul Ulumi, *Filsosofi Magi* (Serang: FUD Press, 2009), 182.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Abah Ubed (74 years old), August 12, 2018.

(patience), and *tawakkul* (resignation), which are indeed prescribed and encouraged in Islam.

### **B. The General Pattern of the *Wawacan Seh* Practice**

The ritual starts with preparations. In this phase, the host usually invites a *juru maos* or someone who is able and used to read or sing the Banten-Javanese *manāqib*. The host also invites local residents to gather at an appointed time. After that, the host prepares *sesajen* (offerings) which are part of the ritual requirements. This kind of offerings varies from region to region according and depending on the wishes of the *juru maos*. In general, the offerings include: milk, coffee and tea with and without sugar, *rujak haseum* (s. unripe fruit in spicy tamarind water), cooked eggs, salt, red chilis, rice, *liwet syeh* (j/s. cooked rice with the crust at the bottom of the pan), *ayam bakakak* (j/s. grilled chicken), seven kinds of flowers, seven kinds of food dishes known as *perwanten*, *perpuyan* (j. incense burning container), incense, several cigarettes, and a basin containing water and coins. In addition, the host also usually presents different food dishes, drinks in the form of coffee and tea, or milk which are placed in front of the residents to eat and to drink from during the ritual.

There are no special provisions for the types of food dishes that are served to the residents who are present and they depend entirely on the ability of the host. There are, however, special provisions for the *sesajen* that have to be met. Usually, the *juru maos* will check the offerings and everything else before the ritual begins and if all conditions are not met he will ask the host to complete them before the ritual begins. According to the *juru maos*, if something is lacking, that there will be magical disturbances during the ritual. Ki Sohra (72 years), a *juru maos* from Cinangka, confirmed this. He told me that he had once been invited to perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. At that time, he had failed to provide for all the necessary offerings and in the middle of

the ritual the loudspeaker failed and the sound repeatedly disappeared.<sup>29</sup>

Abah Ubed (another *juru maos* from Kresek, Tangerang) had the same experience. In fact, according to him, incomplete *sesajen* could cause disturbances and not only when the ritual takes place but for the celebration which is the objective of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. He told me that he once led a *Wawacan Seh* ritual where the *sesajen* the host provided were incomplete, so the next day — during the wedding party — the rice that was being cooked was not cooked properly. In the end, after seeing these abnormal conditions, the host called Abah Ubed to deal with it.<sup>30</sup> Some communities in Banten still believe that these events occur because the host did not hold a *Wawacan Seh* ritual or the *sesajen* the host provided were incomplete. Therefore, a lack of *sesajen* will also bring harm to those who do it. Nevertheless, the offerings that must be prepared by the host may differ from one region to another depending on the traditions and customs of each region.

After everything has been prepared, the next stage is the execution of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. How the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is performed varies greatly depending on the event for which the ritual is performed. For the people in Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual that is held regularly (weekly, monthly, or annually) will be different from the way it is done for certain occasions such as *walimatul ‘ursy* (wedding ceremony) or for the sake of performing arts such as *debus*. However, there is a general pattern and, usually, it is performed in three stages. *First*, a statement is made of the intent and the reason for which the ritual is performed. This is usually stated by the host or his/her representative. *Second*, reading the *silsilah* or *tawassul* (reading *Surah al-Fātihah* as a prayer). *Third*, the chanting of Sheikh AQJ’s *manāqib* using certain *pupuh* rhythms. *Fourth*, reading the *hadiah* (reading *Surah al-*

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Ki Sohra (64 years old) in Cinangka, July 8, 2018

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Abah Ubed (74 years old) in Kresek, August 12, 2018

*Fātiḥah*) and prayer. The performance of the four stages is as follows:

### 1. Stating the Intent

After the invited guests are present in the room, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual opens with a brief word of welcome by the host or his/her representative (usually one of his/her relatives, if none is able they are represented by the *juru maos* at the request of the host). In that short welcome speech, after the words of welcome the guests are thanked for their attendance. After that, the host expresses the intent and the aim for organizing the ritual and he asks the guests for their support and their prayers for the success of the event. Before ending his brief remarks, the host apologizes to the audience for any shortcomings in the banquet (and that was a matter of courtesy). The core of the short welcome speech is to convey the aim and the intent for which the ritual is performed and this is intended to ask for the moral and emotional support from the attendees and the local residents for the planned celebration of the host.

Najamuddin (36 years), whom I met on the afternoon of June 23 in Tirtayasa sub-district, about 25 Kilometers from Serang City, held a *slametan* (ritual meal) for the circumcision of his son. The day before the circumcision event took place, he held a *Wawacan Seh* ritual. On that occasion, he explained the intent and objective of the event in front of the guest he had invited which was to hold a circumcision celebration for his son who was now 5 years old. Najamuddin's statement implicitly asked for support from his relatives and the residents from his surroundings so that the event would proceed successfully without any interferences.

The words that are often spoken by the host or a representative are *mudah-mudahan*, *semoga*, or *moga-moga* (hopefully) and they all imply an expectation that



something that will or is being performed will be a success. After that, he requested the audience to pray for him, so that the effort or the event he was about to perform would take place successfully without any obstacles.

## 2. The Reading of *Silsilah* or *Tawassul*

An important part of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is the reading of the *wasilah* or *tawassul* (prayer by intercessionary statement). This is an important part and is always performed during a *Wawacan Seh* ritual so that the will, aim, and intention of the person who hold the event gets the support and the help of the spirits of the sacred and noble ancestors. The spirits are believed to have the power to influence human life in this world and in essence, they do not have any authority and it is just that because of the sanctity of their souls and their proximity to the source of absolute authority, namely Allah that they are invoked. Because of their sanctity, the spirits of these people possess *keramat* which they splash on living people.

In the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, the reading of the *wasilah* or *tawassul* for the spirits of parents, *ulama*, Sufi teachers—especially Sheikh AQJ—, the Companions of the Prophet, even the Prophet Muhammad himself, is an important stage that must be done. The *tawassul* serves as an intermediary to ask for God’s help to protect them from all hazardous conditions and to ask God to grant their wishes.

Those who perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual believe that God is like a king. So, for the request to be granted by a King, a commoner must state his wishes through the people and confidants closest to the King. It is the same with Allah; according to them, not everyone’s prayer—especially those made by ordinary people who commit many sins—will be answered by Allah. In order for the prayer to be answered, people ask the help of people who are considered close to Allah because of the sanctity of

their soul, namely prophets and saints, to convey their wishes to Allah. Especially regarding spiritual issues, which are very complicated to decipher, asking God for help through his saints is something easy to accept.

*Tawassul* is usually done by reading *Surah al-Fātiḥah* to pray for the spirits who are believed to be able to connect people with Allah, the absolute owner of all power and authority. The series of spirits for whom the *al-Fātiḥah* is often read during the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is as follows:

- 1) To the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, his family and companions (then the ritual guide says loudly: “*al-Fātiḥah*”)
- 2) To all prophets and apostles of God, all angels, the martyrs, the pious men and their companions ... (then the ritual guide says loudly: “*al-Fātiḥah*”)
- 3) To all pious and guided *ulama* in the world ... (then the ritual guide says loudly: “*al-Fātiḥah*”)
- 4) To the Sufis and the founders of *tarekat*, especially to the founder and *murshids* of Tariqa Qadiriyya and Naqshabandiyya and its followers, more specifically to the leader of the saints (*sulṭān al-awliyā*) and pole of the saints (*qut’b al-awliyā*) Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. Other sheikhs are: Sheikh Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd al-Baghdadi, Sheikh Ma’ruf al-Karkhi, Sheikh Sirr al-Saqati, Sheikh Habib al-Ajami, Sheikh Hasan al-Basri, Sheikh Ja’far al-Sadiq, Sheikh Yusuf al-Hamdani, Sheikh Abu Yazid al-Bustami, Sheikh Bahauddin al-Naqshabandi, Imam al-Rabbani, Sheikh Abdullah Mubarrak bin Nur Muhammad, all their descendants and relatives and those included in the lineage of their *tarekat*... (then the ritual guide says loudly: “*al-Fātiḥah*”)
- 5) To our parents, teachers, and relatives ... (then the ritual guide says loudly: “*al-Fātiḥah*”)

- 6) To all Muslims and Mu'mins in the world, especially those who have an intention (*sohibul hajat*)... (then the ritual guide says loudly: “*al-Fātiḥah*”)

According to the narrative of some *juru maos*, the reading of *wasilah* in *Wawacan Seh* rituals is not as strict as that found in the *tarekat* tradition. The main thing about the *wasilah* reading is that it is usually addressed to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and Sheikh Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani. Reading the *tawassul* for Sheikh AQJ, as told in *manāqib*, is believed to have several advantages, one of which is the fulfilment of all desires. This is confirmed in one episode of the *manāqib*:

“*Dicarioskeun ku guru-guru anu laluhung, saha-saha anu nyebut jenengan Sayyid Abdul Qadir henteu boga wudhu maka eta jalma ku gusti Allah dirupekken rizqina. Sareng saha-saha anu nadir hadiah ka Sayyid Abdul Qadir eta kudu dilakonan supaya ulah kasebut jalma bedegong matak kawalat. Sareng saha-saha jalma anu ngahadiahkeun amis-amis dina malem Jum'at teras maca fatehah dihadihkeun ka Sayyid Abdul Qadir teras kadaharanana dibagikeun ka fakir miskin sarta eta jalma nyuhunkeun syafaat sareng karamatana Sayyid Abdul Qadir dina ngahasilkeun maksudna tantu eta jalma meunang pirang-pirang pertolongan ti gusti Allah kalawan karomatana Sayyid Abdul Qadir. Sareng saha-saha anu maca fatihah rek dahar tuluy dihadihkeun ka Sayyid Abdul Qadir tantu eta jalma dibukakacun dikaluarkeun tina kasusahan dunya akherat. Saha-saha jalma anu nyebut jenengan Sayyid Abdul Qadir bari boga wudhu tur ikhlas anu sampurna ngagungkeun ka anjeuna maka eta jalma ku gusti Allah dibungahkeun dina eta poe serta dilabur dosana.*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> “It was said by the great teacher, whoever mentioned the name of Sayyid Abdul Qadir in a state of not having done the ablution (wudhu) he would be troubled by Allah. And anyone who has the desire to give a gift to

### 3. Reading and Chanting the *Manāqib*

After reading the *salawat* and *tawassul*—also called *maca silsilah* and *hadorot* or *hadiran*—the *juru maos* continues the *Wawacan Seh* ritual by reading the contents of the *manāqib* using the rhythmic chant of *macapat* verse. The *manāqib* book of Sheikh AQJ contains stories of his life's journey and the extraordinary events he experienced. It is seen as a sign or a symbol that he has supernatural power (*keramat*) that comes from God. Therefore, for those who believe in it, Sheikh AQJ is seen as the manifestation of ultimate sainthood, the leader of the saints (*Sulṭān al-awliyā*), whose position is only one level below that of the Prophet Muhammad.

As aforementioned, in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual process, the *juru maos* can read the saga (*hikayat*) as a whole or only in certain parts depending on the request of the host. If the host wants a full reading—usually for big events such as *walimatul 'ursy*—it will take around six to seven hours with at least two *juru maos* reading the text alternately. For other events, such as for the construction of a house or a shop (*ngaruwat imah* or *ngaruwat toko*), the *juru maos* usually only reads certain parts of the story and the text is read by one person only.

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*Sayyid Abdul Qadir, it must be performed so that he is not called a mischievous human being—kuwalat. And whoever presents sweet foods on Friday night and then reads al-fatihah presented to Sayyid Abdul Qadir and the food is given to the poor and at the same time he is asking for the syafa'at and karomah of Sayyid Abdul Qadir he will get help from God because of the karomah of Sayyid Abdul Qadir. And whoever reads al-fatihah before eating and is then presented to Sayyid Abdul Qadir he will be excluded from the troubles in the world and in the hereafter. Whoever mentions the name of Sayyid Abdul Qadir in a state of having done the ablution (wudhu) with a sincere sense of glory to him he will be blessed by Allah on that day and all his sins will be removed.” See “Manqobah no. 14” from *Tijan al-Jawahir fi Manaqib al-Sayyid Abd al-Qadir* adapted by H. Muhamad Juwayni bin Haji Abd al-Rahman of Parakan (Jakarta: Syrikah Ali Ridha, 1996).*

There are several versions of the number of saga (*hikayat*) in the *manāqib* I found during my research, from the simplest of 7 up to as many as 53 stories. Every story has a different topic. There are 53 episodes contained in the book adapted from the *Tafīkh al-Khāṭir* by al-Irbili and the *Khulāṣat al-Mafākhir* by al-Yafī'i. The *manāqib* topic in each episode are:

1. The story of Sheikh AQJ's kin (his genealogy and descendants);
2. The story of AQJ's birth;
3. The story of AQJ's religious studies;
4. The story of AQJ's good attitudes;
5. The story of AQJ's dress and food during his study;
6. The story of the meeting between AQJ and the prophet Khidr;
7. The story of AQJ's way of worshiping God;
8. The story of the foundation of AQJ's attitudes;
9. The story of the performance of AQJ's preaching to his audiences on the chair;
10. The story of the assembly of one hundred Baghdad *ulama* who discuss religious issues at AQJ's house;
11. The story of the Prophet Muhammad who set his foot on AQJ's shoulder;
12. The story of the testimonies of Sufis and saints dealing with the extent of AQJ's dignity;
13. The story of the disgrace of the person who called AQJ without having done the ablution (*wudhu*);
14. The story of those who present the *tawassul* to AQJ their intentions will be granted;
15. The story of AQJ's great names;
16. The story of AQJ who made the dead survived again from the grave;
17. The story of AQJ who has taken the life of his servant from the angel of death
18. The story of the AQJ's ability to change the sex of baby girl into that of a baby boy;

19. The story of the salvation of a perverse person (entering heaven) because of his love for AQJ;
20. The story of the sudden death of a bird that flew past Sheikh AQJ;
21. The story of AQJ who brought an eagle to life;
22. The story of AQJ who frees slaves and restores wealth;
23. The story of dishes falling from the sky;
24. The story of the recovery of people affected by the *thoun* disease due to eating grass and drinking water taken from the *madrassa* belonging to AQJ;
25. The story of AQJ who revives chicken;
26. The story of a dog waiting in a stall after killing a cat;
27. The story of buying 40 good horses based on the recognition of unhealthy horses;
28. The story of the *ifrit* genie under the rule of AQJ;
29. The story of the forgiveness of the king of the *Jin* to the person who killed his son;
30. The story of AQJ treating a person who was seduced by Jinn;
31. The story of AQJ who kissed the hand of the Prophet Muhammad;
32. The story of AQJ's ability to visit his students in 70 places simultaneously;
33. The story of AQJ who saved the wife of one of his students from the despicable deeds of a wicked person;
34. The story of AQJ who helped a person who will be released from his sainthood;
35. The story of Sheikh Ahmad Kanji who became AQJ alike because of the guidance of his teacher;
36. The story of Syaikh Ahmad Kanji looking for firewood that flies when the wood will be placed on his head;
37. The story of one of the wives who was blessed because of AQJ's prayer;
38. The story of AQJ who saved his student from the torture of the angels *Munkar* and *Nakir*;

39. The story of AQJ who congratulates every new year and tells what will happen in the new year;
40. The story of AQJ who was given a booklet to record the names of his students who came on the Day of Judgment;
41. The story of a person who sucks his finger and then his teeth without feeling hungry or needing to eat;
42. The story of Sheikh Shon'ani who disregarded AQJ's advice;
43. The story of the fish from the river of Dajlah (Tigris?) which tried to kiss AQJ's palm;
44. The story of AQJ's ability to turn a rejected saint (*wali mardud*) into an accepted saint (*wali maqbul*);
45. The story of AQJ who saved his student from the fire (torture) of the afterlife;
46. The story of AQJ who shows himself in the form of a very old man;
47. The story of AQJ being seduced by Satan;
48. The story of AQJ who slaps the devil;
49. The story of gifts of money from a king that later turned into blood because it was not given directly by the king;
50. The story of a gift from the king in the form of an apple on another occasion;
51. The story of AQJ's testament to his son;
52. The story of *shalat hajat* of a person accompanied by asking for help from AQJ;
53. The story of AQJ's death.

There is an interesting session for residents who attend the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, especially teenagers, namely the session where the *juru maos* predicts or guesses a person's life based on the interpretation of Sheikh AQJ's story as written in the *manakib* text. This session is called by different names in different regions in Banten. There are people who call it *noja* like in Anyer and Cinangka, whereas in other places they call it as *ngabade*, *jarah*, or

*mancing* but they all refer to the same practice. In a *noja* session, the people will gather around the readers of the *manāqib*. A person who wants to be predicted how his or her life will be inserts a banknote into the *manāqib* book. He/she puts it between any pages in the text. If the money is put at the page that tells about Sheikh AQJ being intercepted by robbers, according to Dulyani, then the person (who put the money) is predicted to live a life where what he has managed to acquire will always be taken away or wanted by others, so he or she will often face failure. But if someone puts his or her money at the *manāqib* page that tells about a trade caravan, the money will usually be taken back and turned into a kind of amulet in order to get profit and success in trade.

In some areas in Banten (such as in the sub-districts of Cinangka, Anyer, Baros, Pamarayan, Petir, Cikeusal, Careng, Mauk, Kresek, Ciruas, Tirtayasa, and Pontang), the *juru maos* usually has no high social standing, unlike a *kyai*. Dulyani (68 years old) from Cinangka, Sohra (64) from Anyer, and Abah Ubed (74) from Kresek are not religious experts. Nonetheless, *manāqib* readers are people who have been educated in *pesantren*, so they are people who can read Arabic script and understand the meaning of the *macapat* rhythms. Thus, authority is not invested in the reader but in the text that is read (the text of the *manāqib*), and Sheikh AQJ's *keramat* which is believed to bring benefit to anyone who reads it.

#### 4. Presenting *Hadiah* and Closing Prayer

After completing the reading of the stories in the *manāqib* text, the *juru maos* would read the *tahlil* (reading *lā ilāha illa Allāh*) and the *salawat* presented to the Prophet while inviting the attendees to recite them together. If there is still time left, it is usually used for communal reading of *Quthb Rabbani* that contains prayers to the Prophet Muhammad and the glorification of Sheikh AQJ's



sainthood. If a series of rituals has been completed, the performance of the next item on the agenda will usually be handed over to the elder and most respected person or *kyai* and he will preside over the prayer. If there is no *kyai* present, then *juru maos* himself will lead the closing prayer. In this session, the *kyai* or *juru maos* will read and present the *hadiah* which is the reading of *Surah al-Fātiḥah* which is read and presented to the Prophet Muhammad and his family, his companions, angels, devotees, Sheikh AQJ, Muslims and Mu'mins, and parents, as in the reading of the *tawassul*.

### C. The Ritual Forms

The four stages of the ritual performance explained above form the general pattern of a *Wawacan Seh* ritual but there are minor differences in the way it is practiced and carried out in different areas in Banten. In addition, the practice can also differ between one event and another. For example, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual performed prior to start building a house will differ from that for a wedding ceremony.

Like other rituals, the way a *Wawacan Seh* ritual is done depends on certain times and conditions. Based on my observations and the interviews I had with many expert readers (*juru maos*) of the *Wawacan Seh*, I found that there are three general patterns why and in what conditions this ritual is performed by the people in Banten: rituals performed routinely, rituals performed for certain reasons, and rituals performed for art performances.

#### 1. The Ritual Routine

Some *Wawacan Seh* rituals in Banten are performed routinely: weekly, monthly, and annually. Those who perform the ritual weekly adjust the time and the place of the ritual performance in accordance to an agreement with the community. Some of them are held every Thursday night and some on Tuesday night. Whereas the monthly

routine ritual usually takes place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of each month of the Hijriyya calendar, and the annual routine usually takes place every 11<sup>th</sup> of the last Rabi'ul Akhir or at AQJ's *haul* (death commemoration).

The timing of the ritual routine is usually related to Sheikh AQJ's life. The reason for those who perform it every Tuesday night is that it is the day when AQJ was born whereas those who perform it routinely on the 11<sup>th</sup> of each month of the Islamic calendar refer to the date of Sheikh AQJ's death, as is the case with the annual performance on the 11<sup>th</sup> of Rabi'ul Akhir which also refers to the day of the Sheikh's death.

According to *juru maos* Dulyani, given that the *Wawacan Seh* is a ritual performed to honor, *ngalap berkah* (seeking blessing or *tabarruk*), or to seek "*cantolan*" (spiritual connection) with Sheikh AQJ, the timing of the ritual is always related to his life. It is therefore not surprising that the selection of the weekly, monthly, and annual ritual is taken from the day of his birth or death.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, nowadays, it is rare to find communities in Banten that still perform all of them (weekly, monthly, and annually) regularly. Some regions only organize weekly or monthly routines. However, when people do the ritual weekly or monthly, they also perform it annually too.

The annual *Wawacan Seh* ritual or *Manakiban* (every 11<sup>th</sup> of Rabi'ul Akhir) is a special event. The people usually call it *Haul Kangjeng Syeh* (commemoration the death of the Sheikh). Even though it is not as splendid as the celebration of *mawlid* (the celebration of the Prophet's birthday), for this event the community will organize a *haul kanjeng syeh* or a massive assembly (*Manakiban Akbar*) which is attended by more than hundreds of people. Citizens and community leaders that have an affiliation with the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN) will

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Dulyani (68 years old), May 10, 2018

usually join the congregation where the *murshid* usually hands out the *bai'at*. For example, in the *pesantren* of Cidahu led by Abuya Muhtadi (the son of the late Abuya Dimiyati) in Pandeglang; in Menes where Abuya Khazim used to lead the TQN; at Caringin where Kyai Ageng Asnawi led TQN followers, or in Pasar Kemis where Abuya Uci Turtusi currently leads a *pesantren* and guides TQN followers.

Although Tuesday night is mostly chosen for the routine weekly *Wawacan Seh* ritual to honor the Sheikh's birthday Sheikh, it is not an absolute must. It may change depending on the agreement with the local residents. In the village of Sireumbeut, Cinangka—about 60 KM from Serang City—the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is held regularly every Thursday night and is attended by men and women and not a few children and adolescents. The timing differs somewhat from other communities which usually perform it every Tuesday night. According to Ustadh Husein, a local religious leader, the program was routinely held on Tuesday night but then it changed to every Friday night because the residents wanted it so because it was more efficient because on that night they also held their weekly *pengajian* (religious preaching) and *yasinan* (reading *Surah Yāsīn* together). Ustadh Husein is a religious leader in the village and has taken the oath (*bai'at*) into the TQN with K.H. Kholid, a TQN *murshid* in Anyer. According to Ustadh Husein, before deciding on the changes to the routine schedule for the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, he and some people who had also taken the *bai'at* into the *tarekat* first consulted with their *murshid*.<sup>33</sup>

The ritual routine of the *Wawacan Seh* in Cinangka, which I observed, gives a clear picture of the differences in the technical implementation of the routine *Wawacan Seh* ritual and the same ritual when performed for certain

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Ustadz Husein (45 years old), May 10, 2018

events such as for a wedding celebration and for the construction of houses. The weekly routine ritual of *Wawacan Seh* that I participated in in Cinangka ran for about 7 hours, from 8:00 p.m. or from *ba'da isya* until 3:00 a.m. before *subuh*.

On the last Thursday night of the month Sya'ban (the 8<sup>th</sup> month in the Islamic calendar) or before the month of Ramadhan (the 9<sup>th</sup> month in Islamic calendar system) the villagers of Sireumbeut in the Cinangka region held a weekly routine *Wawacan Seh* ritual and *dhikr* together. It was the last routine event in the month of Sya'ban because in the fasting month of Ramadan the event was temporarily halted and only started again in the third week of Shawwal (the 10<sup>th</sup> month in Islamic calendar system). That night I arrived at the location at 19.30 after traveling for two hours from the city of Serang. Although it is located near various beach tourist destinations in Anyer, the village is located in a mountainous area which is about four km from the beach. The road from the beach to the village runs uphill and some roads are damaged and there is minimal public street lighting. As with the population in other mountainous regions, the distance between villages is quite large and many overlook plantations while the forests are deserted and dark at night.

The weekly routine of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Sireumbeut took place in the *majlis ta'lim* (assembly for religious teaching) led by Ustadh Husein. On that occasion, the *majlis ta'lim* room accommodated 70 men and 26 women. The men sat in the main room of the *majlis*, while the women were in the right foyer. Before starting *dhikr* and *pangaosan* (religious preaching/lecture), Ust. Hussein whispered to me that that night was unusual because the people present were only about 70% of those who usually came. That, according to him, was likely because the people who usually came are still tired because in the

morning they had just returned from their 5-day *Wali Songo* pilgrimage around Java.

While waiting for the ritual to start, some people read the *salawat* together and others checked the ritual preparations, ranging from the food dishes to the incense to be burned during the ritual. One of the distinguishing things from the regular *Wawacan Seh* rituals compared to others for certain events is that in this weekly routine there were no offerings. In this event, only dishes were provided to be eaten together during the ritual and they were donated by the residents. What's interesting here is that almost each of the residents brought a bottle of water that they placed in the middle of the room or in front of Ustadh Husein in an attempt to get the blessing (*ngalap berkah*). The bottles where prayers had been said over and remembrances recited together would later be taken back by the people as “blessed water”<sup>34</sup> and was believed to be medicine and a cure for any disease.

When I entered the *majelis* room, there were already many bottles filled with water placed in the middle of the attendees who sat in a circle and many were placed in front of Ustadh Husein. Many food dishes were served on plates in front of the attendees. Before the ritual began, one of the attendees ensured that all the preparations were complete and he lit several incense sticks in the middle of the room. Fragrant incense bursts inside the room as if giving a sign that the ritual was to start and the attendees immediately sat up straight.

Ustadh Husein began the ritual by saying a greeting followed by reading the *hadorot* and the recitation of *Surah al-Fātihah* as a *hadiah* presented to the individuals he

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<sup>34</sup> Blessed water (*air berkah*) is water in a basin mixed with seven kinds of flowers provided by the host as an offering in a *Wawacan Seh* ritual. For those who believe in it, the water is a means for seeking blessing (*ngalap berkah*), so that when the ritual has been completed they will take the water. Some of them use it to wash their face, to rub it over a sick body part, or to take it home to be splashed onto the yard or a tree.

mentioned such as the Prophet Muhammad and his family, the *al-Khulafa 'al-Rashidun*, the companions of the Prophet, the *tabi'in*, the righteous people, the martyrs, the saints, Sheikh AQJ, the Sufis and the *murshids* of the Qadiriyya Order, some of the names of Sultans of Banten and figures of the *tarekat* in Banten who have died, both parents, Muslims and believers in general. After the *hadrot*, he continued by leading the communal recitation of *Surah Yasin* and several other short *surah* from Al-Quran. The event was closed with a prayer led by Ustadh Husein himself. The reading of the *hadrot* until this prayer ran for about one hour.



Illustration 2. Ustadh Husein leading dhikr and prayer

Ustadh Husein invited the attendees to enjoy the food after they finished reading the prayer. After five minutes, he started his religious preaching. On this occasion, Ustadh Husein talked about the virtues of *dhikr* and drawing closer to God (*muqarabah*). To note, Ustadh Husein is classified as young (42 years old) while many attendees were over 50 years old, but even so, the attendees still listened to him while he delivered his Sundanese sermon in a solemn way as they enjoyed the food. This might have been because Ust. Hussein was seen as a person schooled in Islamic knowledge, even though he only graduated from

elementary school (SD). However, most of his life before he became *ustadh* he spent in various "*kobong*" (the term for traditional Islamic *pesantren* in Banten) and he was a TQN member who had taken the *bai'at* with Abah Anom from Suryalaya and K.H. Kholid from Anyer.

Still led by Ustadh Husein, the event continued with remembrance together (*dhikr bersama*). The *dhikr* was taken from the practice of the TQN. The people who followed the remembrance looked more and more serious (*khusyu'*) and absorbed in remembrance which lasted for two hours. After one hour of remembrance the worshipers became increasingly absorbed in their remembrance and Ustadh Husein said prayers in Sundanese which the congregation could understand. The contents of this prayer were *munajat* (which emphasizes the majesty of God, confession of sins and the request of forgiveness) which made the attendees even more emotional and many of them cried out loud and many shed tears. After praying the *dhikr* resumed for the next one hour. It was during this second *dhikr* that the expressions of the attendees became more and more excited until their clothes were wet with sweat as if they were in ecstasy. The sound of their remembrance came out loud from their mouths and they acted with free body movements (some moved their body and head forward and backward, some moved it to the right and the left, some even moved their hands) even though they were still sitting cross-legged (*duduk bersila*).

After almost two hours, Ustadh Husein lowered the intonation of the sound of his *dhikr* and then said a prayer. This *salawat* reading apparently signified the end of the remembrance so that the congregation could follow the recitation of the prayer with a lowered tone of voice. Many attendees wiped away the sweat that had soaked their faces and necks and smoothly continued to say the prayer together. The people in the room were not as noisy as before. They all sat up straight as before as if they had just

woken up from sleep. After they prayed together they read the following poems from *al-Nūr al-Burhānī* and the *manāqib* books adapted from *Lujjāyn al-Dānī* by al-Barzanji:

على الكافى صلاة الله . ❖ . على الشافى سلام الله  
 بمحي الدين خلصنا . ❖ . من البلواء يا الله  
 عباد الله رجال الله . ❖ . أغيثونا لأجل الله  
 وكونوا عوننا لله . ❖ . عسى نحظى بفضل الله

وياأقطاب وياأنجاب . ❖ . وياسادات وياأحباب  
 وأنتم ياأولى الألباب . ❖ . تعالوا وانصروا لله

سألناكم سألناكم . ❖ . وللزلفى رجوناكم  
 وفى أمرقصدناكم . ❖ . فشدوا عزمكم لله

فيا ربى بساداتى . ❖ . تحقق لى إشارتى  
 عسى تاتى بشارتى . ❖ . ويصفو وقتنا لله

بكشف الحجب عن عيني . ❖ . ورفع البين من بينى  
 وطمس الكيف والأين . ❖ . بنور الوجه ياالله

صلاة الله مولانا . ❖ . على من بالهدى جانا  
 ومن بالحق أولانا . ❖ . شفيع الخلق عند الله

The meaning of the poem is as follow:

*The salawat of Allah be abundant over al-Kafi (sufficient person, i.e. the Prophet Muhammad PBUH), and hopefully, the salvation of Allah is abundant over al-Syafi (the person who heals, i.e. the Prophet Muhammad PBUH).*

*With the glory of Muhyiddin (i.e. Sheikh Abd al-Qadir) ... deliver us from all kinds of calamities O Allah ...*

*O servants of Allah (the saints of Allah), O soldiers of Allah Help us in the name of Allah,*

*Please, be our helper*

*May we be lucky with the grace of God*

*O the pole of the saints, O the saints of Anjab*

*O our leaders and lovers of Allah*

*All of you, O worshippers*



*Come and help us in the name of Allah*

*We beg, beg you*

*To get close to God's mercy, we hope for you*

*In matters (problems), we intend to you*

*Then, please, strengthen your willpower to help us in the name of Allah*

*O my Lord, with all of the princes*

*Prove all those desires*

*Hopefully, all that comes is exciting*

*And becomes a holy (tranquil) time (in our life) for Allah*

*With the opening of evidence for us to see*

*Eliminate the separation between me and you*

*Removal of methods (without describing, without placing)*

*Because of the light of your Essence, O Allah*

*May Allah's Grace, O our Lord*

*Be delegated to the Prophet who came to us with guidance*

*And to people who have shown the truth of religion*

*Those who offer help to people will be on the side of God*



**Illustration 3.** *A female member of the congregation taking “blessed water”.*

While the attendees chanted the poem, some of them began to tidy up the dishes in the middle of the room and handed “blessed water” over to others. After reading the poem they were invited to enjoy the food and drinks while they were waiting for their “blessed water” to take home. The joint remembrance session was finished around 12 p.m. An hour after that there was a coffee break to enjoy the food and the drinks. Almost all female attendees returned to their homes after they had received the blessed water while the male attendees were still enjoying the food and were chatting with each other.

After a break of almost one hour, three people sat down next to the place where Ustadh Husein had sat to lead the remembrance. One of them, Dulyani, took a microphone while giving a signal to Ustadh Husein to ask permission to continue the session. Dulyani (68 years old), Sohra (64 years old), and Salkin (70 years old) are *jurumaos* of the *Wawacan Seh*. Ustadh Husein told me that there were usually five people to read the *Wawacan Seh* in his assembly, but that for some reason the other two were unable to attend that night.

The three people then started the *Wawacan Seh* ritual which began with the reading of the *hadorot* as before and by saying the prayer. The reading of the *Wawacan Seh* that night was different from what was usually done on occasions such as wedding ceremonies and the construction of houses. It proceeded in a very relaxed atmosphere and the people who attended—as far as I could see—did not pay too much attention to the people who were reading the *Wawacan Seh*. Some attendees remained to sit at leisure while they enjoyed the food and many of them kept on chatting while others left the room.

Dulyani, Sohra, and Salkin performed the chanted reading of the *Wawacan Seh* in turns and it was very good. According to Ustadh Husein, *jurumaos* were now very

rare. He said that the residents of Sireumbeut village were lucky that some still exist. In fact, the village was used as a gathering place for *juru maos* from several villages in the Cinangka sub-district to practice together. That is because in the village the *Manakiban* and *dhikr bersama* rituals are still routinely held once a week. Yet, Ustadh Husein himself admitted that even though he was a *tarekat* member and used to lead *dhikr bersama* sessions, he could not read the *Wawacan Seh*. According to him, it requires special skills that not everyone can afford to have.

All three *juru maos* alternately read episodes of the story of *Wawacan Seh* that night. The poetic meter of each story episode was different depending on the topic of the story. The shift of the story episodes and the poetic meters used are indicated in the *manāqib* book and each *juru maos* paid attention to the other's chanting and would know when he had to take over from the other.

The reading of the *Wawacan Seh* in Sireumbeut at that night was not organized for a special event. The weekly reading of the *Wawacan Seh* is performed to honor the Sheikh, to seek blessing (*tabarukan*), and as a joint exercise so no special offerings were needed because it was not done for a special event. The only food dishes present were those left over from the previous *dhikr* session. Even so, the three *juru maos* were still reading in a solemn way and I did not have the impression that they were doing it merely as an exercise. One by one the attendees went home. After 30 minutes after the *juru maos* began their chanting of the *Wawacan Seh* there were only about 10 people left in the room.

The *Wawacan Seh* ritual lasted until three o'clock just before dawn broke. The sound of the *juru maos*'s reading of the story episode increasingly sounded like magic amidst the utter nightly silence in the village, moreover the scent of the incense still lingered in the room. Unfortunately, the

*juru maos* could not finish reading the entire text that night because of limited time.

There was a very interesting session towards the end of the ritual the attendees waited for, namely *noja* and it even managed to stop Samsul (26 years) and his friends from leaving. *Noja*, as I said before, is a session in the *Wawacan Sch* ritual wherein the *juru maos* will "predict" a person's future based on the interpretation of an episode of Sheikh AQJ's life story. In other places, *noja* is also called *jarah*, *bebadean*, and *mancing*.

Samsul and his friends did not rush home because they were waiting for the *noja* session. Earlier, during the first hour after the *juru maos* started the ritual, they slipped a piece of money on inside the *manāqib* book which was being used. When the *juru maos* would arrive at the page the money was inserted, he would call the person who had put the money there. He recited the episode of the story first and then interpreted it and predicted the future of that person. Samsul had slipped some money inside the part of the book Ki Sohra was reading. It told about the time Syekh AQJ was having a problem on his journey to seek knowledge. Ki Sohra told the story that Abd al-Qadir was stopped by robbers when he traveled to Baghdad to study.



Illustration 4. *Ki Sohra and two other Juru Maos reading the wawacan.*

To travel to Baghdad, his mother had given AQJ 40 dinars which he had put in the lower stitches of the armpits of his shirt. The caravan group of which AQJ was part was intercepted and their property was stolen by 40 robbers. Suddenly, one robber approached AQJ who looked like a poor boy and asked if he had anything valuable on him. AQJ answered honestly that he had 40 dinars stored in the armpit of his shirt. The robber didn't believe him because he thought that a poor boy like AQJ could not so much money. A second robber approached him and asked him the same thing, and AQJ gave the same answer and the robber went to their leader. The leader of the robbers asked him the same question again and AGJ gave the same answer. When they broke the stitches they were stunned, it turned out there were indeed 40 dinars inside. The leader of the robbers then asked AQJ why he was so honest while he knew that the money would be stolen when found. AQJ replied, "My mother told me to tell the truth, I could not afford to disobey her." Hearing AQJ's answer, the robber leader started sobbing like he was overcome with deep regret, "How could you not dare to disobey your mother, while I for years have neglected my Lord's promise." He and several of his men then immediately repented to God thanks to AQJ's honesty and exceptional moral behavior.

Ki Sohra then interpreted the story to predict Samsul's future and said that Samsul would face many problems in his life, both in terms of business and with his family and he would need to spend much of his assets to solve them. Ki Sohra then asked Samsul if he was married and Samsul replied that he was and that he has one child who was still a toddler. After looking at Samsul's face for a few moments, Ki Sohra then guessed that Samsul was having family problems which also might have something to do with the business he was carrying out and that it would likely cost a lot of money to solve. I began to pay attention

to Samsul's face. He looked as if he was seriously paying attention while he slightly nodded his head as if confirming what Ki Sohra said. Ki Sohra, who had been paying attention to the changes in Samsul's face, then told him how to solve these problems.

In accordance with the episode of AQJ's story he read, Ki Sohra explained that Samsul would overcome these problems as long as he tried hard to face them and not to run away from his problems. In addition, Ki Sohra said, Samsul also had to be *tawakkal*, *sabar* (patient), always be honest, and start to be open with his family (both with his wife and extended family) about the problems he had. In that way, Ki Sohra said, he would be able to face his problems lightly like Sheikh AQJ in the story. Hearing this, Samsul's face changed again as if he was really eager to solve his problems.

After reading Samsul's future, Ki Sohra opened a new page of the *manaqib* text in which money was put. Usually, when there is enough time, the *juru maos* would continue to read the *manaqib* text page by page. But because there was no time it was impossible to read the stories in their entirety and he only recited the stories on the pages where money was inserted and continued to interpret them as he did with Samsul. At this moment, the attendees who were still present began to gather again and they listened carefully to what the *juru maos* had to say and they waited for their turn to be called to have their future told.

*Noja*, *jarah*, *babadean* or *mancing* is a much-awaited session for attendees who still believe in the predictions or who only consider it a game and are curious if the predictions come true. Regardless of whether the predictions made by the *juru maos* were correct or not, I saw it as a *da'wah* strategy. Given that not every *juru maos* is a charismatic *ustadh* or *kyai*—like Ust. Husein—the *juru maos* felt he did not have the authority to patronize others with religious arguments. It was through *noja* that

they seem to acquire authority. Although the *juru maos* did not use religious arguments, his interpretation made the people listen to him and nod their heads. The *da'wah* delivered in the *noja* session was not patronizing but more consultative and counseling. Several times, the *juru maos* said that what he delivered was not based on his own desire, but it was because of Allah that people inserted the money in the pages of the *manakīb* where AQJ's story happened to resemble what was going on in their life.

After listening to the stories of my sources at the research location, I concluded that *noja* is an effective missionary effort carried out by *juru maos*. Take, for instance, the case of Rosid (28 years), a resident who lived outside the village but often attended the *pengaosan* (s. Islamic preaching) in Sireumbet, who told me that he now lived a more Islamic life. He told me also about his experience. He used to work in a bar in one of the hotels in the tourist district of Anyer. When he worked there, he lived a life he now considers far from Islamic and he used to drink alcohol and take drugs.

Two years ago, Rosid told me, some of his friends who were members of a trail motorcycle community told him of their experience in joining *pengajian zikir* (remembrance and religious preaching) and the Maca Seh ritual which was held every Friday night in Sireumbet. He then also tried to take part in the events although the main reason he had at the time was just so that he could get together for a coffee with his friends. The first meeting ran normally and he had no memorable religious experience. The second meeting he attended, he tried to join the *noja* like his friends and he was surprised to hear the "predictions" of the *juru maos* who, for him, was very precise in his description of the problems he had. The accuracy of the prediction and the advice he got based on Sheikh AQJ's story made him realize that it would be good to return to a religious way of life. Ever since, he regularly attended

*pengajian zikir* and Maca Seh in Sireumbeut and he returned to study Islamic teachings and to live seriously according to them. In fact, he told me that around eight months ago he had resigned from his job because it would not make him happy or give inner satisfaction if he continued to work there. One month after resigning he opened a motorbike workshop at the side of the road in Anyer.<sup>35</sup>

After the *noja* session, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was closed with a second recitation of the *hadorot* and continued with a prayer. One of the *juru maos*, it seems the oldest one of them, namely Salkin (70) presided over the closing prayer which also marked the completion of the entire *pengajian zikir* and Maca Seh session which had started in the early evening (*ba'da isya*) and lasted until dawn (before *azan subuh*).

Besides being performed by the community in general such as in Sireumbeut, it can also be performed routinely at the request of individuals as I found in the sub-districts of Baros, Cikeusal and Mauk. People who perform this ritual weekly usually invite a *juru maos* and some local residents (or just their family members) to gather at their house every week. In this case, all the requirements and money needed for the ritual are provided by the person who organizes it. In contrast to the general routine rituals held by the community, in the routine rituals held by individuals, a *juru maos* usually gets paid even though he does not say how much money it should be (*seikhlasnya*). In addition, routinely held *Wawacan Seh* rituals held by individuals usually only run for one to three hours with the presence of offerings and other requirements as determined by the *juru maos*. Technically, these *Wawacan Seh* rituals are performed in the same way as those organized for specific reasons.

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with Rosid (28 years old), May 11, 2018



## 2. The Ritual for Certain Reasons

Those who still do the *Wawacan Seh* ritual regularly usually also hold it for special occasions. In some areas in Banten, people also perform the ritual on certain important occasions although they no longer perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual regularly every week or month. The procedures for a *Wawacan Seh* ritual for a particular reason are complex and cover almost the entire life-cycle rituals of the Bantenese people, from birth to death.

According to Salkin (70 years), the Bantenese people organize a *Wawacan Seh* ritual for certain events as a form of *nyareat* or prayer to God in order that their wishes may come true. The events meant here include, for example, building a house, after the house is ready or when it will be inhabited, circumcision, wedding, after buying a new vehicle, opening a new business, wanting to travel far and for long periods of time either for business or worship such as the *hajj* and *umrah*, building public facilities (such as mosques, village halls, schools or *pesantren*, bridges and others), expelling *jinn*, when a *nadzar* is fulfilled, and for important life cycle events.<sup>36</sup>

They call it rituals for "*kanggo hasil maksud*" or rituals performed to meet a certain objective. In line with Salkin's statement, Kang Ajo (48 years old), whom I met on another occasion, also said that the community organizes a *Wawacan Seh* ritual for a variety of reasons. For example, it is performed to obtain safety and blessing, for business success, to avoid danger, and to expel evil genies and for other reasons that will usually be conveyed by the host when the event starts. Therefore, people who have these intentions perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual as a form of *nyareat*.<sup>37</sup> As explained above, for the Bantenese,

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Salkin (70 years old), May 11, 2018

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Kang Ajo (48 years old), July 7, 2018. He is a former secretary of the village of Panosogan and now works in the Cikeusal

the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is part of the *nyareat*, namely the spiritual effort and condition of one's trust (*tawakka*) after physical efforts have been made.

In general, the organization of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual for specific reasons is the same as for regularly held ones. Even if there is a difference, it is only in small technical details, such as the time it is held, the offerings required by the *juru maos*, and the duration (it can only last either 1-3 or 6-7 hours). In addition to the *sesajen*, the time, duration, and place of the ritual depend totally on the wishes of the host. Usually, the host himself will adjust it to the reason why the ritual needs to be performed. The technical implementation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in accordance with the objective of the host can be seen in the following explanation.

*a) Syukuran and Slametan*

For religious communities in general, those who believe in the omnipotence of God, thanksgiving (*syukuran*) and ritual meals (*slametan*) are two expressions that are almost inseparable. They are expressions of gratitude for all the gifts given by God as well as requests to God to provide salvation to His servants. Around the world, religious communities express their gratitude and make their requests to God for salvation in different ways and under different names.

One popular religious ritual in Javanese Islamic society, is a *slametan*. It is a collective ritual meal that has become a tradition among Javanese Islamic communities and is performed for important events in

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District Office as a civil servant. He once was a member of the Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya in which he had taken the oath (*bai'at*) with (the late) Abah Anom in Suryalaya and with (the late) Abah Sukanta, the TQN *murshid* in Labuan, Pandeglang. When he was still secretary, he had been the coordinator and initiator behind the regular *Wawacan Seh* rituals during the construction of the mosque in his neighborhood.

life.<sup>38</sup> In general, the objective of a *slametan* is to create a state of well-being and security free from practical and spiritual obstacles—a condition called *slamet* (j. safe). A *slametan* is usually held at the ritual celebration of a transition in life, harvest, to avoid disaster, after buying a vehicle such as a motorbike or a car, and redeeming an oath (*nadhhar*).<sup>39</sup>

For most Bantenese people, the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* is performed in the context of a *slametan*. They believe that with the reading of Sheikh AQJ's *manāqib* they will receive salvation, blessing, and Allah will grant them their wishes.

To perform the ritual, the host—or someone who has a certain reason to hold the ritual—will invite a *juru maos* and some people from the neighborhood to come to attend the ritual at his house. Before the event begins, the *juru maos* usually asks for some ritual requirements (such as *sesajen*) that must be provided by the host. For the *slametan* Muarif (32 years old) held prior to the celebration of the circumcision of his 6-year-old son in the village of Panosogan, Cikeusal sub-district, he invited a *juru maos* and the residents around his house one day before. Two days before the performance, Muarif invited Saruri (68), the *juru maos* to lead the ritual. Because the people are used to hold the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in the village, the *juru maos* just told him to prepare the requirements without having to specify what they had to be.

In the afternoon before the ritual, Muarif and his family were busy preparing meals for their guests and

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<sup>38</sup> Masdar Hilmy, "Islam and Javanese Acculturation: Textual and Contextual Analysis of the Slametan Ritual" (McGill University, Montreal, Canada, 1999), 41.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Beatty, "Adam and Eve and Vishnu: Syncretism in the Javanese Slametan," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2, no. 2 (1996): 271–288; Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 11–15; 40–41.

making *sesajen* that had to be provided for the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. The women, Muarif's relatives and neighbors, were busy in the kitchen preparing everything. The cooking utensils used to cook the food for the ritual have to be new (never be used before or used only for the *Wawacan Seh* ritual). The utensils are used to cook *ayam bekakak* (grilled chicken) and *liwet syeh* (cooked rice with the crust at the bottom of the pan). The *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Muarif's house lasted from 8:00 p.m. to 10 p.m.

The event started with the opening statement of the host's intent. For most people in the village, because they are not accustomed to speaking in front of an audience, conveying the opening statement is not easy. That night, Muarif left the opening words to Ustadh Hamid, an *ustadh kampung* (religious village teacher) who was used to speaking in public. At the occasion, he expressed his gratitude to the village elders, the *juru maos*, and the residents who had come to attend at the host's invitation. He also said that the implementation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was meant to obtain safety, blessing, and to have no obstacles in carrying out the circumcision of his son.

After the host—or rather, his representative—conveyed the intention, the next session was the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* which was totally left to the *juru maos* who began with a greeting (*salam*). Before reading the *silsilah* or the *hadorot*, Saruri first delivered a brief religious sermon wherein he said that the ritual was a form of prayer and *nyareat* that was only addressed to Allah through *tawassul* to the Prophet and the *wali*, especially Sheikh AQJ after which he recited the *hadorot*. After the *hadorot* and the *salawat*, he recited the *Wawacan Seh* in a melodious voice. The event ended around 10 p.m. To end this ritual, the attendees together chanted the

poem *Ibadullah Rijalullah*, the *salawat*, and the *qasidah* and the whole session was closed with a prayer read by the *juru maos* because the local *kyai* who used to read the prayers did not attend that night.

According to Saruri, the host has to provide the *sesajen* because it is a precondition for the ritual to take place. After the ritual, the *sesajen* are no longer used as *ancak-ancak* (small offering packages) to be placed at certain places as was done in earlier times (for example in sacred *keramat* places) but are eaten together with the attendees. However, some *sesajen* such as the *ayam bekakak* will be packed by the host to be taken home by the *juru maos*, and is called *berekat*. Usually, the *juru maos* would be paid by the host after the ritual. The amount of money Saruri got as the *juru maos* is unknown because he never asked for specific rates when the community called him to lead the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. In fact, according to him, it is common for him only to be compensated by the *berekat*, or food. Nevertheless, he always accepted it because what he did is part of proselytizing Islam and actually a prayer addressed to Allah for the blessings and salvation of all the people.<sup>40</sup> Regarding the rates, Samawi (76) from Sukasari Village, Rajeg District, Tangerang, confirmed what Saruri said. According to him, almost no *juru maos* ever set the rates for the rituals they perform.<sup>41</sup>

There are also those who perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual throughout the night, especially for major events such as wedding ceremonies (*walimatul 'ursy*). In this case, the host usually invites two or more *juru maos* to read the text alternately. At such events, the host invites local residents and the ritual begins with

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Saruri (68 years old) in Cikeusal, July 1, 2018

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Ki Samawi (76 years old) in Desa Sukasari, Kecamatan Rajeg, September 2, 2018

together reading *Surah Yasin* and *tahlil* (reading *lā ilāha illa Allāh*), as well as a *slametan* or a *tahlil* ritual that starts at 8:00 p.m. and then proceeds with a *tausiyah* and eating together. At around 10:00 p.m. a *juru maos* starts reading the *Wawacan Seh* text. However, the attendees do not have to follow the *Wawacan Seh* ritual until it is finished. In a ritual that is performed throughout the night, a *juru maos* usually invites attendees to participate in a *noja* session.

According to Ki Samawi, nowadays, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual for any event in the villages in the Rajeg sub-district in Tangerang is no longer lasts the whole night. In fact, the *Wawacan Seh* is no longer performed by the community except for events that begin with a *slametan* or a *tahlilan* when the host has invited local residents. In the sub-district of Rajeg, to perform the ritual the host invited a *juru maos* to read the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ alone at the host's house and he only provided the offerings and the venue for the ritual which was one of the rooms in his house. Sometimes, a host and his relatives also join the *juru maos* in performing the ritual.

The way the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was done in Rajeg sub-district is the same as in the Ciruas sub-district. In Ciruas, according to *juru maos* Ustadh Sairi (69 years old), he used to perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual alone in the house of the host. He said that even though he did not ask a host to provide *sesajen*, he had prepared *ayam bekakak*, *liwet syeh*, a basin of water and coins and seven kinds of flowers, *rujak kalapa*, and seven kinds of food dishes, fruits, and misik oil. According to Ustadh Sairi this is because the community considers it a condition that determines the efficacy of the ritual and as a tradition that has existed for a very long time. In fact, according to him, these *sesajens* are actually not provided for spirits or

for Sheikh AQJ, but are meant as *sodaqoh* (alms) to be given to those who are still alive, especially the *jurumaos*. After finishing the *Wawacan Seh*, the host will usually pack the offerings and give them to the *jurumaos*, except the water in the basin and the oil which he will use for *ngalap berkah* (seeking God's blessing).<sup>42</sup>

Regarding the water in the basin, according to Ustadh Sairi, there is a reference in the *kayat* (*hikayat* or story) of AQJ in the *manāqib*. The story tells that at the time of Sheikh AQJ there was an outbreak of infectious diseases (*tā'ūn*) and the people asked Sheikh AQJ to help them. Sheikh AQJ then gave them water to drink which he took from the vessel he had used for his ablution (*wudhu*) and they recovered. Therefore, the presence of a basin of water as an offerings during every *Wawacan Seh* ritual is a reflection of what happened in Sheikh AQJ's time and meant to obtain the Sheikh's blessing. Those who believe this use the water to wash their face, drink it, scrub it on their stomach when they are pregnant,<sup>43</sup> or splash it onto something to get blessings and safety.

### *b) Tolak Bala and Driving Out Evil Genies*

In their lives, people face many problems and challenges such as crop failures, natural disasters, outbreaks of diseases, and so on. They cannot escape and run away from these problems and thus they must make efforts to face these problems and to find solutions to solve them. There are many ways they can do this, one of which is 'to make peace' with nature through a series of rituals and ceremonies. Even

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Ustadz Sairi (69 years old) in Kecamatan Ciruas, April 27, 2018

<sup>43</sup> Usually it is performed at the *Wawacan Seh* ritual for *mitung wulan*, a *slametan* when a woman is seven months pregnant.

though the people today live in an advanced and sophisticated era, this has not been completely abandoned by some communities in society. For those who still carry it out, the ritual to make peace with nature is believed to be a way to achieve a life of peace, security, and prosperity. This ritual, for the Bantenese—and for the Indonesian people in general—is called *tolak bala* (j/s. a ritual to ward off misfortune). This ritual is performed at a certain period of time, for specific reasons, and in certain ways.

For some people in Banten, a *slametan* and *syukuran* and the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* are also used in a series of *tolak bala* rituals. These rituals can be done alone (only read by *juru maos*) or in congregation. One ritual that is usually performed alone is a ritual held at the invitation of someone, for example, a resident who is about to inhabit a house, open a shop, or has been exposed to magic (such as *teluh* and *santet*). The objective is that he be given safety and to ward off danger. The *Wawacan Seh* ritual, in this case, is usually done alone by a *juru maos* in the house of the person who has invited him, or with at least only one family member present who accompanies him when he reads the *manāqib*. A *Wawacan Seh* ritual performed in congregation in the context of a *tolak bala* ritual is usually related to the intentions of many people in a particular community or village, such as *ngaruwat desa* and *Rebo Wekasan*.

When building a house, some Banten people will hold a *tolak bala* ritual and invite a *juru maos* to read the *Wawacan Seh*. When the construction of a house is almost complete or just put a tile (*mayung*), he will also call a *juru maos* to perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. Technically, this ritual differs from one area to another in Banten and depends on their customs and



traditions. In Rajeg sub-district, for example in a newly built house, the ritual is held at night after *isyah* prayer. The ritual is performed by a *juru maos* at the invitation of the host. Normally, the day before the *Wawacan Seh* ritual the host hangs up a some coconuts, a bunch of bananas, some bunches of rice, a flag (of course the Indonesian national flag), and he slips 1 or 2 grams of gold in one of the beams that support the roof. The goal, according to them, is to ensure that the house will provide peace and prosperity to its owner.

A different ritual performance can be seen in Baros. In this region, the *ngaruwat imah* ritual is performed when someone's house has been completed and will soon be inhabited. A *juru maos* will read *macapat* verses until the *kayat kang kaping sanga* (the ninth story). In general, the technical implementation of this ritual is the same as the *Wawacan Seh* ritual for other events. What distinguishes the *tolak bala* ritual for the construction of a house or *ngaruwat imah* is the part where nails are hammered into the door frame of the house. After the *juru maos* read "*pantek paku kang tumanceb ing saroja*", he will hammer the nails into the door frame hoping for safety and the blessing of the house.

The *tolak bala* ritual deals with the interests of society in general. Usually, it is performed in congregation and the preparations are carried out in mutual cooperation by the community. One example of the *tolak bala* ritual conducted by the community in Banten is *Rebo Wekasan*. The term *Rebo Wekasan* consists of two words. The word "Rebo" refers to the name of the day, Wednesday. As for the word "*wekasan*", there are people who interpret it as a derivation of the word "*pungkasan*" which means the last. *Rebo Wekasan* means the last Wednesday in the

month *Sapar* (the 2<sup>nd</sup> month in the Islamic calendar: Şafar). Others argue that “*wekasan*” comes from the word “*memekas*” which means “mandate” or “last will” so that *Rebo Wekasan* means that the *tolak bala* ritual is a will or a mandate given by the ancestors to their descendants to liberate them from disaster and disease.

According to Tihami, *wekasan* as “the last” seems to be more logically acceptable because *Rebo Wekasan* is a ritual that is performed on the last Wednesday in *Sapar*. For him, *wekasan* in the sense of “mandate” or “last will” is more indicative of the implicit understanding that the last Wednesday in *Sapar* is a “mandate”. What is meant by “mandate”, in this sense, is indeed difficult to trace. Even so, there are people who argue that “mandate” means the mandate of the ancestors to their descendants not to miss the ritual on the last Wednesday in *Sapar*, because if they forget it dangers may happen in the following year.<sup>44</sup>

The *Rebo Wekasan* ritual on the last Wednesday in *Sapar* (based on Islamic/Hijri calendar) is not only performed by the Bantenese people or the Javanese in general but also by the Malay, Indians, Arabs, and others. The way the ritual is performed varies. Some people hold it by way of a ritual meal and others who do it by bathing, either in public bathing places or at the beach.<sup>45</sup> In general, those who perform this ritual believe that *Sapar* is a month of full of disasters and diseases so that the *tolak bala* ritual needs to be done. The people in Banten fear *Sapar* because they considered it an ill-fated month (*bulan naas*) and they believe that danger, disaster, and disease are released

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<sup>44</sup> Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat*, 11–12.

<sup>45</sup> Pijper, *Beberapa Studi tentang Sejarah Islam di Indonesia, 1900-1950*, 153.

in this month. Therefore, many customs and rituals were performed in this month.

In Banten, there is the tradition of the *ruwat ngayun* (s. weighing a baby) ritual for a baby born in *Sapar* because the people believe that a baby born in this month will be unfortunate (*naas*) and have bad habits. To avoid the *sasapareun* (a local term for the bad luck *Sapar* causes to a person), its parent must perform a *ruwat ngayun* ritual. Technically, the ritual is performed by putting the baby in a sarong on the left side of a wooden set of scales while on the right side is a basket made of *ancah* or woven bamboo filled with rice, bananas, and a copy of Al-Quran wrapped in white cloth.

This ritual begins with the reading of the *salawat* for the Prophet, then after a signal from the *kasepuhan/kyai* (j/s. elder) the baby's body weight is balanced with the basket on the right side of the wooden scale. If the baby is heavier, then bananas and rice need to be added until both weights are completely balanced. While balancing, the wooden scales are beaten slowly with a *sapu lidi* (i. a broomstick), in which coins have been tucked inside. After the scales are truly balanced, the child's relatives and other attendees read *Surah Yasin* together. Finally, the *kasepuhan/kyai* (j/s. elder) says the closing prayer.

For some people in Banten, the month of *Sapar* is also known as the month in which there are many taboos such as, for example, one is not allowed to marry, to start planting rice, and not to travel far and they believe that breaking the taboo will bring danger and accidents. They also believe that the dangers in *Sapar* reach their peak on the last Wednesday of the month. Therefore, everyone must guard himself against calamities. The people believe that on the last

Wednesday 320,000 calamities will happen in the world and the community counters this with the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual to protect them against these calamities.

The *Rebo Wekasan* ritual is performed by men and organized by elders (*kasepuhan*) and led by someone who can read and chant the "*kitab syeh*" or the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ, although he is not required to lead a prayer. If an elder can read the *kitab syeh* or the *manāqib* and can also say prayers, the whole series of rituals is totally led by him. But for an elder who cannot say the prayer, the closing prayer can be done by a *juru maos* (the reader of the *manāqib*) or someone who has mastered religious knowledge such as a *kyai* or an *ustadh*. All ritual participants wear a sarong and a shirt with a round collar (*baju koko*) and wear a cap on their head (*peci*). The participants in the ritual, 10-20 people, come from the same village and are all male, while the women are only responsible/in charge of preparing food and taking care of other ritual requirements for the ritual. Usually, the ceremony takes place on Wednesday morning after sunrise (*dhuha*) with the sun approximately as high as 20° which is called "*srengenge setet umbak*".

To complete the ritual requirements, the community provides various food dishes and offerings which are placed in the center of the congregation. Usually, the offerings consist of a basin with water and seven kinds of flowers, seven different kinds of food dishes (*panganan pitung rupa*), *liwet syeh* (cooked rice with the crust from the bottom of the pan), side-dishes without vegetables, a vessel to burn incense (*perpuyan*), and burning incense and have to be present when the event starts. Each person brings a small baskets with flowers and food taken from his house.

The ritual begins with the reading of *hadorot* and remembrance (*dhikr*) together led by the elder as is usual in a *tahlil* and a *slametan*. The next session is handed over to the *juru maos* who reads the *kitab syeh* or the *manāqib*. In this *Rebo Wekasan* ritual, the *juru maos* reads the eighth canto in the *macapat* meter *dandanggula*, which contains the sixth and seventh *kayat* (story) of the miracles of AQJ in which he treats diseases and expels/defeats various kinds of evil spirits. The reading of the *Wawacan Seh* until the closing prayer runs for about one to two hours. After completing the reading of the *manāqib*, the attendees recite the *salawat* for the Prophet Muhammad and the *qasidah quthb Rabbani*.

In some areas in Banten, the ritual is held in different places, usually three. There are those who hold it at the border of the village (or the entrance gate to the village), in a house (or on the terrace of a house) which is located at the end of the road of the village, or in a mosque.

There are certain reasons why they opt for these places. The ritual held at the entrance gate of the village or in the last house in the village is meant to prevent the village from being attacked by disease because the people believe that diseases and calamities come and are carried by evil spirits through the gate to the village. Thus, it means that diseases and dangers can be prevented by the ritual and the ritual can even defeat these spirits and demons before they manage to enter the village. This can be done by means of "expulsion" by the holy spirit (*roh suci*) and by persuasion.

The execution of the ritual in the portico of the mosque or *langgar / tajug* (not inside the mosque) was initially an alternative option when it rained. But now, the people have become accustomed to using mosques

as locations for the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual. This means a change in physical culture inspired by the fact that the physical boundaries of the villages have become unclear due to social and spatial changes.

After the ritual is completed, the food previously provided by the villagers is shared and eaten together or taken home. The food that is taken home is called “*berekat*”. The attendees will then take up the water that they previously put in the center of the ritual with the aim of *ngalap berkah* (seeking blessing). While the water in the basin will be taken up by the elders to sprinkle (or spit out through the mouth) onto the streets which are believed to be inhabited by evil spirits intend to spread diseases or calamities. These bursts are meant to repel and ward off evil spirits that might interfere. A small portion of the seven kinds of food dishes and flowers is put in small bamboo baskets called “*ancak-ancak*” to be placed in specific places which are believed to be inhabited by evil spirits so that they no longer not interfere. When placing this *ancak-ancak*, the elders will say, “*katuran Ki Buyut!*” (j/s. enjoy your offerings, ancestors!).

According to Tihami, the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* in the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual has two meanings. *First*, the ritual is a “present” for Sheikh AQJ in the expectation that he will help to drive out evil spirits. *Second*, the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* is meant to ensure AQJ’s role as intermediary (*wasilah*) to convey the people’s prayers to God. It is clear that the prayers of ordinary people who have many sins/are dirty are answered by God through the intermediation of the spirit of Sheikh AQJ who is believed to be very close to God. The prayers said in the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual

are specifically meant for salvation (*keselamatan*) and to avoid danger and disease (*tolak bala*).<sup>46</sup>

In his research on the *Rebo Wekasan* in Banten in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pijper said that in addition to performing the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual and eating together or giving alms for *tolak bala*, the people in Banten would also take ritual baths and drink “blessed water”. They used the water from the basin which was previously used in the *Wawacan Seh* in the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual in which a piece of paper had been put with seven specific verses from Al-Quran<sup>47</sup> surrounded by a rectangular drawing with Arabic formulas. This paper is called a *wafak* (magical rectangular image) and is a repellent (*tumbal*) to ward off impending disaster on the last Wednesday of *Sapar*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat*, 23.

<sup>47</sup> The seven verses written on the piece of paper contain the word *salam*, which means peace or safety. The written sentences are: *Salāmun qaulan min rabb al-raḥīm* (Q.S. Yasin/36: 58); *Salāmun ‘alā Nūḥin fī al-‘ālamīn* (Q.S. al-Shaffat/37: 79); *Salāmun ‘alā Ibrāhīm* (Q.S. al-Shaffat/37: 109); *Salāmun ‘alā Mūsā wa Harūn* (Q.S. al-Shaffat/37: 120); *Salāmun ‘alā Ilyāsīn* (Q.S. al-Shaffat/37: 130); *Salāmun ‘alaykum tibtum fadkḥulūhā khāliḍīn* (Q.S. al-Zumar/39: 73); dan *Salāmun hiya ḥattā maṭla’ al-fajr* (Q.S. al-Qadr/97: 5)

<sup>48</sup> Pijper, *Beberapa Studi tentang Sejarah Islam di Indonesia, 1900-1950*, 156–157.

الله	الطيب	بعباده
73	129	84
111	93	70
115	57	151

Illustration 5. Wafak or a magical quadrilateral for tolak bala

The reading of the *Wawacan Sch* to expel evil spirits and genies not only takes place during the *Rebo Wekasan* ritual but can be done whenever the community needs it. In the Lebak region, according to Taufik (38), there are still many people who perform the *Wawacan Sch* ritual to expel spirits that disturb the community. He told me about his experience when he was accompanying his uncle—a *juru maos*—who was invited by one of the village elders to read the *Wawacan Sch* last year because one of the residents had fallen ill. According to his family, he fell ill because he tried to cut down a large tree that was considered haunted (*angker*). The elders of the local community believed that the large tree could only be cut down if the spirits that inhabited it were "tamed"



or "driven out" first by conducting the ritual of *Wawacan Seh*.<sup>49</sup>

The same thing happened to Samawi, a *juru maos* from the Rajeg sub-district in Tangerang who was often invited to perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual when one of the residents was possessed (*kesurupan*).<sup>50</sup> In addition, according to Athoullah Ahmad, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is also commonly performed by the Bantenese to treat crazy people. They believe that people become crazy due to the evil influence of spirits, so the person has to be treated with the *Wawacan Seh* ritual to drive these evil spirits away.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. The Ritual for Art Performances

Nowadays, the *Wawacan Seh* is not only a ritual with a spiritual dimension, but has also become integrated with traditional performing arts. There are two forms of *Wawacan Seh* art performances. *First*, the *Wawacan Seh* has become a ritual inherent in performing arts like *debus*, *pencak silat*, *rudat*, and *beluk*. In these arts, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual has its own function. For example, in *debus*, *rudat*, and *pencak silat*, the ritual is performed in order to get protection and to become invulnerable while in *beluk*, the *Wawacan Seh* is used as a literary work that is read using the *beluk* method (i.e. with a high-pitched voice). *Second*, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual itself has become a performing art and it is performed on stage for entertainment and to give a demonstration of the oral tradition. As a performance art, the *Wawacan Seh* is usually recited with certain elements added to it to

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Taufik (38 years old), a religious teacher in a *pesantren* in Lebak Regency, August 5, 2018

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Samawi (76 years old), September 2, 2018

<sup>51</sup> Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Syekh Abdul Qadir Jaclani pada Masyarakat Banten*, 35.

enhance dramatic and entertaining effects so that it not only the sound that can the audience can enjoy.

Because it is now considered part of performing arts, local governments often hold *Wawacan Seh* reading competitions. One of them was organized by the Malingping sub-district in the context of the commemoration of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Indonesian Independence Day in 2017 which involved the *juru maos* from the villages in the sub-district. According to the chairman of the committee, Kyai Sodik, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual actually contains magical elements. The reading of Sheikh AQJ's *manāqib* or Maca Seh is a tradition that existed for a long time in the area and some residents used to hold a *manāqib* reading once a week at their homes. However, at present, the ritual is rarely found in the Malingping area and only held on specific occasions and the competition was held so that the ritual tradition would not disappear from the region.

The same thing was done by the Serang local government. Supyan (68) told me that he had participated in the *Wawacan Seh* reading competition organized by the Serang local government during the leadership of Taufik Nuriman as the Regent (2005-2015). For him, the *Wawacan Seh* reading competition is a form of local government attention to local traditions that have become virtually extinct.<sup>52</sup> In 2016, in the Pandeglang Regency, the *Wawacan Seh* reading competition was organized by the Office of the Language Department of Banten Province (*Kantor Bahasa Provinsi Banten*) in collaboration with the Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Kantor Kementerian Agama*) of Pandeglang. The event was attended by 80 *santri* from Pandeglang District and ran for three days. The program not only consisted of competitions but also included training sessions on how to

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<sup>52</sup> Interview with Supyan (68 years old), in Serang, October 18, 2018

read the *Wawacan Seh* using Sundanese *macapat* poetic meters. According to the Head of the Office of the Language Department of Banten Province, Muhammad Lutfi Bachaki, the event was organized in an effort to revitalize oral literature and local wisdom in the Pandeglang region.<sup>53</sup>

a) *Debus*

As I said above, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is also an inseparable part of some performing arts traditions in Banten, such as *debus*, *rudat*, *pencak silat*, and *beluk*. *Debus* is a performing art that is influenced by religious tradition, especially *tarekat*. *Debus* does not only exist in Banten, but is taken from the *tarekat* tradition that exists almost everywhere in the Islamic world, especially in areas that have long been affected by a *tarekat* tradition. In Indonesia, *debus* also exists in Aceh, Minangkabau, Cirebon, and Maluku, in addition to Banten. In Banten, *debus* is a performing art that combines invulnerability techniques and *pencak silat* by using specific equipment.<sup>54</sup> Almost all scholars who study *debus* agree that it originates

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<sup>53</sup> Ari, "Kearifan Lokal 'Maca Syech' dan 'Nandung' Akan Terus Dilestarikan," *Banten.Co*, last modified 2016, accessed March 6, 2018, <https://banten.co/kearifan-lokal-maca-syech-dan-nandung-akan-terus-dilestarikan/>.

<sup>54</sup> Some studies that deal with *debus* in Banten are: J. Vredenburg, "Dabus in West Java"; K. Hadiningrat, *Kesenian Tradisional Debus* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1981); Imron Arifin, *Debus, Ilmu Kekebalan dan Kesaktian dalam Tarekat Rifa'iyyah* (Malang: Kalimashada Press, 1993); M. van Bruinessen, "*Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani and the Qadiriyya in Indonesia*"; van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*; Isman P. Nasution, "Debus, Islam, dan Kyai" (University of Indonesia, 2002); Masruri, *Teknik Magis Atraksi Debus: Sejarah Debus dan Mengungkap Teknik Atraksinya* (Solo: CV. Aneka, 1998); M. Athoullah Ahmad, *Debus di Masyarakat Banten* (Serang, 2004); Ayatullah Humaeni, "The Phenomenon of Magic in Banten" (Leiden University, 2009); Rohman, "Challenging the Result of a Holy Alliance: A Study of the Debus Fatwa of The Indonesian Council of 'Ulama Banten" (Leiden University, 2011).

from the Sufi tradition. According to van Bruinessen, *debus* in Banten is not only influenced by the Qadiriyya Order (more precisely TQN), but also by the Sammaniyya and Rifa'iyya Orders.<sup>55</sup>

According to Jacob Vredembregt, the objective of *debus* is to demonstrate the invulnerability of the performers by piercing their bodies with a special implement called a *debus*, an awl-like dagger with an iron spike at the end of a wooden hilt.<sup>56</sup> After Vredembregt's study, the *debus* performance has produced several new invulnerability elements including magical games such as burning the performer's body, cooking eggs above the performer's head, using the performer's hand to turn a fried egg in hot oil, slicing the stomach with a machete, peeling a coconut with the teeth, slicing the tongue with a knife, ascending a ladder of which the steps consist of machetes, eating fragmented glasses and pouring the Sulfuric Acid (99% H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>) on the performer's body.<sup>57</sup>

According to Athoullah, other games include: Stabbing the cheeks with a big pin, stabbing the neck with a sharp iron, digesting coals of fire, ejecting bats and snakes from the mouth, rolling on broken glass and nails, beating the head with bottles and wood, shelling coconuts with the teeth, and slicing cucumbers on the stomach.<sup>58</sup> To create a more interesting and at the same time interactive performance, the *syeh debus* (the person who leads a *debus* performance) will invite members of the audience to imitate the actions of the performers by eating broken glass or brushing their hair with fire.

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<sup>55</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Shari'a Court, Tarekat and Pesantren: Religious Institutions in the Banten Sultanate," 303.

<sup>56</sup> Vredembregt, "Dabus in West Java," 302.

<sup>57</sup> Hadiningrat, *Kesenian Tradisional Debus*, 64–65.

<sup>58</sup> Ahmad, *Debus di Masyarakat Banten*, 64–65.

During the performances, percussion instruments such as tambourines, drums, small drums (*talinggit*) and rattles are used combined with *dhikr*, reading Qur'anic verses, and *Wawacan Seh* recitations.

According to van Bruinessen, the art of *debus* is inseparable from Banten culture which has a reputation as a place obsessed with occult sciences. Most of the magical skills that developed in Banten have an intimate relation with *silat* and *jawara*, strong people who dominated many rural areas of Banten. *Debus* is an art that displays that the performer is invulnerable and cannot be harmed by fire and sharp iron objects and to accomplish this the *syeh debus* uses all kinds of magical practices.<sup>59</sup>

*Debus* is just one example of a technique that was adapted from the *tarekat* tradition. One can find many similar examples in Indonesia. The cult to gain invulnerability may have existed in Banten before the spread of the teachings and traditions of the *tarekat* but in any case, "*debus*" is clearly a tradition that underwent evolution and Islamization by absorbing *tarekat* traditions in line with local magical traditions.

In *debus*, the process of evolution and change is still ongoing. Like other magicians or supernaturalists, a *debus* player is very eclectic and may try any prayer, *wirid*, or magical text that he learned from a religious teacher for its magical efficacy and he will add them to the treasure of "knowledge" he already possesses. Some changes have also occurred to the *syeh debus* himself. Vredembregt reported that in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *debus* was still part of the *tarekat* tradition and a *syeh debus* was also a *tarekat* teacher or a *murshid*.<sup>60</sup> But no less than 20 years later, the results of van Bruinessen's field research showed a

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<sup>59</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 276–277.

<sup>60</sup> Vredembregt, "Dabus in West Java," 304.

significant change that despite adopting some of the magical techniques and traditions of the *tarekat*, none of them were actual *tarekat* caliphs or *murshid* but usually *guru silat* who are not at all familiar with the *dhikr* and *ratib* of the *tarekat*.<sup>61</sup>

Although it no longer follows the strict procedures of the *tarekat* tradition, a *debus* performance still includes the *Wawacan Seh* ritual which is a very important element in *debus* to support the success of its staged performances. The *syeh debus* and the *debus* players will almost certainly not want to give a *debus* presentation without it being preceded by the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. They believe that the immunity that they have is a gift from God through the sacred saint Sheikh AQJ. It can be said that *debus* is the real manifestation of the cult of the founding Sheikh of the *tarekat*, namely Sheikh AQJ. This is in line with the widespread tradition of Sheikh AQJ's *manāqib* reading that became a very important popular religious expression.<sup>62</sup>

The reading of the *Wawacan Seh* in *debus* is done before the players display their invulnerability skills in front of their audience. In general, it begins with the joint reading of *Surat al-Fātiḥah* by the players. This reading of *al-Fātiḥah* is a "gift" and also a prayer to ask for special protection and help. In *debus* groups influenced by the Rifa'iyyah Order, *Surah al-Fātiḥah* is offered to the members of the genealogical tree. These include the Prophet Muhammad, *al-Khulafā' al-Rashidun*, the Prophet's companions (*sahabah*), the Prophet's family members, *tabi'in* and *tabi'ut tabi'in*, *Sheikh* Ahmad al-Kabir al-Rifa'i, *Sheikh* 'Abd al-Qadir Jaylani, *Sheikh* Shafi al-Din Ahmad bin

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<sup>61</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 278.

<sup>62</sup> Van Bruinessen, "The Origins and Development of Sūfī Orders (Tarekat) in Southeast Asia," 14.

‘Ulwani, *Sheikh* Ahmad al-Badawi al-Rifa‘i, *Sheikh* Ibrahim Ahmad al-Dasuki, *Sheikh* Abu Bakr bin ‘Abd Allah al-Aydarus, Sultan Mawlana Hasanuddin bin Mawlana Mahdum, *Sayyid* Jalil, Sayyid Musa and *Sayyid* ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Rifa‘i, *Sheikh* Muhammad ‘Atabah al-Babur, Sultan ‘Arifin Zayn al-‘Ashiqin al-Bantani al-Tsani, Sultan Abu al-Mufakhir Muhammad ‘Ali al-Din, *Sheikh* Hajj Muhammad ‘Arif al-Rifa‘i, *Sheikh* ‘Abd Allah bin ‘Abd al-Qahar, Hajj Isma’il bin ‘Abd al-Salam and the spirit of the parents.<sup>63</sup>

In *debus* groups influenced by the Qadiriyya Order, the *Surah al-Fāṭīḥah* recitation is offered to the Prophet Muhammad, Sheikh Muhtar al Palimbani, Sheikh Khalil Aceh and Sheikh ‘Abd al Qadir Jaylani.<sup>64</sup> However, some *debus* Sheikhs do not send the *Surah al-Fāṭīḥah* recitation to the members of the Order’s genealogy only but also to Uyut Widara Tampolong, Uyut Santika Cimahi Ujung Kulon and Embah Khaer, spirits known to supernatural practitioners such as the *jawara* and *pencak silat* experts.<sup>65</sup>

After presenting the *al-Fāṭīḥah*, the group recites passages from the *Wawacan Seh* in chorus. This singing continues throughout the entire performance. Next, the *syeh debus* arranges some coconut oil, drinking water, *menyan* (incense) and a basin with water and *kembang pitung warna* (seven kinds of flowers) in front of him. While doing so, he recites a number of verses from Al-Quran, burns some incense and performs various acts of a magical nature.

Van Bruinessen noted that the reading techniques had changed and that old techniques were being abandoned. As an example he introduced the new

<sup>63</sup> Ahmad, *Debus di Masyarakat Banten*, 52.

<sup>64</sup> Vredendregt, “Dabus in West Java,” 308.

<sup>65</sup> Ahmad, *Debus di Masyarakat Banten*, 52.

technique for reading the *Wawacan Seh* in a *debus* group from Walantaka led by Haji Idris. According to him, Haji Idris no longer read the *Wawacan Seh* before the starting of each show because the audience got bored. Instead, he read it and prayed at home the night before a performance. Also he carefully prepared blessed water (water that had been present during the reading of the *Wawacan Seh*) in a bottle. His experience has shown that this practice is effective and useful and that the spirits still come to protect the players.<sup>66</sup>

#### *b) Pencak Silat and Its Derivative Arts*

Like *debus*, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is also one of the rituals that is almost always performed in the *pencak silat* tradition. *Pencak silat* can be described as a martial art, a dance, or a form of self-defense. Martial arts, fighting arts, and self-defense all include stylized forms of attack and defense. According to David E. Jones, martial arts are “stylized behaviors that relate to war but can be distinct from actual battlefield engagements. Elements of these behaviors comprise a general model.” He recounts the following characteristics to describe this model: 1) *Kata*, 2) Emphasis on shock-combat, 3) Ritual, 4) Techniques, repetition, and drill, 5) Sparring, 6) Entertainment, 7) Seeking internal power, 8) Ranking and indications of rank, 9) Connection with social elites. Jones sums up this list of defining characteristics based on his observations.<sup>67</sup>

Fighting arts throughout Southeast Asia have traveled through Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic

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<sup>66</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 278–279.

<sup>67</sup> David E. Jones, “Towards a Definition of the Martial Arts,” in *Combat, Ritual, and Performance: Anthropology of the Martial Arts*, ed. David E. Jones (London: Praeger, 2002), xi.



channels.<sup>68</sup> The nationalization of *pencak silat* in Indonesia, however, has led to a downplaying of foreign influences,<sup>69</sup> such as those from China, India, Mongolia, Persia, Turkey, Tibet, Japan, Korea, and Europe.<sup>70</sup> “Pencak Silat is a compound expression”<sup>71</sup> that refers to the authentic martial arts of the Indo-Malayan archipelago. *Pencak silat* practitioners consider it a sport, an art, a form of combat training, and a tool for mental and spiritual development.

*Pencak silat* has played an important role in the Islamization process in Banten where it has been present since the arrival of Islam. As in the tradition of *pencak silat* in the archipelago in general, it is proof of a cultural evolution which lasted for a long time and is intimately linked with Muslims in the archipelago.<sup>72</sup> De Grave says that to understand the social weight of *pencak silat*, it is necessary to specify that it has played an important intermediary role between the more or less formalized imported religions and pre-existent ritual and religious conceptions.<sup>73</sup> According

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<sup>68</sup> Bart Barendregt, “Written by the Hand of Allah: Pencak Silat of Minangkabau, West Sumatra,” in *Oideion; The Performing Arts World-Wide 2*, ed. Wim van Zanten and Marjolijn van Roon (Leiden: Research School CNW, 1995), 113–130; Gary Nathan Gartenberg, “Silat Tales: Narrative Representations of Martial Culture in the Malay/Indonesian Archipelago” (University of California at Berkeley, 2000); Ian Douglas Wilson, “The Politics of Inner Power: The Practice of Pencak Silat in West Java” (Murdoch University, Western Australia, 2002); Facal, *Keyakinan dan Kekuatan Seni Bela Diri Silat Banten*.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson, “The Politics of Inner Power: The Practice of Pencak Silat in West Java,” 35.

<sup>70</sup> Gartenberg, “Silat Tales: Narrative Representations of Martial Culture in the Malay/Indonesian Archipelago,” 30.

<sup>71</sup> Notosocjitno, *The Treasury of Pencak Silat* (Jakarta: C.V. Sagung Seto, 1997), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Geertz, *The Religion of Java*, 157.

<sup>73</sup> Jean-Marc de Grave, “The Standardisation of Pencak Silat: Javanisation, Nationalism, and Internationalisation,” in *The Fighting Art of Pencak Silat and Its Music: From Southeast Asian Village to Global*

to Denys Lombard, the traditions of Hindu-Buddhist religious communities (*dharma*) is also currently found in *Qur'anic* schools (*pesantren*) and they share the following characteristics: remoteness from the world, settlement land, a culture of free lands, royal tax exemption; a paternal link between the followers and the *kyai* chief; networks between linked communities by the old custom of the itinerant traveler and the mystic quest which lead the students from one site to another to perfect their knowledge; the religious *kyai* leaders who return to the “former school” (*pesantren induk*) on certain occasions after having established a “sub-branch” (*cabang*).<sup>74</sup> These traditions are very similar to those of the basic organizational systems of martial arts schools.

*Pencak silat* is not only an art of self-defense but has also become a culture where physical strength is combined with inner strength and social ethics. People who learn *pencak silat* are not only taught about martial art techniques, but also about religious taboos that they must avoid breaking. In this case, *pencak silat* is used as a medium for learning about the Islamic religion. Martial art techniques such as immunity in *pencak silat* in Banten are taken from the tradition of the *tarekat* in Islam (specifically the Qadiriyya and Rifa'iyya Orders).<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that many *tarekat* traditions have been maintained in *pencak silat* exercises. One of them is collective remembrance and the recitation of the *Wawacan Seh*.

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*Movement*, ed. Uwe U. Paetzold and Paul H. Mason (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 46.

<sup>74</sup> Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya, Kajian Sejarah Terpadu. Bagian II: Jaringan Asia*, 124–148.

<sup>75</sup> Facal, *Keyakinan dan Kekuatan Seni Bela Diri Silat Banten*, 2.

The reading of the *Wawacan Seh* in *padepokan silat* is performed as an effort to *tawassul*, seeking blessing (*tabarukan*), and to request protection and invulnerability. Sa'id (26), a *pencak silat* practitioner, told me his experience while learning *pencak silat* in one of the *peguron* (j/s institution for *pencak silat* exercise) in Lebak Wangi sub-district in Serang. He said that learning martial arts was a gradual process. Those who were already proficient in the martial arts' advanced techniques would be instructed in their inner level (*tingkatan batin*) by the teacher. Sa'id said that his teacher had asked him to perform a ritual to obtain invulnerability power which began with fasting for several days. On the last day, he and his friends performed the "magical power transfer" ritual or the transmission of magical energy from the teacher to his student. To start the magical transmission, they first perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual to obtain the blessing of the "ngelmu Tuan Syeh". After reading the *manāqib* and the magical power transfer ritual are finished, one by one their achievement in getting invulnerability power is tested.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to learning and receiving magical power, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is also performed for *pencak silat* staged performances. In this case, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual will usually be read at the *peguron* the night before the show. This is done to ask God for salvation and the Sheikh for *tabarruk*. Therefore, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is also still used in other typical Banten stage performance arts which are adaptations of *pencak silat* and musical art such as *rampak bedug*, *kendang penca*,<sup>77</sup> and *rudat*.<sup>78</sup> All these

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Sa'id (26 years old) in Serang, October 8, 2018

<sup>77</sup> Facal, *Keyakinan dan Kekuatan Seni Bela Diri Silat Banten*, 5–7.

<sup>78</sup> *Rudat* is a kind of musical art that uses a tambourine that has a certain size and shape, accompanied by chanting verses of the *salawat* and

three art forms are combinations of *pencak silat* and *music*. Usually, this ritual is performed the night before the show.

### c) *Beluk*

Another traditional art in Banten that is closely related to the *Wawacan Seh* is *beluk*. The term “*beluk*” is related to the words *meluk*, *celuk*, or *eluk*, which refer to the same meaning, i.e. producing high-pitched sound. Therefore, *beluk* is a form of *sekar irama merdika* (free rhythm sound)<sup>79</sup> which is generally done with a high-pitched voice when chanting *rumpaka* (*syair*) patterned on *macapat* meters which are packaged in the form of a storyline called *wawacan*.<sup>80</sup> One *wawacan* that is read for the art of *beluk* in Banten is the *wawacan* of Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani.

*Beluk* was created in West Java (Sunda) and Banten. Actually, it is an art that came up in an

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certain prayers. It is played with patterns that differ from one group to another. *Rudat* consists at least of musical art, *pencak silat*, and literary elements, namely in the form of sung poetic texts. More study about rudat see: Rosadi, “Seni Rudat Sururul Faqir: Sejarah Dan Fungsinya Pada Masyarakat Desa Kilasah, Kecamatan Kasemen, Kota Serang, Banten”; Ako Mashino, “Dancing Soldiers: Rudat for Maulud Festivals in Muslim Balinese Villages,” in *The Fighting Art of Pencak Silat and Its Music: From Southeast Asian Village to Global Movement* *Silat and Its Music*, ed. Uwe U. Paetzold and Paul H. Mason (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016), 290–314.

<sup>79</sup> *Sekar irama merdeka* is a *sekar* or a song that is performed without being bound by certain rules of rhythm. In other words, beats still exist in the song but are pseudo. Meanwhile, singers can still expand song melodies, especially in their ornamentation.

<sup>80</sup> More elaboration of the definition of *beluk* see: Atik Soepandi, *Lagu Pupuh: Pengetahuan dan Notasinya* (Bandung: Pustaka Buana, 1970); Enip Sukanda, *Tembang Sunda Cianjuran: Sekitar Pembentukan dan Perkembangan* (Bandung: Terate, 1984); Nano Suratno, *Yang Terbetik dari Beluk* (Bandung, 1995); Oyib Sujana, *Seni Beluk Mitra Sunda* (Bandung, 1985); Eva Syarifah Wardah, *Seni Beluk dan Perkembangannya di Banten* (Serang, 2009).

agrarian society among people who plant rice on dry ground (*huma*).<sup>81</sup> The *huma* fields were located at great distances from each other because much of the land still consisted of forest. Therefore, to communicate with each other people had to use a high-pitched voice (*meluk*) so that they could be heard. In addition, because at that time the area the community inhabited was still close to the forest, wild animals often roamed through residential areas and many predators preyed on babies and toddlers. These conditions made the local residents take the initiative to jointly guard the homes where babies lived who were less than 40 days old. To stay awake while waiting, they alternately sang song in high-pitched voices while one of them read or sang a *ninggali guguritan pupuh*. These loud high-pitched voices not only drove away sleepiness but also wild animals that were about to approach.<sup>82</sup>

It is clear from this story of the origins of *beluk* that at first *beluk* was simply meant to entertain the people themselves and for communication. However, in line with the development and needs of the community, *beluk's* artistic function increased. Now, *beluk* has religious, social and entertainment roles. In its religious and social functions, *beluk* is performed on certain occasions, for example for the celebration of a baby 40 days after birth, marriages, circumcisions, *mitung ulan*, *ruwatan imah*, *rasulan* or *ngariung*, and *syukuran* after the completion of the harvest with the intention to obtain blessings.

Similar to the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, holding a *beluk* performance also requires offerings (*sesajen*)

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<sup>81</sup> Rice growing in the dry fields. Currently, rice cultivation with the *huma* method can be found among the Baduy community in Banten.

<sup>82</sup> Tim Subdin Kebudayaan Dinas Provinsi Banten, *Seni Budaya Banten* (Banten: Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Banten, 2003), 36.

which are usually in the form of *parukuyan*, cigars, *rujak* with seven kinds of fruits, a cup of mineral water, a cup of coffee, coconut, *ayam bekakak*, *tumpang*, brown sugar, chicken eggs, *pisang emas*, red onions, garlic, red chilis, *urab* with white sticky rice, seven kinds of food dishes, *leupeut*, *papais*, and some fruits. If the offerings are absent this will affect the *beluk* players, the audience, and those who organize the event. Usually, a negative effect of the incomplete of offerings is that the players, the spectators or those who hold the performance may become possessed (*kesurupan*) because they would be disturbed by spirits.

A *beluk* performance is usually done by 10-15 persons but at least by 5 persons and is led by one person called *dalang* whose main task is to read the *wawacan* lines which are then alternatively followed by one *beluk* player (*penembang*) after another. There are two kinds of *penembang*, *juru ilo* or *tukang meuli* and *tukang naekeun*. Anyone can act as *tukang meuli* and take part in the *wawacan* recitation which is first sung by the *dalang*. A *tukang naekeun* is a *penembang* whose voice is higher than that of the first reader. In this case, the singing tunes would become higher and higher. Sometimes, the *tukang meuli* or the *tukang naekeun* misunderstand the sentence sung by the *dalang* so that what they sing sounds funny in the ears of the listeners. At the end of the reading of each *pupuh*, it is interspersed with *alok* simultaneously or *rampak* which is usually called as *madakeun* or *ngagoongkeun*. The *beluk* players do not have to do specific attire. Usually, they wear everyday religious clothes such as *takwa* clothes, a *peci*, and a *sarong* but for certain performances, they wear more traditional clothes, such as *kampret* clothes, a headband, a *batik sarong*, and *pangsi* pants.

What is interesting about this art is, of course, the reading of the *manāqib* of Sheikh AQJ which is proof that a change and a form of Islamization has taken place. *Beluk* is an art that has existed for a long time and it seems to be a living artifact of an Islamized culture. The use of the *Wawacan Seh* in *beluk* has helped to change its function from a means of communication and entertainment (*kalangenan*) to a religious function, wherein Sheikh AQJ is again the focus.

Finally, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual has become a living local tradition in Banten and is performed for various reasons, ranging from religious to pragmatic social needs. As can be seen in diagram 2, The *Wawacan Seh* ritual has become a ritual encompassing various religious, social, artistic, and pragmatic personal needs and objectives, (such as invulnerability or *Elmu Tuan Syeh*).

As a ritual, the *Wawacan Seh* contains at least two aspects: religious and magical. Its religious aspect can be seen from the use of religious elements and instruments such as prayers adapted from Islamic teachings. The magical aspect can be observed from the way the performers “make use of” magical powers (in this case *keramat Tuan Syeh*) for certain objectives such as invulnerability, supernatural power, and the expulsion of evil spirits.

These two aspects add to two other mutually supportive social and artistic aspects. The ritual of the *Wawacan Seh* has become a tool for social cohesion. This cohesion arises from the ritual not only because of the way the rituals is performed jointly leading to a state of shared emotion but also because the ritual is actually enacted for a common purpose. For example, the collective *Wawacan Seh* ritual in the *Rebo Wekasan* tradition is performed for a common goal. In

this case, the people believe that individual safety is the safety of society in general, and the suffering of individuals is also the suffering of society. If one person in the community is ill or is affected by a magical disorder, the whole community will be anxious because it will be afraid of contracting them too. Therefore, they will hold a collective ritual to prevent a calamity from occurring in the community.

This condition then caused the ritual to have become a tool for social cohesion. Therefore, it is not surprising that some scholars say that one of the social functions of a ritual is that it is a means for social cohesion. For Durkheim and Parsons, ritual and worship are to enhance social solidarity and to diminish the focus on individual interests because involvement in ritual brings people together because of their common interest.<sup>83</sup>

In fact, Durkheim recognized that ritual is powerful; it has effects on people and does not simply make them *feel* stronger, it *makes* them stronger.<sup>84</sup> As he notes in his conclusion to *The Elementary Forms*, although most of the theorists who came before him attempted to explain religion in terms of beliefs or knowledge, their slighting of ritual was erroneous, as “Its true function is to make us act and to help us live,” and “... it is action that dominates religious life, for the very reason that society is its source.”<sup>85</sup> E. Wallwork described how Durkheim realized, like

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<sup>83</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, ed. Karen E. Fields, A new tran. (New York: The Free Press, 1995), 420–442; Talcott Parsons, *Action Theory and the Human Condition* (New York: The Free Press, 1978), 223.

<sup>84</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 229, 419; Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 473; W.S.F. Pickering, *Durkheim's Sociology of Religion: Themes and Theories* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 278.

<sup>85</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 419, 421.



Saint-Simon, that cold, sociological analysis is not enough to create solidarity and motivate citizens to moral behavior; ritual is needed for this.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ernest Wallwork, "Durkheim's Early Sociology of Religion," *Sociological Analysis* 46 (1985): 201–218.

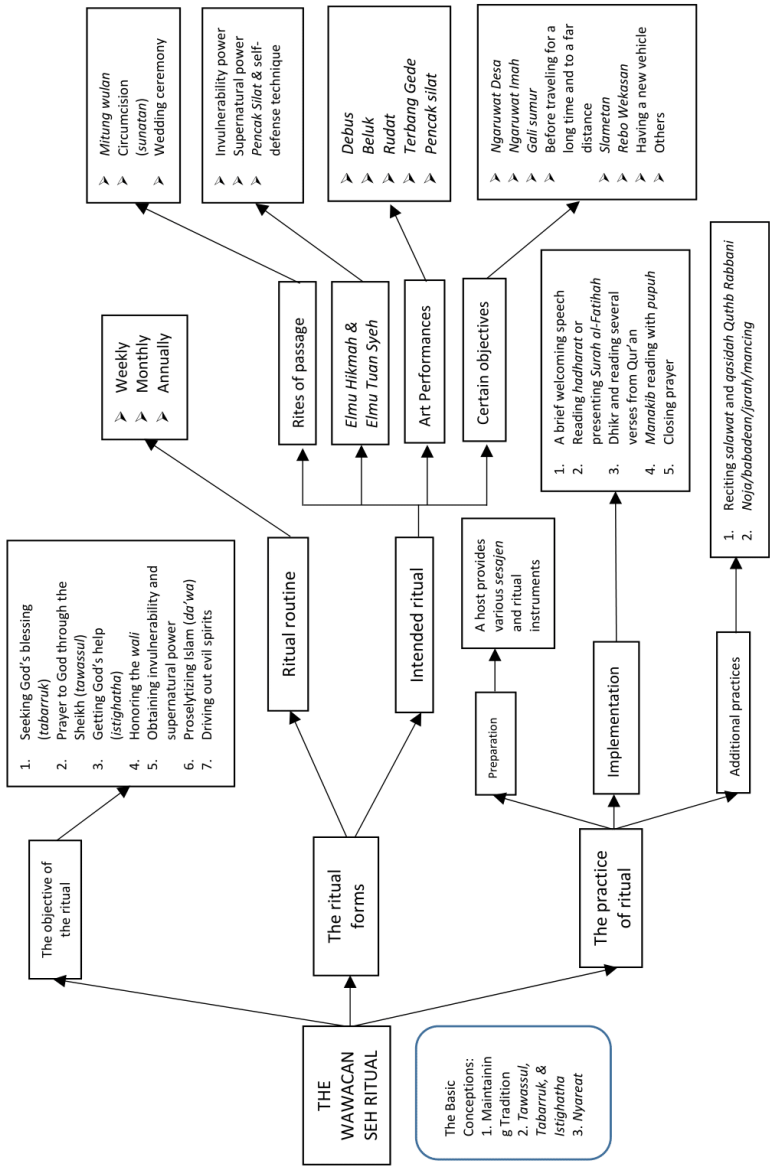


Diagram 2. The Concept and Practice of the Wawacan Seh Ritual

## CHAPTER V. RITUAL CHANGE AND DISCOURSE



Culture is dynamic. It develops along with the interaction among its cultural agents, people. The concepts and practices of a culture are always dynamic, adaptive, and “borrow” elements from other cultures with which it interacts and integrates borrowed elements in a process of production and modification for the sake of the continuity of the culture. These changes can be observed from the appearance of cultural objects. In the living tradition, in which ritual is a part, one can observe the changes that take place in the sense of cultural objects in society. In the previous chapters, I discussed the history of the emergence of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition and its variants that still exists in Banten society. This chapter will discuss the cultural changes—particularly in the sense of the modified forms of their practices and determining factors, and the discourse that takes place in the process of change.

At the beginning of its formation in Banten, the *Wawacan Seh* tradition was a sign of a major change in the cultural pattern of the community. It became a hallmark of the active and massive change that started with the early Islamization process in Banten. The *Wawacan Seh* is a clearly observable clue because it became a bridge between the existing local tradition and Islamic teachings in the form of living tradition. The *Wawacan Seh* also became a modified cultural expression as a result of negotiations due to the meeting of two cultures—local traditions and Islamic teachings—which, because of the integration of many elements of both—such as literature, music, songs in the form of macapat verses, worldview, as well as the concept of sanctity—subsequently formed a hybrid culture.

In discussions about culture, Boyd and Richerson alluded to this view of culture as a dynamic process, holding that culture has inherited properties, including beliefs, values, and

attitudes, and the transmission of culture/cultural values through social interactions much as one might inherit genetic properties but with the ability to choose behaviors and thus “divergences” and differences evolved.<sup>1</sup> Sztompka defines cultural processes as something designed to “embrace the soft tissue of society, the intangible assumptions, premises, understandings, rules, and values.”<sup>2</sup> Johnson defines culture as processes, values, beliefs; as the sum of human experience within certain settings, and the intersections of production in a Marxist sense. This definition encompasses culture as the sum of the social and cultural conditions of production of especially capitalist commodities and their consumption and how their principles create power differentials in societal relations.<sup>3</sup>

Compared to other cultural objects, ritual—which is part of culture and of the living tradition<sup>4</sup>—is the most fixed, rigid, and slowest form to accept change. Its inaction in accepting change cannot be separated from its constituent elements, namely faith, worldview, efficacy, and the very strict nature of its transmission from one generation to the next. Therefore, ritual change is a great marker of cultural change in society, even in the deepest and the most personal dimensions of cultural agents (people), i.e. faith and worldview. The changes that occur in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition are not only a marker 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

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Boyd and Peter J. Richerson, “The Evolution of Ethnic Markers,” *Cultural Anthropology* 2 (1987): 65–79.

<sup>2</sup> Piotr Sztompka, “Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 29 (1996): 117.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Johnson, “What Is Cultural Studies Anyway?,” *Social Text* 16 (1987): 48–49.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Kapferer, “Performance and the Structuring of Meaning and Experience,” in *The Anthropology of Experience*, ed. Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 190–191.

are other more systematic and structured changes surrounding the cultural agents, both at the level of social interaction, power relations, and structures of authority, as well as in terms of their worldview and their religious perspective.

### A. The Ritual Changes

The existence of culture or ritual changes can be traced by way of comparison, taking either a diachronic or a synchronic approach. Comparing culture or ritual using the diachronic approach is carried out by comparing ritual concepts and practices that exist today with the same concepts and practices that existed in the past in the same place. The synchronic approach is carried out by comparing ritual concepts and practices with the same things at the same time in different places.<sup>5</sup> From these two approaches or methods of comparison, it is known that changes took place in the concepts and practices of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and in the meaning of its ritual symbols, structures, and functions. However, in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, the diachronic approach proved more difficult to take because of its historical nature while comprehensive historical documents regarding this ritual are remarkably rare. Even so, historical fragments in several documents and in the collective memory of the community helped me to use it.

In drawing on the diachronic method, I collected information about the ritual performance of the *Wawacan Seh* as performed by the Bantenese people at a certain time in the past. There are several research reports that I use here that offer information about the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and about other local traditions in Banten in which the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is part.<sup>6</sup> The synchronic method is carried out by

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<sup>5</sup> Barnard, *History and Theory in Anthropology*, 8–10.

<sup>6</sup> Drewes and Poerbatjaraka, *De Mirakelen van Abdoelkadir Djaelani*; Vredendregt, “Dabus in West Java”; Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Syekh Abdul Qadir Jaelani pada Masyarakat Banten*; Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat*; Baedhawiy, *Wawacan Seh: Praktek dan*

comparing the concepts and the ritual practices of the *Wawacan Seh* among the regions in Banten.

The process of ritual change and the factors affecting this change are briefly illustrated in diagram 3. In this diagram, the encounter between the existing local tradition and other cultures that came later is the initial stage of change. This encounter then leads to a process of discourse in the community. This discourse, on the one hand, can occur through open debate between different cultural agents who share their opinions about their traditions. Also, another discourse takes place in areas that is more “silent” but able to influence other cultural subjects to be able to accept the concept of culture that came later or at least affects—to some extent—the culture that already exists in society. The latter usually goes silently, a little slow but sure, and does not directly confront the subjects of the culture that already exists in the community.<sup>7</sup>

There are three elements that are instrumental for the output of intercultural encounters, namely subject, event, and conditions. Of course, looking at these elements is a form of simplification when applied to the process of acculturation or ritual hybridization in case of the *Wawacan Seh*. Yet, the role of these three cannot be ignored in the process of acculturation and hybridization, or, at least, all three are almost always present and influence the process.

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*Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten*; Millie, *Splashed by the Saint: Ritual Reading and Islamic Sanctity in West Java*.

<sup>7</sup> Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society*; Mohammed A. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, and Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 115–121; Robert J. Wuthnow, “Taking Talk Seriously: Religious Discourse as Social Practice,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 1 (2011): 1–21.

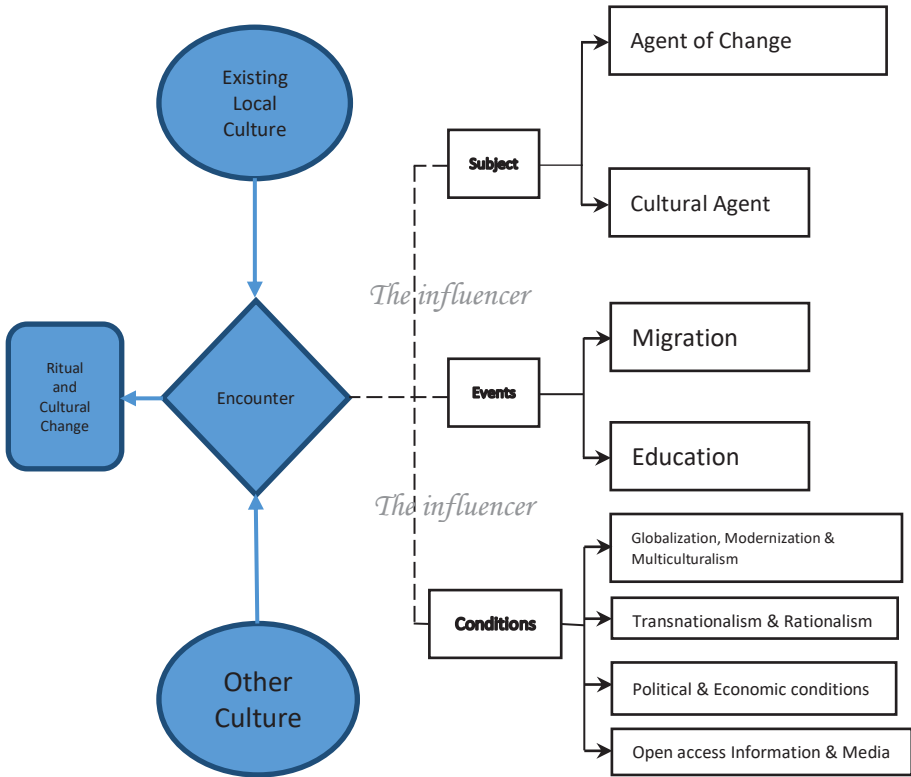


Diagram 3. *The process of ritual change*

It should be mentioned here that this explanation cannot be separated from the explanation of the previous chapter regarding the encounter of Islamic teachings with the local culture. In the previous chapter I offered an explanation of the period of the formation of the *Wawacan Seh* traditions and rituals, while this chapter is part of the explanation of the culture changes that took place. As also discussed in chapter two, the process of Islamization that took place in Banten, as well as in Southeast Asia in general, is an unending process. In this case, Johns reminds us that interaction is a symptom of sustainable creative energy and a vital element in Islam in

Southeast Asia which houses a variety of communities and cultures.<sup>8</sup>

What happens in that encounter is a process of acculturation and the re-hybridization of a culture. As an existing local tradition (please keep in mind that its existence was also the result of cultural negotiations between local culture and Islamic teachings that came in the early days of Islamization in Banten), the *Wawacan Seh*—through its cultural agent—engaged in what is called historical recycling in the encounter process. Adopting Asad’s depiction of history production by local communities, the acculturation in the process of the encounter between the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and the new culture arose actively: the local community accepted the incoming external culture (including the coming of Islamic teachings), contested it, “borrowed” new meanings from it and finally reconstructed its traditions.<sup>9</sup>

The depiction looks simple, even though what actually happens in reality is far more complex and takes a long period of time. There are many factors involved in cultural negotiations, including the three influencers I mentioned earlier each with its own supporting dimensions and aspects. To explain the changes in tradition and discourse that occur within, I will begin with the forms of change that occurred in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition. Both can be observed in cultural objects and symbols and elements that are not clearly visible in the functions and power relations between the tradition and its cultural agents.

### 1. The Symbolic Meaning

Changes in culture or tradition can easily be seen in the symbols they use. On the one hand, changes in symbolic

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<sup>8</sup> A.H. Johns, “Perspectives of Islamic Spirituality in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Encounters,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 12, no. 1 (2001): 5.

<sup>9</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 2.



objects indicate a change in their meaning. This change in meaning, in this case, became a hallmark of the changes in the way people perceive realities. On the other hand, changing the meaning of society towards reality does not necessarily lead to change in the symbolic object used. A case in point is the early formation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. Its appearance signals that there was a change in society's perspective on reality away from its previous worldview, which was based on ancestral beliefs, to a more "Islamic" perspective.

Although there are changes in people's worldview, not all earlier ritual symbols were abandoned or replaced when rituals are enacted. *Sesajen* or *bekakak ayam* (grilled chicken), for example, are still used, but the people have given them a new meaning. *Bekakak ayam* is no longer interpreted as a symbol of tribute to the *Karuhun* (ancestor spirits) as a sign of submission so that the negotiation efforts with the spirits may run smoothly, but as an effort to mimesis of what Sheikh AQJ had done who really liked to eat this kind of food. Because its meaning has changed, the way to use it changed also. *Bekakak ayam* is no longer used as *sesajen* or offerings stored in a place that is considered sacred and inhabited by spirits, but is meant as a gift which is eaten together by the people who attend the ritual.

These changes can be easily understood when we look at the history of the early formation of these cultures and traditions. The emergence of culture in a particular community or society, according to van Gennep, begins with the interaction of people with the world around them, including the forces that are around the place where they live. Cultural expression is a reflection of the reaction of the people to these forces. In facing that power, people try

to adapt, subdue, and adopt it for the sake of their lives and this subsequently forms a culture.<sup>10</sup>

People show their reaction by adapting, subduing, and adopting these forces and they create a ritual. So, the ritual is the process of dramatizing the reality that people adapt themselves to or subjugate the great powers outside themselves. This dramatization process can also be understood as the process of simplifying the cultural communication of various elements and agents in reality. Therefore, Jeffrey C. Alexander defines ritual as:

“...episodes of repeated and simplified cultural communication in which the direct partners to a social interaction, and those observing it, share a mutual belief in the descriptive and prescriptive validity of the communication’s symbolic contents and accept the authenticity of one another’s intentions. It is because of this shared understanding of intention and content, and in the intrinsic validity of the interaction, that rituals have their effect and affect. Ritual effectiveness energizes the participants and attaches them to each other, increases their identification with the symbolic objects of communication, and intensifies the connection of the participants and the symbolic objects with the observing audience, the relevant ‘community’ at large.”<sup>11</sup>

The use of symbolic objects in rituals is something that is almost inevitable in any ritual and in any part of the world. However, the dramatic effects and communal affections of rituals can be observed from the presence of the symbols these rituals use. The symbols show how reality has been described in order to be tamed or subdued. Therefore, the use of symbols is very closely related to how

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<sup>10</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy,” *Sociological Theory* 22, no. 4 (2004): 527.

society, as an agent of culture, portrays and conceptualizes reality.

It could be that the symbol is the illumination of the people's conceptualization of the environment around them. Therefore, it is not surprising that in traditional societies certain ritual symbols have a very philosophical meaning and are usually related to the community's life. Even so, it does not mean that every generation in a particular society creates the results of its own imagination and conception of reality so that the symbols used almost always differ from one generation to the next. Ritual symbols are almost integrated into the ritual itself, and because of this change or are replaced very slowly because the system of ritual transmission is traditional, i.e. it is handed down strictly from generation to generation. It is the same with the meaning of the ritual symbols which is also transmitted from generation to generation so that their existence is maintained.

In a more general scope, the *Wawacan Seh* is a cultural expression and a tradition whose implementation is manifest in the various ritual practices the Bantenese perform. In other words, it encompasses and has become part of almost all Islamic rituals, traditions, and arts in Banten. Its wide coverage and the fact that it has existed for centuries indicate that this tradition has become an inseparable part of the Banten community's perspective on reality and of the cultural communication between them. Consequently, something that has become a symbolic object, in this case not only the tools used during the ritual but also the ritual itself, has become the object of the symbol. Ritual becomes an object of a symbol because it is a mirror of how cultural communication takes place among cultural agents.

In the case of the *Wawacan Seh*, the fundamental cultural changes that took place among the people in Banten can be seen from what they call the ritual itself. It

is called “*Wawacan Seh*” because it refers to a new supernatural agent that replaced the old supernatural agent of the ritual. Sheikh AQJ, an “Islamic” supernatural agent managed to replace the supernatural/magical power, the mysterious, and the sacredness of the old agents such as the *dewa-dewa* (gods), *Ki Buyut*, and *Karuhun* (both refer to powerful ancient spirits). But the questions arise: Does Sheikh AQJ in the ritual occupy the same position as that of the previous agents who were the objects of worship, believed to be able to bring danger or safety, and could be asked for help as long as *sesajen* were offered to them? Is Sheikh AQJ believed to be able to act like their old agents' acted for them and is that the reason why they accept that Sheikh AQJ has replaced them?

These questions cannot simply be answered by “yes” just like that. Explanations regarding changes in the people’s perspectives and changing beliefs need to be emphasized here in order to understand the phenomenon comprehensively. In the pre-Islamic system, they believed that the old supernatural agents in the ritual had autonomous supernatural power that could bring disaster or security whereas the new belief system—the teachings of Islam—does not allow this and it even considers it a great unforgivable sin. Therefore, Sheikh AQJ's spiritual position is very different from that of the old supernatural agents because he is believed not to have the slightest autonomous power. He has the supernatural power or *karomah* as the emanation of God's own. The people believe that they can share Sheikh AQJ's supernatural powers in the form of magical powers, invulnerability, and salvation, but that they are the powers God “loaned” to the Sheikh. He has it because of his closeness to God.

In the study of religion, the position of the supernatural agent has become the center of the culture of the local community. Some scholars have different ideas about who this supernatural agent is. Some point out that

supernatural agents are none other than the people who lead a ritual.<sup>12</sup> But here, the supernatural agent that I am talking about is both, namely the person who organizes the performance of the ritual (in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual he is called *juru maos*) and the subject who is addressed in the implementation of the ritual, namely Sheikh AQJ (including *Ki Buyut* or *Karuhun* in their old beliefs). This is an important position in the analytical category in religious studies. Boyer considered the supernatural agent of this religious belief system a “full access strategic agent”, “envisioned as possessing knowledge of socially strategic information, having unlimited perceptual access to socially maligned behaviors that occur in private and therefore outside the perceptual boundaries of everyday human agents”.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Bering also argues that the accumulation of research shows that people exhibit a developmental tendency to believe in supernatural agents who are socially aware, appearing in childhood and decreasing in adulthood.<sup>14</sup>

The change of belief is in line with the change of the symbolized object. The substitution of the people’s belief—who just converted to Islam—requires the implementation of Islamic teachings both in the social, economic, and cultural spheres and rituals are a part of it. Replacing—or even abolishing—local traditions and rituals that have long existed in the community is a difficult process and takes a long time. Most historians who wrote about Islamization in the archipelago agree that the

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<sup>12</sup> Candace S. Alcorta and Richard Sosis, “Ritual, Emotion, and Sacred Symbols: The Evolution of Religion as an Adaptive Complex,” *Human Nature* 16, no. 4 (2005): 323–359.

<sup>13</sup> Jesse M. Bering, “The Evolutionary History of an Illusion: Religious Causal Beliefs in Children and Adults,” in *Origins of the Social Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and Child Development*, ed. B. Ellis and D. Bjorklund (New York: Guilford Press, 2005), 419.

<sup>14</sup> Bering, “The Evolutionary History of an Illusion: Religious Causal Beliefs in Children and Adults.”

cultural negotiation process was a very important part of the success of the early Islamization process in the archipelago.<sup>15</sup> This success was closely related to the cautious attitude of the early Islamic preachers who faced the existing local culture, in their efforts to change or even eradicate it.

The emergence of the *Wawacan Sch* ritual was part of a cultural negotiation process. The early Islamic preachers in Banten found it difficult to abolish a ritual related to the spirits of ancestors, *Ki Buyut* and *Karuhun*, and other rituals of requests to spirits or objects considered sacred and haunted. Of course, in Islam, this practice is strictly prohibited because it falls into the category of *shirk*, or making something other than Allah the destination of worship and trust.

The early Islamic preachers managed to replace the supernatural agents' position without having to remove the entire ritual. They realized that a ritual is nothing but a container and an expression of trust. The container does not have any religion, it depends on the content of the beliefs in it. This is evidenced by the existence of many other local traditions in the archipelago that we can still find today, of course with a more "Islamic" content. Slowly the early Islamic preachers in Banten introduced Islamic heroes, one of which was Sheikh AQJ, who were no less "powerful" than their previous supernatural agents. The popularity of Sheikh AQJ is not only disseminated verbally but also through the process of the vernacularization of Sheikh AQJ's hagiographic texts.

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<sup>15</sup> Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*; Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since C. 1200*; Merle Calvin Ricklefs, *Mystic Synthesis in Java: A History of Islamization from the Fourteenth to the Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Norwalk: Eastbridge, 2006); Johns, "Sufism in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations"; Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya, Kajian Sejarah Terpadu. Bagian II: Jaringan Asia*.

To be able to completely replace the old supernatural agent, vernacularizing the Sheikh AQJ's hagiography text was done by translating the Arabic text freely into a *macapat* poetic arrangement called *wawacan*. The way of reading the *wawacan* text differs from the way we read a book today. Actually, the *wawacan* text is intentionally written to be sung or chanted following the requirements of the *pupuh* poetic meters, such as *Kinanti*, *Sinom*, *Asmarandana*, *Dandanggula*, *Pangkur*, *Lambang*, and *Durma*. It is usually chanted in a religious ritual performance or a ritual accompanied by theatrical and musical performance.

In this kind of ritual, according to Candace S. Alcorta and Richard Sosis, the incorporation of religious music, songs and dances increases priming and extends the impact of rituals beyond dyadic interaction. Music is an abstract representation of rituals that can be recreated across space and time to evoke emotions generated by rituals. The use of ritual by people to connect emotions and abstractions conditionally creates the sacred; it also lies at the heart of symbolic thinking. The plasticity of the human brain offers a unique window of development for the creation of sacred symbols. Such symbols represent a powerful tool for motivating behavior and promoting collaboration in communities.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, Sheikh AQJ became a substitute for the old supernatural agents with the additional belief that the Sheikh's supernatural power is actually the power that God loaned to him. This is why the concept of sainthood in Islam was introduced. The *wali* was introduced as the one who is very close to God because his excellent character qualities accord with God's teachings. Because of that, God is able to hear his prayers and to answer them. Whenever anyone asks for his help to pray to God he will pray to

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<sup>16</sup> Alcorta and Sosis, "Ritual, Emotion, and Sacred Symbols: The Evolution of Religion as an Adaptive Complex," 348–349.

God, and God will answer the prayer's request. This is the basic concept of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, namely the ritual of asking for something from God through one who is considered capable of connecting the people's prayers to God, in Islam this is called *tawassul*.

It is clear that even though Sheikh AQJ replaced the old supernatural agents, his position remained different from them. He was present in the ritual only as an intermediary between the ritual practitioners and God, not as an object directly requested for help. So why should there be an intermediary? Almost all of the people I interviewed answered that this was because of the concept of *tawassul*. They interpret *tawassul* by illustrating it as a hierarchy in an empire. Let's say that God is the king, so in order to ensure that the request of ordinary people is accepted by the King they need the person closest to the king to deliver their request. They see it as more effective if their prayers are supported in this way than to direct their prayers directly to God. This way of thinking might be more acceptable to ordinary people in Banten than religious concepts at a more abstract level. However, they still need religious symbols so that the religious meaning can be easily digested. For them, this is a form of cultural negotiation that takes place between the teachings of Islam and the existing local culture without having to completely erase existing rituals and also without having to contradict the teachings of Islam itself.

This cultural negotiation also occurs in symbolic objects in a series of ritual performances. The most tangible example that we can still find today is *sesajen*. This ritual object still persists even though its existence is very vulnerable as it is an object of criticism from Universalist Muslims. The meaning of the symbols of sanctification, fertility, safety, and prosperity contained in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual can be seen from several devices used in it. The word "symbol" is taken from the Greek verb



*sumballa* or *sumbalen* which means interviewing, contemplating, comparing, meeting, throwing into one, and uniting.<sup>17</sup> This implies that a symbol is the union of two things into one, or one understanding that has more than one meaning.

A symbol is an action, event, or relation to which a conception is associated. The conception is the meaning of the symbol. As Geertz puts it, a symbol is “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception—the conception is the symbol’s ‘meaning’”.<sup>18</sup> What’s more, the conception that is the meaning of the symbol is accessible to the religious practitioner. The meaning of the symbol is “the meaning particular social actions have for the actors whose actions they are,” Geertz says.<sup>19</sup> The Geertzian anthropologist reads the culture “over the shoulders” of the people whose culture it is.<sup>20</sup>

Based on this concept of the symbol, the role of the symbols in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual can be divided into two types, namely symbols through software and symbols through hardware. Symbols through software can be found in the basic concepts behind the ritual as aforementioned, while symbols through hardware can be seen from the tools, facilities, and *sesajen* used. As also aforementioned, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Banten is not only an autonomous ritual but also a ritual that is inherent in other Banten rituals, traditions, and arts. For example, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual has become part of the tradition of *ngaruwat desa*, *prah-prahan*, *sunatan*, *nikahan*, *Rebo Wekasan*, *slametan*, and others. Therefore, the form of the *sesajen* and other symbolized objects also vary according to what tradition or ritual is performed.

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<sup>17</sup> Dibyasuharda, “Dimensi Metafisik dalam Simbol: Ontologi Mengenai Akar Simbol” (Universitas Gadjah Mada, 1990).

<sup>18</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, 89, 91.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 452.

In the ritual of *ngaruwat desa* or *prah-prahan*, for example, the ritual means and offerings that are presented are more likely to show prosperity, safety, and *tolak bala* (ward off misfortune). The symbolic objects like the offerings used in the ritual are usually in the form of crops produced in that place that symbolize fertility. The goal is that the occupied land or the surrounding area becomes fertile soil, free from pests and other disasters. The symbolic objects used in the ritual have been used for a long time and have been transmitted from generation to generation.

Some of the symbols commonly used in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in the *ngaruwat desa* tradition are *janur kelapa* (young coconut leaves) that remind us to always endure all the difficulties in life, *batang tebu hitam* (black sugarcane trunks) to ward off misfortune, two bundles of rice that usually hang on the doors of the house after the completion of the ritual symbolize prosperity and fertility, *tumpang* (rice arranged into a cone) symbolizes the relationship between the people and God, *nasi wuduk* or savory rice is a symbol of purity, flowers symbolize honor and wisdom, *banyu kendhi* (water from seven sources stored in a pot made of clay) symbolizes the union and the relationship between the people and God at all times (7 days a week), incense is a symbolic offering to the gods or the spirits of the ancestors to ensure that the ceremonial activities run smoothly without magical disturbances, and so forth.

The symbolic objects of the *sesajen* in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual which was held in addition to the *ngaruwat desa*, also used to vary and were different from one region to another in Banten. Even so, there are offerings that are used in many areas, such as *liwet syeh* (cooked rice with the crust from the bottom of the pan ) which is a symbol of simplicity and purity, the *penganan pitung rupa* (seven kinds of food dishes) signify prosperity at all times (because 7 represents the number of days in a week),

*kembang pitung rupa* (seven types of flowers) symbolizes honor because it invites people not to act disgraceful for 7 days a week, bitter and sweet tea and bitter and sweet coffee are both symbols of patience because people always face joys and sorrows in life, water and coins in a basin symbolizes salvation and prosperity, and various other mimetic or symbolic objects that invite the people to always remember and imitate Sheikh AQJ's good morals as they are narrated in the *wawacan*.

Over time, some ritual symbols changed their meaning and function, and some of them are no longer used. Looking at previous research on the symbolic objects in the form of *sesajen* used in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, for example in the 1980s by Athoullah Ahmad,<sup>21</sup> in the early 1990s by H.M.A. Tihami,<sup>22</sup> and in 2009 by Baedhawiy,<sup>23</sup> I can conclude that only few of the ritual objects have changed. For example, the *sesajen* in the form of *ancak-ancak*, which in Tihami's research were said to have been used in Banten in the 1980s have now not been found in the *Wawacan Seh* rituals anywhere in Banten.

The series of symbolic objects in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is part of a tradition whose existence depends on the transmission process between generations and later were newly interpreted by religious leaders and *juru maos*. Some symbolic ritual objects have been retained, but others were eliminated on the assumption that they were no longer relevant to religious teachings, for example the *ancak-ancak* which were considered not in accordance with religious teachings. Other symbols are still considered relevant because they are not meant as offers to the spirits, but as alms for the *juru maos* and/or the attendees. For

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<sup>21</sup> Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Syekh Abdul Qadir Jaclani pada Masyarakat Banten*.

<sup>22</sup> Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat*.

<sup>23</sup> Baedhawiy, *Wawacan Seh: Praktek dan Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten*.

example, *liwet syeh* (cooked rice with the crust from the bottom of the pan), *ayam bekakak*, food dishes, and some drinks are no longer meant as offerings to spirits but will be eaten jointly by attendees or taken home (*berekat*).

Even so, not every means or *sesajen* in the ritual has been given a clear meaning by the practitioners. Some practitioners claimed that they did not understand all the meanings of the ritual symbols either in the form of *sesajen* or in other forms. They claimed just to perform the ritual as they were taught by their predecessors, and not every predecessor also told them the deepest meaning of the ritual symbols and they have become a myth because symbolization is a cognitive process that changes uninterpreted conceptual presentations to make them accord with the existing or real order. Therefore, not only symbols are multi-vocal, but also the meaning attached to them is multi-symbolic because the number of meanings of a symbol through the symbolization process is uncountable.<sup>24</sup>

Belief in symbols and myths, according to Kraemer as quoted by Jakob Sumardjo, is a monistic-naturalistic system. It means that people only manifest God in nature. Belief in a macro and microcosm is an effort to make life perfect, and that belief has become a cultural pattern for primordial societies living from agricultural enterprises. For example, there is an assumption that the sky is in opposition to earth while the human world is in the middle. It is the middle world where heaven and earth unite, where all life lives. Thus, the two transcendent worlds (heaven and earth) unite in the immanent world of man. The middle world is paradoxical, both male and female at the same time. People want to survive paradoxical, ambivalent, and ambiguous situations. All activities of the Sundanese and

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<sup>24</sup> Mark R. Woodward, *Islam Jawa: Kesalehan Normatif versus Kebatinan* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 1999), 67.

Bantenese in their transcendent and paradoxical presence is to obtain salvation and the perfection of life.<sup>25</sup>

Symbols also have no meaning if they are excluded from human life. Anton Baker said that, for people, symbols are central signs that are important, affective, and emotional and existential, as well as comprehensive. However, symbols become mere meaningless tools when they are excluded from life. Then they die and turn into partial and regional concepts only.<sup>26</sup>

According to Toeti Heraty, symbols can be seen as polar dimensions because of the existence of a dual intentionality. Thus, symbolic language is a multivalent language. In her writing, Toeti formulates symbols as symptoms with multiple meanings. That is, in the depiction of a symbol, something is “described”, but is not the real thing. Therefore, symbols have functioned as cosmic, *onarik*, and poetic. Symbols as “cosmic” often occur in nature, i.e. nature can give symbolic meaning. As *onarik*, they are found in dreams so that they form predictions, and as poetry—or the creation of poetry, they become primordial communication.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, the meaning of a symbol depends on the level of trust and understanding of the totality of the micro and macrocosm. If the symbol is addressed only as “ownership”, it is regional and even partial. If the symbol is taken seriously, based on self-awareness and an understanding of the concepts of nature and the reality of life, these symbols have mystical meanings that are directly related to aspects of human life. Thus, these symbols will always be sacred, not profane, as in religious ceremonies.

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<sup>25</sup> Jakob Sumardjo, *Simbol-Simbol Artefak Budaya Sunda: Tafsir-Tafsir Pantun Sunda* (Bandung: Kelir, 2009), 31.

<sup>26</sup> Anton Bakker, *Kosmologi dan Ekologi: Filsafat tentang Kosmos sebagai Rumahtangga Manusia* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1995), 251.

<sup>27</sup> Toeti Heraty Noerhadi, *Aku dalam Budaya: Telaah Teori dan Metodologi Filsafat Budaya* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2013), 195–197.

## 2. The Ritual Functions

The question that arises is whether the symbols embodied in the series of rituals are sufficient to show the religious expression and behavior of the community? Anthropologists who emphasize the symbolic interpretation of religion or of certain rituals, will answer “yes”. This is based on the function of the symbol itself in a religion or in a smaller scope, its rituals. Symbols, however, are home to human conception and experience of reality and sacredness.

The function of sacred symbols, according to Geertz, is to synthesize ethos (the moral and evaluative elements of culture) and worldview (the cognitive orientations about the order of self, society, and the world). Every society has important sacred symbols that embody meanings of why there is ultimate order in human existence even when we cannot experience it, and these symbols serve as vehicles to conceptualize the meaning of one’s own existence, combining the experiences of diverse domains. In his essay “Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,” Geertz notes:

“. . . religious symbols, dramatized in rituals or related in myths, are felt somehow to sum up, for those for whom they are resonant, what is known about the way the world is, the quality of the emotional life it supports, and the way one ought to behave while in it. Sacred symbols thus relate an ontology and a cosmology to an aesthetics and a morality: their peculiar power comes from their presumed ability to identify fact with value at the most fundamental level, to give to what is otherwise merely actual, a comprehensive normative import.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, 127.

As a home for religious expression and the human experience of reality, symbols are very effective in maintaining the sacredness of a tradition or a ritual. This sacredness, however, is one of the main pillars for the continuity of a ritual. The maintained sacredness provides enough energy for the community to continue to do the ritual. In the case of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, although it became a container for the sacredness of the ritual, the symbols continued to get meaning from various circles, including the *juru maos*, religious leaders, and by the people in the community. There is no standard to establish a single meaning in the object of the ritual symbol of the *Wawacan Seh*.

In some historical fragments that I explained in Chapter Two concerning the early Islamization in Banten as a pre-condition for the emergence of the tradition of the *Wawacan Seh*, there is at least speculation about its three initial functions. *First*, it was used as a means of introducing Islam with a local “taste” so that people easily accepted the Islamic teachings that were being introduced. This function of *da'wa* (proselytizing Islam) can also be seen in the Islamic “touches” of the ritual, for example, the shift of supernatural agents from the ancient gods and ancestral spirits to Sheikh AQJ. Even though Sheikh AQJ is a central supernatural figure in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, the early Islamic preachers always stressed that he had strength only because of his position as the closest person to Allah, so that the real power owner is Allah and thus Sheikh AQJ seemed to be an exemplary figure for the people who performed the ritual and they emulated his piety and good character.

*Second*, the *Wawacan Seh* at that time was a form of entertainment. Do not imagine that at that time it was like today when people have many choices for entertainment, such as watching performing arts, television, cinema, and

others. The poetic reading of the *Wawacan Seh* became an entertainment in the community.

*Third*, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was used as a means of social control and social consolidation. It became a ritual where the community gathered enabling the Sultan or the Ruler to exercise social control. In Banten during the reign of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari—who at that time was a religious adviser and warlord against the Dutch—taught *Ilmu Tuan Syeh* (i.e. the technique of invulnerability and supernatural powers that later transformed into the *debus* tradition) to the Bantenese soldiers.<sup>29</sup> *Ilmu Tuan Syeh* is actually the techniques of self-protection taken from the *tarekat* tradition and is believed to originate from Sheikh AQJ's *karomah*. The technique obtained through the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was also a driving force behind the morale and the spirit of Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari's soldiers in confronting the Dutch.<sup>30</sup> The ritual managed to maintain the fighting spirit and solidarity among the soldiers of the Sultanate of Banten. This function of social control and mass consolidation was also present in the days of preparation for the Banten peasant uprising in 1888.<sup>31</sup>

Although this ritual was performed jointly to mobilize mass consolidation, it never lost its sacred dimension. The sacredness in a ritual performance is a very important factor. Almost all of the interviewees I met during my field research said that the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* had been a ritual whose sacredness had always been

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<sup>29</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah di Indonesia*, 35; Hamid, *Shaykh Yusuf: Seorang Ulama, Sufi dan Pejuang*, 99; Rohman, "The Result of a Holy Alliance: Debus and Tariqah in Banten Province," *Afkaruna: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (Januari-Juni) (2013): 1–15.

<sup>30</sup> Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, 221; Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past*.

<sup>31</sup> Kartodirdjo, *The Peasants' Revolt of Banten in 1888, Its Conditions, Course and Sequel: A Case Study of Social Movements in Indonesia*.



maintained. It is not to glorify Sheikh AQJ as a pre-Islamic society glorifies a deity, he is presented as a “close person” to God who is able to deliver the prayers of the people who perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual directly to God. They also believe in two things when this ritual is performed, namely that Sheikh AQJ was “present” in the *majlis* (religious forum) and saw who participated in the ritual and then gave them his blessings; and they also believe that Sheikh AQJ will bring hope because he delivers the prayers of the attendees to God to be answered. At least, these two beliefs still persist for anyone who still performs the ritual, while the functions of social control performed by the authorities may have changed.

In each region that I observed, many people assumed that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is part of a religious ritual, although they realized that it must be distinguished from obligatory rituals such as the *shalat*. Because it is part of religious rituals, its sacredness has been maintained. Anyone who is involved in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual will treat it as they do other religious rituals. For example, the participants who attend a *Wawacan Seh* ritual would dress as they would to pray in congregation in the mosque, such as wearing a *sarong*, *peci*, and shirt with a round collar (*baju koko*).

The basic conception of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is maintaining tradition, prayer (*istighātha*, *tawassul*, and *tabarruk*), and *nyareat*. The last two concepts are closely related to religious factors and this influences to a large extent the conception society has that the ritual is part of religious life and therefore it is almost always present in every rite de passage ritual in the community. This conditions then encourages each subject that it is assumed to be in control of the meaning of the ritual symbols and to interpret them according to religious teachings. Therefore, the meaning of religious symbols must ultimately be linked with and adapted to Islamic teachings. A meaning that is

considered “deviant” will have an immense effect on its sustainability.

This condition then “forces” the subjects of ritual meaning, such as the *juru maos* and religious leaders, to actively and creatively reinterpret ritual symbols to conform them to Islamic teachings, or even rationalize them to avoid meanings contradictory to Islamic teachings. For example, incense is commonly used during rituals. In the past, it was used as a *sesajen* offered to the ancient gods and ancestral spirits and the smoke would bring the people’s prayers to them. In the present, according to most sources I interviewed, incense is considered nothing more than a “room deodorizer” or a kind of aromatherapy which is believed able to psychologically generate ritual sacredness.

This meaning certainly has a large effect. Many people ultimately choose not to use incense anymore because it they no longer consider it a ritual tool and that it has no significant impact for them. There are also those who replaced it with *hio* (Chinese incense stick) because of its similar aromatherapeutic effects. Some of them replace it with perfume, like *misik*. Those who no longer use it or who have replaced it with perfume, have done so because incense can be smelled to up to several meters from the house which often invites questions and suspicion from other people (this usually occurs in *Wawacan Seh* rituals performed alone or with only relatives without inviting local residents). Therefore, in order to avoid defamation, incense is replaced with non-alcoholic perfume. Some people still consider incense a means and a tool for pre-Islamic magical rituals so that smelling of incense will be considered as being engaged in black magic.

The meaning and rationalization of the symbolic objects of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual will also lead to changes in the function of the symbolic objects themselves. The more meaning it is given the more the *Wawacan Seh*

ritual's function will change. The fact that the people who demand the meaning of ritual symbols are Muslims also "forces" the *juru maos* and the ritual practitioners to reinterpret them according to Islamic teachings. The more difficult it is to adjust the meaning of symbols to Islamic teachings, the more they will offer a rational understanding that can be accepted by everybody. But this effort is not without risk. The more ritual symbols are rationalized, the more they are in danger of losing their sacred position. The discourse on the meaning of symbols is the determinant factor behind changes in the functions and preconditions of the continuity or discontinuity of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Banten.

This condition made the Bantenese to discontinue the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and many have replaced by with the *Manakiban* ritual which is actually almost the same as the *Wawacan Seh* ritual because also here, Sheikh AQJ is still a supernatural agent. The community considers a *Manakiban* to be more Islamic in nature because it is not only done by reading Sheikh AQJ's text in Arabic but also because it does not require *sesajen* that are usually present in the pre-Islamic *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

The loss of sacredness as the main pillar of a ritual will cause a change in its social function and even its sustainability may be threatened as it will make it nothing more than a theatrical performance. This also happened in Banten, where the *Wawacan Seh* came to be used as a local art performance. Even the regional government in Pandeglang Regency, Serang Regency, Serang City, and the Banten Province Language Office once held a reading competition of the *Wawacan Seh*. Although it was not the intention to eliminate its ritual sacredness aspect, it is clear that the local government's main objectives and concerns were not the effectiveness and efficacy of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, as they were meant by most people, but to preserve the local culture and its language. This

preservation of culture and tradition was later to become a local asset for the development of tourist and cultural industries managed by the local government.

However, the changes in the *Wawacan Seh*'s ritual function in Banten cannot be reduced to one generalization because it is still scattered over several regions in Banten each with its own variations in their respective implementation techniques. For those who still perform it routinely in every major event of the life-cycle ritual tradition, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is usually run in congregation rather than individually.

The function of the ritual, in this case, is very clear. In addition, to develop religious motivation and disposition, it also becomes a binder of social power. In these communities, rituals are maintained as hereditary traditions with symbolic meanings and are rarely performed openly because they assume that what they do is nothing but guarding the religious traditions that have been handed down to them from previous generations.

Other communities no longer perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in congregation but consider it enough to be performed individually or only in the presence of a limited number of relatives and they invite a *jurumaos* to read it at home. This is what mostly happens today in Banten. Usually, these communities perform the ritual based on effectiveness, efficacy and on maintaining the traditions that their families have performed for generations. People like this do not invite their neighbors because they are often opposed to this ritual which they see as un-Islamic.

Since the last ten years, the local government has started to pay attention to local traditions and culture, and the *Wawacan Seh* ritual regained its place in the public domain. Almost all Banten cultural and artistic heritage sites feature this ritual in the form of a traditional theatrical art performance. In fact, many tourist villages (*desa wisata*) are now supported by the Local Government,

such as the village of Cikolelet in Cinangka region which has turned the *Wawacan Seh* ritual into one of its distinctive traditional art performances. However, even though it has been considered a traditional art form, people who still believe in it and still treat it as a sacred ritual.

### 3. The Ritual Structure

Given that there are no standard rules for making sense of ritual symbols, the meaning used in the community becomes fluid depending on the most powerful subject in their power circle and social relations, which in Weber's terms is called Charismatic authority. In this case, the owner of the meaning is the real ruler who can control the implementation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, with respect to the ritual techniques and the continuity of the ritual itself. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is said that changes in the meaning of symbols affect the function of the ritual itself, and these changes also influence and are also influenced by changes in the structure of the ritual. The ritual structure referred to here not only concerns the social and power relations in the community of ritual practitioners but also the internal structure of the ritual itself including its supernatural agents.

Many scholars primarily studied religion in terms of beliefs, uncovering the psychological mechanisms that produce supernatural agents in all cultures.<sup>32</sup> They argue

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<sup>32</sup> Some works that are relevant to this study are Scott Atran, *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); J. L. Barrett, "Exploring the Natural Foundation of Religion," *Trends in Cognitive Science* 4 (2000): 29–34; Bering, "The Evolutionary History of an Illusion: Religious Causal Beliefs in Children and Adults"; Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Joseph Bulbulia, "Religious Costs as Adaptations That Signal Altruistic Intention," *Evolution and Cognition* 10 (n.d.): 19–42; Joseph Bulbulia, "The Cognitive and Evolutionary Psychology of Religion," *Biology and Philosophy* 19 (n.d.): 655–686; Stewart Elliott Guthrie, *Faces in the Clouds: A New Theory of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Lee A.

that these supernatural agents wielded power over the community. Tribal leaders, who usually became shamans (*dukun*) or religious authorities (*kepala suku*), became people with full authority over the course of life of the people in their territory. Society considers them as persons who understand all the reality around them. Therefore, the supernatural agent's function in local and very traditional communities is to act as central cultural agent whom the community will usually consult for whatever issue they have in their lives. He becomes the central figure and community consultant on household issues, war, health, and social institutions. He is considered the person who can communicate with the gods, ancestral spirits, and other supernatural realities so that he is able to know a reality that ordinary people cannot.

One of the reasons the *Wawacan Seh* ritual emerged was to change the structure of the supernatural agencies. In their pre-Islamic culture, by participating in rituals, the Bantenese people would depend for solving their problems on this supernatural agent who has mystical powers and was believed to be able to communicate directly with the gods or the spirits. Supernatural agents in this type of society usually have a very important position in the community and have, what Weber called, charismatic authority.

Some anthropologists agree that religion was originally a communal matter which over time became an individual matter. When they say that religion is a matter that almost entirely refers to communal issues they are actually talking about the procession of religious rituals. This also applies to the *Wawacan Seh* ritual when it first

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Kirkpatrick, "Toward an Evolutionary Psychology of Religion and Personality," *Journal of Personality* 67 (1999): 921–951; Steven Mithen, *The Prehistory of the Mind* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996); Steven Mithen, "Symbol and the Supernatural," in *The Evolution of Culture*, ed. R. Dunbar, C. Knight, and C. Power (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

came up. As I explained earlier, it is a communal ritual. For the people who perform it, it aims to be religious, a request for salvation, and a means of warding off misfortunes (*tolak bala*). While from the ruler's perspective, the ritual could be used as a means of social control and mass consolidation, because people were bound in a religious sentiment, as during the time of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa when Sheikh Yusuf al-Makassari used it to arouse the fighting spirit against the Dutch.

The destruction of the sultanate in Banten had a tremendous effect on the spread and the changes in the structure of the ritual's implementation. The Sultan or his religious adviser were no longer the only subjects to create ritual meaning. Its spread followed the spread of the royal members of the Sultanate and their *ulama* to the peripheral regions in Banten in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The more it spread to these remote areas, the more it faced local traditions and customs that were increasingly complex. This complexity in its turn created a variety of *sesajen* which were different from one region to the next. Although in further developments it proved not to be immune to change what is interesting about the spread is the emergence of new cultural agents and subjects that gave the ritual new meaning and the *kyai* and the *jawara* became an inseparable part in it.

There was no longer a Sultan in Banten while the *kyai* and the *jawara* remained very influential figures. It should be noted that, as I explained in Chapter Two, in Banten a person will be considered a *kyai* when he has supernatural and magical powers other than, of course, in-depth religious knowledge and a *jawara* is a traditional figure who has supernatural powers with which he maintains the security of the village and its territory.

Although there is a historical connection regarding the relationship between a *kyai* and a *jawara*, currently, the relationship between the two has changed slightly. When

in the past, a *jawara* was a traditional figure who was very submissive to his *kyai*, and it was even said that he was his *kyai*'s right hand, in line with the changes in social relations and power, the relationship between the *jawara* and the *kyai* also changed. This especially happened during the New Order (*Orde Baru*) era in Indonesia when the *jawara* were exponents of the Golkar, i.e. *Satkar Pendekar*.<sup>33</sup>

Even so, both of them were, and still are, agents of culture in this region but the *kyai* became an inseparable part of the development of Islamic teachings in Banten, while the *jawara* became part of the preservation of religious traditions, including the tradition of the *Wawacan Seh*. Until now, many *jawara*—many of whom are currently village heads (*kepala desa*), community leaders, and wealthy people in the village<sup>34</sup>—still perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual routinely at their houses for which they invite a *juru maos* and community members. In this case, the ritual is performed not only to preserve the tradition but also to bless and—the most important thing—to maintain their traditional charisma in the community.

The texts used in the *Wawacan Seh* rituals are deliberately arranged according to the *pupuh macapat* poetic formula so that they can be chanted for a wide audience that was entertained by the distinctive sound of the poems and it is peculiar that the ritual later became an individual affair. About this, some *juru maos* reasoned that

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<sup>33</sup> Bandiyah, “Evolusi Jawara di Banten (*Studi Evolusi dari Bandit Menjadi Pejabat*)”; Kolopaking et al., “The Shift of Power Structure in Rural Banten: A Case of Local Leadership Typology of Ulama and Jawara in Pandeglang”; Facal, *Keyakinan dan Kekuatan Seni Bela Diri Silat Banten*, 28–30; Ian Douglas Wilson, *The Politics of Protection Rackets in Post-New Order Indonesia: Coersive Capital, Authority and Street Politics* (London: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Tihami, “*Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Studi tentang Agama, Magi, dan Kepemimpinan di Desa Pasangrahan Serang, Banten.*”



this individual reading is done because the conditions in the community encourage this. The point is that since the social change that took place in Banten in the early 1990s with the arrival of factories and industries, the social make-up of the agrarian community changed, especially in Cikande, Ciruas, Careng, Pontang, and Tirtayasa sub-districts.

Especially after television had become the main choice of public entertainment, traditions that contain entertainment felt its influence. The sacred ritual of the *Wawacan Seh* and also the dimensions of entertainment contained in it were also affected. Many residents who were invited to a *Wawacan Seh* ritual have become bored and many no longer want to accept the invitations. They usually only participate in the *hadorot* reading session, read some of the selected verses of Al-Quran and the initial prayer (like in *tahlil*), but many of them leave the room when the *Wawacan Seh* reading starts. This happens because in the reading session of the *Wawacan Seh* the main role is for the *juru maos*, while the others merely listen to the poetic fragments of the *wawacan* stories that are chanted in the *macapat* way, and they no longer understand the language of the *wawacan* (because they use old Banten-Javanese of which many words are no longer used in daily language).

Of course, there is no single reason why the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is now performed individually. Some *juru maos* gave different reasons. According to them, the ritual is performed individually mostly because the hosts want it. For some people, the ritual is based on the concept of *nyareat* or as a spiritual effort after physical efforts have been made. Like Ahmad whom I met in the Rajeg area in Tangerang who invited a *juru maos* to perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual individually at his house. His reason was that before building a house, people usually give a *selamatan* and invite many people from the neighborhood,

but because he did not have enough money all he could do was “*sekedar Maca Seh*” (only perform the *Wawacan Seh*) at home. Ahmad’s “*sekedar Maca Seh*” was his *nyareat* (spiritual effort) and meant as a substitute for the *slametan* (which is usually accompanied by the *Wawacan Seh* and attended by many people and thus would certainly cost a lot of money). In this case, the economic factor also provided change to the ritual performance. Ahmad wanted to get security, blessing, and follow the traditions of his community, but because he did not have enough money, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was performed individually at his house.

There are two other forms of change in this ritual, namely the *Manakiban* ritual which has replaced the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and the discontinuity of this tradition. In Banten, a *Manakiban*, as I explained in Chapter Four, is a ritual similar to the *Wawacan Seh* but done using Arabic texts, usually *al-Lujjayn al-Dānī*, *al-Nūr al-Burhānī*, or *Jauhar al-Ma’ānī*. Another difference is that this ritual does not require *sesajen* so that many argue that it is more “Islamic” than a *Wawacan Seh*. Those who no longer hold the *Wawacan Seh* ritual argue that it is not a religious ritual and does not reflect Islamic traditions. It is nothing more than a *bid’a* (innovation) tradition which should be avoided because it is not in accordance with the concept of *tauhid*.

The changes in ritual and tradition resulting from cultural negotiation can also be seen in the Istigosah Kubro (the ritual collective praying involving hundreds of people or more), which in recent years has been widespread among the people. It is very closely related to the tradition of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) but its use is now something that has become nationally acceptable. If we look at it further, it a tradition adopted from the *tarekat*, especially the

Tariqa Qadiriyya wa Naqshabandiyya (TQN).<sup>35</sup> The name *istigosah* is taken from the modified *Manakiban* tradition which is done so that various Muslim groups can accept it. One modification was the elimination of the reading session of stories about Sheikh AQJ but it remained the *hadorot* in his honor with that of the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, other *tarekat* Sheikhs, Muslim martyrs, and Muslims and believers in general as read out in the *tahlil*. The reading of the stories about Sheikh AQJ was replaced by reading some Qur'anic verses, *dhikr*, and prayers for salvation and for warding off dangers. What distinguishes the Istigosah Kubro from other religious rituals is that it is performed in the public space and attended by hundreds or thousands of people. At present, it is common in large events that accommodate many people in open spaces, such as prayers for areas affected by disasters, and is also often done to support political activities.

In relation to the use of ritual as a form of political symbolism, it is interesting to see that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and its modified version in the form of Istigosah Kubro have the same function of legitimizing power and power control in society but differ at the level of the structure of their performances. As I explained earlier, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was a tool of political legitimacy and social control of the Sultan of Banten. At present, Istigosah Kubro is also used as a political symbol to show authority and power by involving many people. In this regard, it is interesting to cite Noorhaidi Hasan's on *dhikr akbar*, which in recent years has also become very popular among politicians in Indonesia, he said:

“...The importance of ritual in politics stems from the fact that politics is expressed through symbolism. Symbols give people a way of understanding the world and

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<sup>35</sup> Zamhari, *Rituals of Islamic Spirituality: A Study of Majlis Dhikr Groups in East Java*, 165–167.

interpreting what they see, and, indeed, what they are. Rituals play a major role in dramatizing symbols, whereby rulers make claims to power and send messages to the public about who has authority and who does not. Political contenders also use rituals to question the legitimacy of existing systems and those in power.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, I must emphasize here that the three components of change in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual—in terms of its symbols, function, and structure—are very strongly interrelated. Changing the meaning of ritual symbols causes changes in structure; changes in ritual functions will also change the ritual symbols and the structure, and so on. This means that the three cannot be analysed partially but have to be considering as a whole.

From the explanation of the changing rituals and traditions of the *Wawacan Seh* above, I can conclude, even though it is a little simplistic, that the changes are a response to changing conditions and perceptions in reality. There are at least three responses, which are: continuation (without any changes in the rituals or tradition of *Wawacan Seh*, and this is rarely found); continuation with changes and modifications; and discontinuation (the ritual is no longer performed). Reserved rituals, or rituals that are performed since previous generations without change, occur because the community does not want to face changes in the social environment or they are resistant to new religious ideas and life patterns.

The modified ritual form is the most frequently found and changes can be found in the realms of symbols, functions, and structures. There are two fundamental changes in the realm of symbolic meaning, i.e. the existence of the ritual itself and the symbolic objects such as *sesajen*. These changes can be seen, for instance, in

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<sup>36</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, *The Making of Public Islam Piety, Democracy and Youth in Indonesian Politics* (Yogyakarta: SUKA Press, 2013), 113–114.

ritual symbols which were previously Islamic but transformed into religious symbols in the public sphere and in the meaning of these symbols, especially *sesajen*, which changed so much that they are even seldom used.

The functions and structures of rituals also change and follow the developments in the changing meanings of the ritual symbols. Not only do they change, but they also experience growing appreciation and depreciation. For example, the ritual function is no longer to enhance control and social cohesion but develops into a traditional art that can assist local governments in their development of local tourist industries. The structure of the ritual is not only changing but also experiencing expansions and reductions in the way it is implemented starting from the main change in the supernatural agent up to its reducing into a ritual that is performed individually. More dramatically, since its encounters with other religious cultures and understandings, the ritual has also been totally replaced. For example, in the District of Cipocok Jaya, Serang City, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is no longer performed but replaced by “Maca Silsilah”.

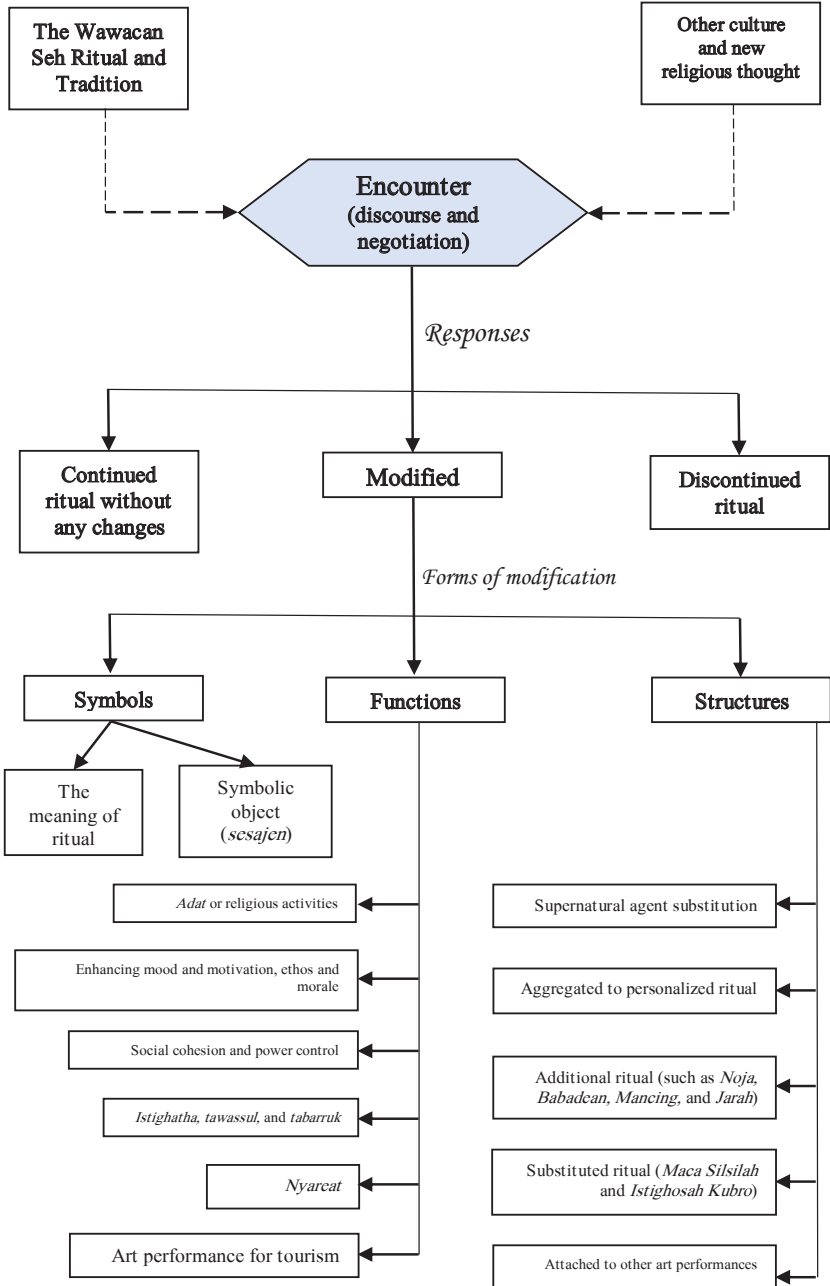


Diagram 4. Forms of ritual changes

The Maca Silsilah ritual is actually still part of the *Wawacan Seh* but without the reading of the stories of Sheikh AQJ. Its performance consists only of *hadorot* readings (reading *Surah al-Fātiḥah*) to the Prophet and his family, Companions, Sheikh AQJ, Sheikhs in the TQN genealogy, *ulama*, both parents, and Muslims and believers in general, then proceeds with reading several Qur'anic verses, *dhikr*, and ends with a prayer. Despite all these changes, two things did not change. *First*, that the people believe that Sheikh AQJ was “present” among them when the ritual was performed, so the first session of the ritual was called *hadorot*. *Second*, they continue to “entrust” their prayers and hopes to Sheikh AQJ because people still believe that he is very close to God so that their prayers will be answered by God.

People who no longer perform the ritual, based on my observations, have two main reasons. One is because of their contact with new religious understandings and they argue that the ritual is an innovation (*bid'a*), and second the absence of future generations who can lead the reading of the ritual of the *Wawacan Seh* (for instance, because the *juru maos* who usually lead the rituals die). Ritual continuity comes about when the ritual continues to be enacted but with certain changes and modifications.

## **B. The Determinant Factors of the Ritual Change**

There are three dominant factors that greatly influence changes in culture in general, and rituals and traditions in particular. The dominant factors are subject, event, and condition and they do not work independently in influencing cultural change.

### **1. Subject**

The subject referred to here are the people who are involved in culture. All people in their environment are cultural agents. This subject is a cultural actor because he

or she forms, changes, and determines the course of culture. Indeed, there are forms of cultural analysis today, mostly inspired by Foucauldian or other poststructuralist thought, that emphasize the ways in which the discourse constructs the subject and its position. This certainly has little resemblance to the Geertzian's interpretation but the subjects in question in this kind of analyses are mostly defined in terms of politics (usually subordinate), locations ("subject positions") and political subaltern identities (in the colonial sense), woman, the racialized other, and so on.<sup>37</sup>

What I want to emphasize here is the formation of subjectivity, structure of thoughts, feelings, and complex reflections that enable social actors to determine their own cultural identity. Therefore, in this dissertation, the subject has a broader meaning because it involves everything related to people as cultural actors. They are the owners and determinants of the traditions and rituals of the *Wawacan Seh*. Therefore, I divide this subject into two. *First*, the subject as a cultural agent (in a wider sense), which in this case refers to all members of the community involved in the traditions and rituals of the *Wawacan Seh* and also other communities in the environment that influence the course of the discourse on religious traditions in the region.

*Second*, the subject as an agent of change. The second definition is more specific because it refers to a small portion of community members who are directly involved in maintaining the *Wawacan Seh* tradition as well as those who alter the existence and the performance of the ritual. Although they are few in number, their active movements in society enable them to change the course of rituals and traditions. The second subject is directly involved in the

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<sup>37</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 114–115.



discourse process which can then affect the subject in the first category. This category include religious leaders (*ulama, ustadh, and kyai*), community leaders (*jawara*, highly educated people, or influential entrepreneurs), and the *juru maos* of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

These two categories of the agency have their respective roles for the existence and change in the practice of *Wawacan Seh* ritual. The cultural agent broadly refers to the local community or commoners where the ritual is performed. The cultural agent has a very significant role in the existence and change of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. In fact, since a long time ago, the local community has been *a reason of making* as well as *making a reason* for the ritual change. It means that, on one hand, commoners are the reason why the ritual is made for and, on the other hand, they also have an active role to make a reason for the ritual change. Ordinary people or commoners who have collective belief and worldview formed the ritual practice. This practice then changes along with changing their belief and worldview. These cultural agents have a strength that can encourage religious authority to reinterpret the ritual practices. At present, the role of this cultural agents, in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in a particular region, is quite powerful and decisive, especially when they are faced many similar ritual choices to perform for the same purpose, such as *Manakiban* and *slametan*.

For those people who still strongly believe in the efficacy of this ritual, the death or absence of *juru maos* in their area does not discourage them from performing the ritual. Usually, they will invite *juru maos* from other villages. For example, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual performance in the community in Panosogan village, Cikeusal, the Regency of Serang is strongly believed as a hereditary tradition and is still a ritual that must be performed when they are going to do great things, such as a marriage ceremony. The aim is to ask for blessings,

salvation, and to be kept away from disturbances during the ceremony. Although there have been no *juru maos* anymore in Panosogan village since the last 10 years after Ki Hamid passed away (the local last *juru maos*) the local community will invite Ki Saruri from Mander village, the next village of Panosogan.

Conversely, if the community in general no longer believes in the efficacy of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual or even questions its religious validity, then almost certainly the ritual will no longer be performed in the area, as it happened in the Kagungan, Serang City which currently does not perform the ritual. In addition, those who no longer perform this ritual they also have an economic reason. This is because the ritual requires a lot of money to be performed, in which for some people they cannot afford to provide.

While the second subject category, the agent of change, refers to a small group of religious authority or traditional elites in the region. Although there are only a small number of them, the role and power that they have are able to compensate for even control the existence and change of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in the midst of society. The subject agent of change has the authority to reinterpret the ritual symbols and practices. In fact, although most *Kyai* or *Ustadh* in the village might not necessarily be able to read and lead the *Wawacan Seh* ritual as well as *juru maos*, giving the meaning and reinterpretation of ritual symbols and practices are entrusted to them. If there are religious questions regarding the religious validity of the ritual, *juru maos* usually gives the matter to *Kyai* or *Ustadh* to answer it, as in the case of Ustadh Hussein in Cinangka. Therefore, these two subject groups are correlated together, with their respective portions, and have an important factor in the discourse and changes that occur in the wawacan ritual in Banten in terms of cultural subjects.

## 2. Events

Another factor that determines the changes in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition is the event. In this case, events are things that happens at 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 portray 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 or where it does not, I found that events have a major influence in the process of ritual change. Some of the most influential events are migration, education, and decrease of ritual guide regeneration.

Migration is the movement of persons from one country or locality to another. In some areas in Banten, especially in urban (such as in Serang, Walantaka, Taktakan, and Cilegon) and areas adjacent to cities or industries (such as Cikande, partly Careng and Ciruas), migration can change the pattern of social relations because it makes the social structures heterogeneous. The emergence of migrants and abundant new residents in a village changed the pattern of social relations—even power—which then changed existing traditions. This is due to the intense interaction between citizens with different traditions and cultures.

Another event that had a significant influence on the change in the mindset of citizens is education. Education is included in this category of events because it is part of human actions. In the village of Kepandean, Ciruas District, for example, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual has not been performed since the 1980s. The education level of the village community, which is quite far from the highway

and the city, is directly proportional to its influence on the process of religious discourse, including the issue of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. According to Kyai Khalwati (87 years), one of the elders and village religious leaders, since the 1980s, the community slowly abandoned local traditions and religious rituals which were considered mixed with *adat*. According to him, this condition was an impact of increasing awareness due to public education that occurred since the 1970s when school-aged children were sent to study in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and *madrassa* institutions. After graduating from a *pesantren*, some of them went to higher levels of education both in Indonesia and in the Middle East, such as Egypt and Mecca. He also remembers that in the 1970s and 1980s his father's house was often used as a meeting place for *kyai* and *ulama* in North Banten to share Islamic knowledge and to discuss the religious problems that existed in the community.

In addition to the enhanced awareness due to education, existing traditions and religious rituals in the community were also criticized by many *haji* who had just returned from Mecca. Enhanced education and sharing knowledge had a major influence on the existence of religious rituals and traditions, including the *Wawacan Seh*. Performing the *Wawacan Seh* ritual was no longer necessary because it was considered enough to perform the *hadorot* to pray for the Sheikh.

The last factor as 'event' that influences the existence of the ritual is the decrease of the ritual's transmission to the next generations. The decline of the next generation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual leaders has become a problem with the sustainability of this local tradition. As I explained in the previous chapter, in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, the social position of *juru maos* is different from *Kyai* and *Ustadh* in the midst of community. Socially, *juru maos* do not have high authority in the community. They have

authority only when they lead the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. Even so, not all *Kyai* or *Ustadh* are able to lead this ritual. Special skills are needed to become *juru maos*. For example, having the ability to sing songs with *macapat* way (such as *Kinanti*, *Sinom*, *Asmarandana*, *Dandanggula*, *Lambang*, *Pangkur* and *Durma*), being able to read Arabic-Pegon script, and of course mastering Islamic teachings (although it is not requiring him or her to have this ability as deep as owned by *Kyai*).

At present, especially for the Bantenese young people, it is rare for anyone to learn to be a guide of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual even just to learn how to perform the ritual. This is because the *macapat* song art is no longer taught in formal schools (except for those who are majoring in art). Moreover, many young people do not even know the types of *macapat* songs and how they sound. In addition, the penetration of modern culture is now able to shift local culture and traditions. Another reason of the regeneration problem of the ritual's guide, according to Ki Samawi of Tangerang, is that being a *juru maos* does not promise for getting economic benefits, so there are not many (or almost none) young people who are interested in developing it. These conditions make the *Wawacan Seh* ritual guide regeneration process hampered. Finally, this tradition later became a unique tradition, even for some Bantenese people themselves, especially in urban areas, because not many *juru maos* still teach it to the younger generation. In some areas, such as in Kagungan, Serang, Taktakan, and Cipocok Jaya (all in Serang City), Ciruas (Kabupaten Serang), and part of Cilegon City, this ritual is no longer performed because there is no regeneration among those who can perform it like the previous generation.

### 3. Conditions

The last factor that had a major impact on the *Wawacan Seh* tradition in Banten is condition which can be defined as a person or thing or a state's mode of being or form of existence at a particular moment in time. Based on my field research in several areas in Banten, "conditions" that had a profound influence on the *Wawacan Seh* ritual changes included several things: the level of multiculturalism, globalization and modernization, the wave of transnationalism and rationalism, political and economic conditions, as well as open access information and social media.

Globalization is defined as "the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life, from cultural to the criminal, the financial to the spiritual",<sup>38</sup> and in the recent past, has rapidly accelerated.<sup>39</sup> There are historical and contemporary aspects of globalization, especially as "growing engagement between the world's major civilizations" as defined by Modelski.<sup>40</sup> There are three main schools of thought associated with globalization: hyper-globalization, skepticism, and transformationalism. The transformationalist school is most persuasive: globalization, even from its multiple definitions, is creating

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<sup>38</sup> John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 65; Jonathan Perraton. Held, David, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 51.

<sup>39</sup> Erika Gasper, *Globalization Big Book* (San Diego: Classroom Complete Press, 2010), 16; and Ray Kiely Wells, Gary J., Robert Shuey, *Globalization* (Huntington: Novinka Books, 2001), 24; Teresa Rodriguez De las Heras Ballell, "Global Markets, Global Corporations: How European Competition Policy Responds to Globalization," in *European Responses to Globalization: Resistance, Adaptation and Alternatives*, ed. Janet Laible and Henri J. Barke (Oxford: JAI Press, 2006), 79.

<sup>40</sup> David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*, 51.

transnational, multiple and simultaneous group identities and memberships that exhibit characteristics of glocalization. Simultaneously, these identities transcend geography—their geography is global—while they are unbound by time and space.

Appadurai, in his seminal work, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, argues that “the central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization. A vast array of empirical facts could be brought to bear on the side of the homogenization argument.”<sup>41</sup> In acknowledging the reasoning behind homogenization but contradicting its main argument, Appadurai shows the dynamism of culture and the integration of the new cultural attributes into the existing culture. “As rapidly as these forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies, they tend to become indigenized in one or another way: this is true of music and housing styles as much as it is true of science and terrorism, spectacles and constitutions.”<sup>42</sup>

Almost no one community is completely free from the influence of globalization, which is getting stronger in line with the improvement of transformation and communication technology. Even so, the process of globalization has received various responses from different communities. In the context of local traditions, such as the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, it appears from the process of substitution, negotiation or adaptation, and resistance. One of the characteristics of globalization is the mobility of thought, ideas, and culture. If it is seen far back historically, the embryo of the movement of globalization has begun to exist for a long time since the expansion of trade fleets throughout the world. This cross-country trade

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<sup>41</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 32.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

mobility is the forerunner of the globalization movement. This initial mobility did not only carry out economic activities but also drove the process of encounter and dissemination of ideas and cultures which then influence each other. The *Wawacan Seh* ritual itself was originally the result of this encounter process, where the teachings of Islam spread globally to the Archipelago. Therefore, the time of an early formation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is a process of 'localization' (a kind of attempt to conquer global culture or some kind of adaptation to and from global culture, in this case between the existing local traditions with Islamic teachings that come later).

The process of globalization is currently running very fast and massive due to increasingly sophisticated means of transportation and information. The sophistication of transportation equipment and information technology in the process of globalization is capable of blurring the country's physical boundaries. Social media is now able to penetrate private spaces. This certainly has an impact on the way of thinking of society in accordance with the trends brought by globalization itself, for instance, rational thought patterns and modern ways of life. This change will certainly have an impact on the existence of the local ritual. For example, in most urban areas of Banten, such as in parts of South Tangerang City and Serang City where the effects of globalization are mostly felt in the Banten region, the existence of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is almost difficult to find. This is proof of a global effect of cultural resistance, especially rationalism and modernism towards the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, which is considered an irrational, primitive, and inefficient practice. Changes in an individual's way of thinking in society because of the effects of globalization then give a new encouragement for redefining tradition, culture, and identity, including the local rituals such as *Wawacan Seh*.



All of these are environmental conditions that exist in the cultural space affect the way of human thinking and acting as cultural actors. The condition of people living in parts of Serang City has experienced multicultural interactions. This condition then causes the public to reshape traditions to suit the “tastes” of everyone. For some people, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is considered a religious ritual that has a very “local” taste so that not a few consider it to be a non-Islamic or less Islamic ritual. Likewise, people who tend to think modern and rationally will consider traditions and ritual celebrations “ridiculous” if they are associated with expressions of something supernatural and they also understand that the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is not a religious ritual as required by Islam.

The more polemical conditions of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual are the wave of transnationalism. In principle, transnationalism is a movement that is formed between human communications around the world which results in waning the boundaries of a country's territories due to globalization. Therefore, the process of transnationalism is a cross-country global interaction that includes individuals or groups of people, thoughts, capital, goods, and culture. In this dissertation, the term transnationalism that I mean is the transnationalism movement that is related to the spread of religious ideology. This transnational religious ideology encourages people to only adhere to single religious interpretations and practices throughout the world, for example, Salafi-Wahabi movement and other Islamic movements that have a tendency towards universalizing Islamic practices and culture in a monolithic way. Salafi-Wahabis are people whose religious orientation is more inclined to textual interpretation so that any business in life must be based on the authoritative texts, namely Al-Quran and Hadith which they understand textually. For them, the *Wawacan Seh* ritual does not have

a strong religious basis at all. The ritual was even considered as *bid'a* which had to be abandoned.

In many areas in Banten, especially in rural areas, the ideology of religious transnational movement cannot yet spread its doctrines freely, let alone to openly debate with local religious leaders about the issue of local traditions, including the *Wawacan Seh* that they consider *bid'a*. However, their teachings spread massively and they are active in social media. In the open information era, these Islamic doctrines oriented to textual interpretation spread very quickly, massively, and actively, both in the form of books, magazines, journals, and social media so that anyone can gain access to them. According to Noorhaidi Hasan, transnational influences of this Islamic revival in their global form have begun to flourish among Indonesia's young generation, where they use Islam as the “ultimate source in building their identity”.<sup>43</sup> He further said that:

“...They believe that being a nominal Muslim is insufficient to overcome the obstacles of life. Instead, Islam should be practiced completely and holistically in each and every aspect of life and society. In their opinion, people cannot be considered true Muslims until they practice Islamic teaching in its totality, and are fully committed to defending Islam.”<sup>44</sup>

This condition certainly does not only occur among the youth in Kebumen, where Hasan conducted his field research, but has manifested itself massively in Indonesia up to the remote areas of the villages due to the existence of social media and open information conditions. In the eyes of practitioners of local traditions, this global Islamic revival movement is very threatening towards the

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<sup>43</sup> Hasan, *The Making of Public Islam Piety, Democracy and Youth in Indonesian Politics*, 187.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

existence of local traditions, including the *Wawacan Seh* tradition.

### C. Culture Discourse and Negotiation

In the explanation of the factors that determine the changes of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, there needs to be an affirmation that the three factors do not work separately. The division of these three factors is categorical, but in reality, they work together in an arena called discourse. Therefore, the explanation of the religious discourse is actually only to affirm explanation regarding ritual change and the factors behind it. However, the factors that influence the change of tradition in society work based on religious discourse, where cultural agents play an important role as “active change actors” and are intensely influenced by events and conditions. In that discourse cultural negotiations emerge which then give birth to a response. There are three responses related to cultural discourse and in the case of *Wawacan Seh* tradition they are *continuity*, *modification*, and *discontinuity*.

Discourses on Islam, both among scholars and Muslims themselves, always lead to discussions about universal Islamic teachings and their diverse expressions in all regions. This variety of religious expression prompted some anthropologists to carry out analyses and classifications. Robert Redfield, for example, suggested that all world religions can be divided into a “great tradition” and a “little tradition.” The great tradition, he argued, is reflective, orthodox, textual, “consciously cultivated and handed down,” while the little tradition is heterodox, peripheral, local, popular, and unreflective. While El-Zein suggests that the term *Islam* be replaced by *islams* to emphasize the multiplicity of Islamic expression and asserts that in all historical and cultural contexts the *islams* of the elite and non-elite, literate and illiterate, and theologians and

peasants, are all equally valid expressions of fundamental, “unconscious” Islamic principles.<sup>45</sup>

Although El-Zein’s offer looks rational and objective it does not mean that it is immune to weaknesses. Ovamir Anjum criticized him by saying that El-Zein’s theory, which places more emphasis on the locality of Islamic expression, and its analysis overemphasized the aspects of the minds of the subjects they experience as religion or ritual and would lead to the conclusion that an anthropology of Islam is simply impossible because Islam cannot be located as an analytical object.<sup>46</sup>

Stemmed from this theoretical debate, Talal Asad’s theory of discursive tradition has its place in anthropological research, and intersects the theologian and anthropologist approaches. It is in discourse, and not in social structure, or political style, that one finds the unifying principles of Islam.<sup>47</sup> The discursive nature of Islam means that everywhere Islam is concerned with deciding what is allowable (*halal*) and what is not (*haram*).<sup>48</sup> Asad states that anthropological studies of Islam should depart from the same assumption as Muslims in which Islam is a discursive tradition that “includes and relates itself to the founding texts of Al-Quran and the Hadith”.<sup>49</sup> In addition to criticizing this approach, Lukens-Bull notes that Asad’s discursive tradition has made at least two contributions that apply in research, he says:

“The first suggests that it is a mistake to study an Islamic study with a monolithic, essentialist conception

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<sup>45</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>46</sup> Anjum, “Islam as a Discursive Tradition: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,” 658.

<sup>47</sup> Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 11.

<sup>48</sup> Merryl Wyn Davies, *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology* (New York: Mansell Pub, 1988), 62.

<sup>49</sup> Asad, *The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam*, 14.

of Islam; there may be as many forms of Islam as there are Muslims. The second suggests that it is crucial that we accept the self-identification of Muslims. If someone calls himself a Muslim and identifies certain practices as Islamic, as scholars, we must begin by accepting that statement as true and then examine how these practices differ from those of other Muslims... As a discursive tradition, Islam is constantly being reshaped to fit with an everchanging world.”<sup>50</sup>

In Indonesia, the discourse on Islamic teachings and its local practices has been going on for a long time<sup>51</sup> and not only takes place in Indonesia but has become a universal problem.<sup>52</sup> Polemics occur when religious theologians and scholars question the validity of certain doctrines or religious practices. To maintain orthodoxy, they refer to the texts—Al-Quran and Hadith—as the most authentic sources. In Islam, polemics occur not only in terms of theological doctrine but also in terms of religious practices, and the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is considered an un-Islamic practice. Interaction between text and practice cannot be avoided. While the text represents the universality of Islam, religious practices

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<sup>50</sup> Ronald Alan Lukens-Bull, “Between Text and Practice: Considerations in the Anthropological Study of Islam,” *Marburg Journal of Religion* 4, no. 2 (1999): 9.

<sup>51</sup> Merle Calvin Ricklefs, “Six Centuries of Islamization in Java,” in *Conversion to Islam*, ed. Nehemia Levtzion (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979), 100–127; Andrée Feillard, “The Constrained Place of Local Tradition: The Discourse of Indonesian Traditionalist Ulama in the 1930s,” in *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia: Syncretism, Orthodoxy, and Religious Contention in Java and Bali*, ed. Michel Picard and Rémy Madinier (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 48–70; Robert W. Hefner, “Islamizing Java? Religion and Politics in Rural East Java,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 3 (1987): 533–554.

<sup>52</sup> Bowen, *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society*, 229–288; Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*; Geertz, *The Religion of Java*.

represent locality and distinctiveness. This interaction is far from stagnant and it changes over time.<sup>53</sup>

### 1. Localist – Moderate – Universalist Muslims

The tradition and ritual of the *Wawacan Seh* are manifestations of religious expression and the discourse about its existence has experienced ups and downs in society. In the past, scholars often classified the subjects involved in the discourse on this matter in binary opposition, Traditionalists-Modernists, or Traditionalists-Reformists. They were right because they are all part of the reality that developed at that time. However, if we use Talal Asad's approach regarding discursive tradition to analyse the *Wawacan Seh* ritual, these categories contain fundamental flaws. *First*, the categories are at an elitist level and ignore other discourse actors in society. The category only targets elites who are actually a small part of society. In fact, the discursive tradition Asad referred to is a religious discourse involving all actors including ordinary people as cultural actors who think and act based on their own reasons. *Second*, even if the categories are made based on subject grouping because of their ways of thinking, the emergence of the current wave of global Salafi-Wahabism movements will make the categories more complex.

Therefore, in analysing the discourse of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, I use three Muslim types: Localists, Moderates, and Universalists. Localist Muslims refers to people who have a local way of thinking. They look at the *Wawacan Seh* as part of their religious tradition that had been around for generations. To maintain this local tradition, they ensure the symbolic meaning of this ritual

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<sup>53</sup> Azra, *The Origin of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*; Fauzan Saleh, *Modern Trends in Islamic Theological Discourse in 20th Century Indonesia: A Critical Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

should be in accordance with what was taught by their predecessors. Included in this criterion are people who still faithfully perform this ritual such as the *juru maos*.

Moderate Muslims are those who understand enough about Islam and are able to distinguish between Islamic teachings and the expression of Islamic culture. They share a number of distinctive attitudes which are accommodative to local culture, often give new understanding in participatory ways to correct what is considered contrary to Islamic principles, and give new meaning to ritual symbols to conform to Islamic teachings. Included in this category are *kyai*, some *juru maos*, and *ulama* from al-Khaeriyah, Mathla'ul Anwar, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Muhammadiyah.

Whereas the last category, Universalist Muslims, is an uncompromising group that insist to universalize Islamic practices and to restore local Muslim practice to make it in accordance with Al-Quran and Hadith. They deem the rituals Muslims perform today but was never practiced by the Prophet as *bid'a* and therefore, they must be abandoned. This group's way of thinking is textual and totally based on interpreting Al-Quran and Hadith. Included in this group are Salafi-Wahhabis and members of other transnational Islamic movements who hold the religious belief that the practice of Islam is universal and therefore they are called Universalist Muslims.

## 2. The Problem of Interpretation

The third group is the strongest critic of the practices of local religious traditions, including the tradition of the *Wawacan Seh*. For this group, the implementation of the *Wawacan Seh* falls into the category of *bid'a*, even *shirk*. It is included in the *bid'a* category because there is no guidance in the authoritative texts of Islam, namely Al-Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Furthermore, it could also be categorized as *shirk* because of the excessive

worship of a person, namely Sheikh AQJ, and the requests made to him for things like supernatural powers, blessings, and salvation.<sup>54</sup> This criticism of the ritual practices of *Wawacan Seh* also led to problems with *wali*, *tawassul*, *istighosah*, and *tabarruk*.

According to HDY (46 years),<sup>55</sup> the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is very clearly included in the *bid'a* category. The concepts of *wali*, *tawassul*, *istighosah*, and *ngalap berkah* (*tabarruk*) which are widely understood by the community, especially those who still perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual are very far from the teachings of the *shari'a*. According to him, the *wali* are none other than righteous and devout Muslim who are close to Allah because of their good deeds. They have no supernatural powers except through God's will. Therefore, Muslims should not ask for salvation from them, let alone from a deceased *wali*. *Tawassul* is an intermediary that can bring people closer to Allah and *tawassul* as intended by Islam is by means of God's names, good deeds, and prayers of living righteous people. For him, *istighosah* is asking for help and *tabarruk* is asking for blessings, both of which must be addressed directly to Allah, not by way of a *Wawacan Seh* ritual and *sesajen*.

These criticisms and accusations have come up in the community, but no direct confrontations have yet occurred between Universalist and Localist Muslims in an open

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<sup>54</sup> The first time I heard some of the criticisms and allegations against the *Wawacan Seh* tradition was in interviews with many *juru maos* (like Dulyani from Anyer, Uting from Ciruas, Abah Ubed from Kressek, and Samawi from Rajeg). They claimed that indeed until now there had not been a direct polemic, especially with violence, about *bid'a* or *shirk* with *juru maos* in public spaces or assemblies. Only Dulyani from Anyer and Samawi from Rajeg had been directly reprimanded by someone (who was in the Universalist Muslim category) that their tradition was *bid'a* and *shirk*. The rest (*juru maos*) claimed to only hear the accusations from third parties who heard them in lectures or in Friday sermons in other regions.

<sup>55</sup> He is a lecturer in one of the private universities in Tangerang and he affiliates himself with the Salafi movement. I did not write his name at his request. Interview with him in Tangerang, November 26, 2018



forum or *majlis*. Practitioners of the *Wawacan Seh* mostly learn of these criticisms from someone who got it from social media or sermons in other regions. So, do not imagine that the discourse takes place as an open debate. The discourse sometimes appears in the minds of individuals in society but they do not dare to discuss it directly with a *kyai* or a *juru maos*. When some of them did ask a *juru maos*, it was usually during a break in the performance of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

During the performance of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Cinangka, I witnessed someone who asked Ustadh Husein about the Islamic legal standing of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual during a break between the *dhikr* session and the reading of the *Wawacan Seh*. He said that he had received a text on WhatsApp saying that rituals like the *Wawacan Seh* were *bid'a* and *shirk*. In a casual manner, while the people who were present at the time were enjoying dishes and drinks, Ustadh Husein replied that *bid'a* only referred to *ibadah mahdhah* (worship with pre-set terms and conditions), such as *shalat* that cannot be added to or reduced and the *Wawacan Seh* is indeed not *ibadah mahdhah*, it is just praying and honoring Sheikh AQJ. He also added that what is read in the *Wawacan Seh* are the stories of Sheikh AQJ's life so that we can commemorate his piety and remember that we could imitate his good deeds. About *shirk*, Ustadh Husein considered the accusation wrong because in reality, according to him, those who perform the *Wawacan Seh* do not intend to worship Sheikh AQJ. We, he said, constantly worship and pray to Allah. Sheikh AQJ is only an intermediary. It is like this. If we want something from a king, we ask the closest person to the king to convey our request so that it can be granted. Besides that, according to him, even though Sheikh AQJ is dead, he was a trustee who was also a martyr and a martyr is still alive even though his body is dead, and he continued with reading verse Q.S. Ali Imron: 169.

The case above shows that social media also plays an important role in the process of cultural dissemination. Social media, including Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Line, and YouTube, have become a medium for disseminating a lot of information, which moves very quickly and widely. This condition also shows a change in society that has a shift in tendency in defining practice and at the same time shows the process of melting the boundaries of space (physical). Physical mobility, for example, has been equipped with more efficient and intensive social and intellectual mobility. The increasingly sophisticated communication media has caused the community to be integrated into a broader order, from local to global.

The role of social media in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual runs in two directions, namely outward and inward direction. The outward direction referred to here is the role of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp in socializing the existence of local traditions to other communities outside the area where the tradition is performed. This is a broad public awareness of efforts to preserve local traditions. One of these was hosted by the Banten Provincial Language Office, the Local Government through tourism and cultural services, and the *Wawacan Seh* ritual practitioners' communities who actively disseminated it through social media. While the inward direction is the role of social media in disseminating other ideas and cultures into the local community. Dissemination of external ideas and culture through social media can then influence the existence of local traditions. Therefore, it is not surprising when some people question the validity of the local traditions that they perform based on WhatsApp viral messages. In this case, the discourse on orthodoxy and the religious validity of a ritual is inevitable. From the

discourse, then new meanings and interpretations of ritual practices emerged.

In responding to similar questions, some *juru maos* and *kyai* in areas where the people still perform the *Wawacan Seh* tradition answer with similar arguments. At the beginning of this chapter I explained the problem of the meaning of *sesajen*, which is often accused of being pre-Islamic. I have described the *wali*, *tawassul*, *istighasah*, and *tabarruk* in Chapters Three and Four. For example, in Chapter Four I wrote about Sukri from Tirtayasa who explained to me during an interview about *ngalap berkah* or *tabarruk*<sup>56</sup> that *ngalap berkah* or *tabarruk* in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is actually to receive the overflows (*leluberan*) or splashes (*fadhail* and *barokah*) of the dignity and the special position of a *wali*. Because Sheikh AQJ is considered the leader of the saints of Allah, the people expect splashes and an abundance of blessings from his superior, dignified and special position when they perform the ritual reading of the Sheikh's hagiography (*Wawacan Seh*). Those who still perform the ritual illustrate *ngalap berkah* in the *Wawacan Seh* ritual with a glass of which the water overflows. The Sheikh is considered a saint, pious, and the *karomah* he has was given to him by Allah so that by doing *tabarruk* all the advantages of the saint are expected to be "splattered" onto those who ask for it by reading the *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

The negative allegations directed at the ritual practitioners of the *Wawacan Seh* can confuse Localist Muslims who are indeed religiously less knowledgeable. For them, performing the *wawacan* ritual is part of the religious rituals that they have to do. They do it to keep the tradition going in the belief that it has been handed down from previous generations who are considered religious people with deep religious knowledge. For

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Sukri in Tirtayasa, July 24, 2018

instance, their view of *tahlil* is only based on tradition and not on strong religious arguments and many people feel guilty when one of their family members dies and a *tahlil* is not held because of the tradition and because social psychology encourages it.

They feel the same about the *Wawacan Seh* tradition. The various stories about the misfortunes and dangers they will encounter if they do not perform the *Wawacan Seh* ritual also affect their psychology. For example, someone who just bought a motorbike will hold the *Wawacan Seh* ritual so that he can set his mind at rest because the tradition has been going on for generations which encourages him to do it. Conversely, if he does not perform the ritual and later on his motorbike is stolen or he has a traffic accident, some people will blame him for not having performed the *Wawacan Seh* ritual.

Actually, I have many stories about these psychological conditions many people told me while I was conducting my field research and interviewing residents in areas where most of the people are still loyal to the *Wawacan Seh* ritual. However, some *juru maos*, though not all of them, also have become affected by this psychological condition. Therefore, a *juru maos* will usually ask a *kyai* or a Moderate Muslim with sufficient religious knowledge but still accommodating to the ritual to clarify religious matters.

### 3. Ritual and Authority/Power Identification

I also need to say here that the agent structure in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition is very different from the structure of agents in other religious traditions such as *tahlilan* which are led by *kyai* who do have religious authority and power in society. In the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, when performing the ritual, a *juru maos* cannot be equated with a *kyai* when he is leading the *tahlilan*. Based on Athoullah

Ahmad's,<sup>57</sup> Tihami's,<sup>58</sup> and Baedhawiy's<sup>59</sup> research, and on my own observations in various regions in Banten, the majority of *juru maos* are not people who enjoy a strong social status, nor do they have religious authority such as *kyai*. They are not different from most commoners; in general, they work as farmers, and in the case of religion some of them are teachers who teach children how to read Al-Quran. The authority and the power they have is limited to the implementation of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and the closing prayer after the reading of the *Wawacan Seh* is usually left to a *kyai* or an *ustadh*.

This condition, at a certain level, makes the *juru maos* dependent on the *kyai*, especially with regard to religious issues. *Juru maos* like Dulyani, Sohra, and Salkin who live in Anyer and surroundings regularly attended *pengajian* (religious preaching) and *dhikr* together in Ustadh Husein's assembly. In these forums, they usually ask questions about religion, including the issue of the "Islamic" identity of the *Wawacan Seh* ritual and other local traditions that many people nowadays are questioning. This kind of discourse has a bearing on the existence of and the changes made in the ritual.

*Kyai* and *ustadh*, in this case, occupy a significant position as agents of meaning makers of the ritual, because they stand at the forefront of religiosity in society. However, the final determinant of cultural change and tradition remains with society at large. Through individuals, society is also a meaning maker agent even though sporadic because it rarely adopts this role and the meaning mostly differs from one individual to the next. The *kyai* function here as binding agents when he ties and

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<sup>57</sup> Ahmad, *Pengaruh Wawacan Syekh Abdul Qadir Jaclani pada Masyarakat Banten*.

<sup>58</sup> Tihami, *Upacara Rebo Wekasan di Serang, Jawa Barat*.

<sup>59</sup> Baedhawiy, *Wawacan Seh: Praktek dan Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten*.

binds the sporadic meanings of the community in the name of religion. Therefore, I classify *kyai*, who possess religious knowledge, as Moderate Muslims because they not only unify meanings but also, to some extent, accommodate existing meanings in the community. This conditions then causes many changes in ritual performance, or even cause it to be discontinued.

How important the role of *kyai* is in changes in the tradition, particularly in the case of its discontinuity, we can learn from a story I heard in one of the villages in Ciruas. Kyai Khalwati told me of his experiences when he was dealing with the process of changing traditions in his village. He said that the changes were quite drastic when his brother, K.H. Thoha (died 1995), returned from Mecca from performing the pilgrimage (hajj) in the 1960s and ideas of religious reform began to arise in the region. Kyai Thoha was a *kyai* with whom the villagers usually learned how to read Al-Quran and *kitab kuning* (yellow books or Islamic books taught in traditional *pesantren*), especially on *ilmu alat* or *nahwu* and *sorof* (Arabic grammar) before they continued to study outside the area. Upon returning from Mecca, while continuing to teach in his *pesantren*, he began to gradually change the traditions which he thought were no longer necessary. For example, for the *Wawacan Seh* tradition and other traditions aimed at asking for blessings and salvation, Kyai Thoha advised the community to simply replace it with a *slametan* because in the *tahlilan* they already had been praying for Sheikh AQJ in the *hadorot*. This change also occurred in the *Mawlid* tradition. In the past, the villagers celebrated *mawlid* with an elaborate festival where every family competed to make the nicest food dishes.

Seeing that a lot of food was wasted, Kyai Thoha advised the community to give orphans alms in the form of money during *mawlid*. Many *kyai* in the village objected to his proposal for various reasons. Yet, the village

community is currently holding the *mawlid* festival without food but with alms, prayers, and religious sermons. Kyai Thoha still thinks that *tahlilan* were needed in the community because in addition to praying it was also used as a means of gathering the people and preaching to them about Islam.<sup>60</sup>

The two cases show that the role of the *kyai* has become increasingly important in the sustainability of local religious traditions and this role led Geertz to call them cultural brokers and he stated that the *kyai's* influence lay in the implementation of the broker's function.<sup>61</sup> Horikoshi,<sup>62</sup> in her study of *kyai* in West Java, saw the *kyai's* power as a source of social change, not only in *pesantren* communities but also in the communities outside the *pesantren* and in the case of Banten, the roles of *kyai* and *jawara* were also very clearly demonstrated in studies conducted by Tihami.<sup>63</sup>

The role played by *kyai* and *juru maos* as cultural agents, especially in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition is very clear. They have become meaning maker agents of the rituals performed in the community. The production of meaning is the production of knowledge, and knowledge is able to control the course of a tradition and to what extent to which society depends on that tradition. From them, the people accept the meaning of rituals and their symbolized objects and they internalize these meanings in their social minds. The *Wawacan Seh* tradition depends on the fate of its existence, whether it will continue to be performed as the tradition it is or in a modified way, or discontinue altogether. However, many scholars who study *kyai* forget

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with K.H. Khalwati in Ciruas, June 23, 2018

<sup>61</sup> Geertz, *The Religion of Java*.

<sup>62</sup> Horikoshi, "Traditional Leaders in a Time of Change: The Kijaji and Ulama in West Java."

<sup>63</sup> Tihami, "*Kyai dan Jawara di Banten: Studi tentang Agama, Magi, dan Kepemimpinan di Desa Pasangrahan Serang, Banten.*"

other cultural agents who are no less important, namely the people in the community as a general cultural agent.

Although it looks like a mere consumer of meaning, society in general is a determinant agent of its culture. The discourse on local religious traditions actually does not stop at the hands of a few members of the religious elite. It continues to move on to individuals in society as subjects who can filter knowledge in a variety of discourses. This happened in the case of the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, where people could determine for themselves what the existence of this tradition means. Asep (37 years old) from Kagungan, Serang City, for example, said that the *Wawacan Seh* tradition in his village had become rare—and if it was done it was only individually—since the late 1990s, although some *juru maos* were still alive at the time. The tradition was discontinued after the last *juru maos* in the village died in 2008. According to him, the community in the village, where since the early 1990s many migrants had started to settle from outside regions, argued that the *Wawacan Seh* tradition was no longer needed, although there were no religious leaders such as *kyai* and *ustadh* who forbade it. In this case, the people in the community also had control over the course of the tradition.<sup>64</sup>

The *Wawacan Seh* ritual is performed because the community wants it and it invites *juru maos* to do it, whether it is performed collectively or individually. Although there are, not many, people who do it routinely and they combine it with *pengajian* and *dhikr*; when the *Wawacan Seh* reading session starts not many people still seriously listen to it. At least, that is what I once witnessed during a regularly performed *Wawacan Seh* ritual in Cinangka. It is likely that this is because the people are no longer too interested, because it has become a routine and

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Asep (37 years old) in Kagungan, Kota Serang, December 16, 2018



something normal, or because the session was placed at the end so that they are already tired and sleepy.

Although the people, in general, are cultural agents who can determine the existence of and changes in a tradition, their abilities depend on the coordinative pattern that exists within their society. What I mean by coordinative pattern is that even though individuals in the community are active and autonomous agents of culture, their movements depend on each other. They are like autonomic points, but the shapes and patterns are determined by the coordinative lines between these points. This pattern is the main basis and the means of psychological social binding of the collective implementation of a tradition in society. Therefore, some people said “*sekedar ikut-ikutan*” (“just joining in”), “*tidak enak jika tidak ikutan*” (“it does not feel right when we don't participate”), and other psychological emotional states are binding on society and it is this moment of psychological social binding that the discourse takes place (such as questioning traditions—from various perspectives—even though it only occurs in the mind).

For the community in general, the moment of “coordinating action” is the most in common, even today. Even though he has a religious argument for rejecting the ritual, someone would still join it because he was invited to attend. He will be worried that if he is not present, he will be ostracized by society in general. Based on the people's collective memory, this condition strengthened in the 1960s. According to Dulyani from Anyer, since the late 1960s, religious local traditions have been attracting many people. According to him, this was related to the dissolution of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party/PKI). Many PKI sympathizers and other members of the general public who had not previously attended mosque services became very active in *pengajian* and other religious traditions, including the *Wawacan Seh*.

They did this, according to Dulyani, because they were afraid of being considered PKI members if they did not show up.

Dulyani's story clearly reveals that religious traditions, aside from having a religious function to improve the people's mood, motivation and ethos and morale as described by Geertz,<sup>65</sup> it also has the function of identifying one's position in social life. A religious tradition can allow a person to state his religious disposition, to make him sense mystical dimension and arouse religious passion so that he becomes more pious and encouraged to do good deeds. However, other people consider it nothing but a tradition that is routinely performed and does not have a significant effect on changes in piety. For people who hold the latter opinion, carrying out the *Wawacan Seh* ritual is just a coordinating action that forces them to participate in social action networks, so that if they do not perform it like others in the community, they will feel left out and isolated. Besides that, Dulyani's story added to the pattern of social relations formation in society, namely as a means of identifying one's social position.

The motive of social identification also occurs in terms of authority and power. Some "rich people" and community leaders (most of them are *jawara*) usually hold the *Wawacan Seh* ritual regularly in their houses and they invite many people to attend. When he did his research in Baros and Gunungkaler in 2007, Baedhawiy noted, for example, that many people still regularly held the ritual in their houses once a week.<sup>66</sup> The people who were invited to attend the events were members of the community around them, relatives, and colleagues. In this case, the ritual had

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<sup>65</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, 97, 127.

<sup>66</sup> Baedhawiy, *Wawacan Seh: Praktek dan Fungsi dalam Kehidupan Sosial di Banten*.

become a means of identifying authority and power in society. People will see the person who invited them as a generous individual who would be able to overshadow them. In this way, his authority in the community, in the sense of charismatic authority and power able to control society, would be maintained. Ritual can make someone claim power and tell the people in the community who has authority and who has not. In fact, in relation to wider politics, this ritual managed to change itself into a more publicly acceptable form such as *Istighosah Kubro* which is often a tool for this kind of political identification.

#### 4. Theoretical Implication

Using Asad's theory of Discursive Tradition for analysing the *Wawacan Seh* tradition and ritual inevitably led me to attempt to decipher the power relations present in the ritual practice. Although Asad criticized Geertz's approach of interpretation and symbolic meaning on many occasions, 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.

There are now two approaches that have currently become mainstream in anthropological research, namely the interpretation and symbolic meaning approach as represented by Clifford Geertz and the power relations and practice approach as represented by Talal Asad. Oftentimes, the proponents of either approach speak as if their approach is exclusive and unrelated to the other. This approaches probably stems from Geertz's and Asad's statements. For example, Geertz says, "Culture is not a power."<sup>67</sup> Asad pointedly remarks, "Searching for symbolic

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<sup>67</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, 14.

meanings is not the name of my game.”<sup>68</sup> In response to Asad, Geertz accused him of being a “power-reductionist.” He says, “I suspect that Asad is a Marxist who cannot be a material-reductionist anymore, so instead he is a power-reductionist.”<sup>69</sup>

The differences in and exclusivity of both approaches are increasingly evident when Asad sharply criticizes Geertz's thought. One of the chapters in his book, *Genealogy of Religions*, Asad's now-famous criticism of Geertz, was deliberately written to seriously criticize Geertz's theory. For example, in one chapter in his book, *The Interpretation of Culture*, Geertz said: “The anthropological study of religion is, therefore, a two-stage operation: first, an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and, second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes.”<sup>70</sup> Asad criticized this and said that “religious symbols—whether one thinks of them in terms of communication or of cognition, of guiding action or of expressing emotion—cannot be understood independently of their historical relations with nonreligious symbols or of their articulations in and of social life, in which work and power are always crucial.” Asad also argued that it is not just that religious symbols are intimately linked to social life (and so change with it), or that they usually support dominant political power (and occasionally oppose it). Rather, different kinds of practices and discourses are intrinsic to the field in which religious representations (like any representation) acquire their

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<sup>68</sup> Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 110.

<sup>69</sup> Arun Micheelsen and Clifford Geertz, “‘I Don't Do Systems': An Interview with Clifford Geertz,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 14, no. 1 (2002): 9.

<sup>70</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays by Clifford Geertz*, 125.

identity and their truthfulness.<sup>71</sup> In other words, for Asad, these two stages are in essence one: religious symbols acquire their meaning and efficacy in real life through social and political means and processes in which power, in the form of coercion, discipline, institutions, and knowledge, is intricately involved.

In addition to the sharp differences between the interpretation and symbolic meaning approach and the power and practice approach, my research findings show that both approaches involve each other. This dissertation, however, agrees with Stephen S. Bush<sup>72</sup> who says that an adequate theory of religion would have to incorporate both terms into its methodology, preferably without subordinating one to the other.

In relation to the study of ritual, the power and practice theorist usually wants to know not what the ritual *means*, but what does the ritual *does*. Yet, according to my research findings, to analyse the *Wawacan Seh* ritual it is not enough to understand “what does the ritual does” when it is also not analysed in terms of “what does the ritual *mean*”. Therefore, analysing the *Wawacan Seh* ritual by only emphasizing the power and the practice approach will be difficult because the power relations that exist in the practitioner’s community of the ritual are built on symbols. In the *Wawacan Seh* tradition, it is very clear that those who have power over the existence of and the changes in the *Wawacan Seh* tradition are those who are the symbolic meaning makers and the interpreters of its ritual symbols.

Now it would be wrong to say that these two approaches are characterized by nothing but mutual antagonism. The combination of their occasional mutual

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<sup>71</sup> Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 53.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen S. Bush, “Are Meanings the Name of the Game? Religion as Symbolic Meaning and Religion as Power,” *Religion Compass* 6, no. 12 (2012): 526.

disparagement leaves the impression that we are faced with a choice between interpreting meanings or analysing power. Therefore, it is worth stating explicitly that the situation here is not that we have symbols on the one hand, and social power on the other. Rather the disciplinary and coercive practices through which power acts to shape subjects and hierarchies are themselves thoroughly symbolic. Power cannot produce its effects without the symbolic context in which it operates. The question to ask is, Asad tells us, “How does (religious) power create (religious) truth?”<sup>73</sup> But equally, we have to ask the question how truth and meaning create power. As Foucault says, in his terminology, “Power and knowledge directly imply one another ... there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, 33.

<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd Vintag. (New York: Vintage, 1995), 27.

## 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 Kresiek 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