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Author: Bamualim, Chaider S.

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CHAPTER ONE

ISLAMISATION AND OTHER FAITHS IN WEST JAVA

In its wonderful natural and cultural setting, West Java has a large diversity of religious beliefs and practices. It is predominantly the home of the Sundanese ethnic group next to the Javanese and Betawi, most of whom are Muslims while the area is also the home of Christian Batak and Chinese groups,¹ as well as other minority communities such as the Ahmadiyah, Shia and plenty of adherents of native beliefs. This religious diversity ensures a remarkable plurality among West Javanese society which has been its characteristic especially since the 18th century. Most observers of Islam in West Java would think that the Sundanese are and have always been more religiously observant than the Javanese. Although some among these observers such as, for instance, Julian Millie, argue that this generalisation “obscures the dramatic variety of understandings and conventions visible in West Java’s Islamic currents,”² this perception is understandable because it is derived from the generally accepted social identification of the Sundanese with Islam.³ A Dutch missionary, P.N. Gijsman, once related that when he first encountered the Sundanese in 1872 in Sukabumi, he had the impression that for the Sundanese, Islam was nothing but a piece of clothing. This means that, at that time, Islam was only an outward matter. After a while when he got along with them better, he became increasingly convinced that the Sundanese were really observant Muslims after all.⁴

The Islamisation of West Java is the outcome of at least three

¹ Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin and Aris Ananta, *Indonesia’s Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

² Julian Millie, *Splashed by the saint: Ritual reading and Islamic sanctity in West Java* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), p. 13.

³ Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, p. 159.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 159.

processes. The *first* is the transformation from the Sundanese Hindu Vaisnava realm to an Islamic polity.⁵ This shift thus enabled the transition of political power away from the Hindu Pajajaran Kingdom to the Islamic Sultanates of Cirebon and Banten in the sixteenth century.⁶ That they took Islam seriously is, for instance, evident from the fact that from the sixteenth until the eighteenth century, Banten enforced *shari'ah* ruling on apostasy and imposed the death penalty on Muslims who abandoned Islam.⁷ The *second* was that the Islamisation of West Java took place not without resistance from Sundanese society but this resistance was not all that significant. This is in contradistinction with, for instance, the Islamisation of East and Central Java that had faced tremendous challenges from its many opponents.⁸ The *third* was the relatively easy way in which the Sundanese were able to adapt Islamic doctrines and norms to their own, age-old worldview and customs.⁹

From the start, Sufi orders played an important role in this Islamisation process.¹⁰ In the nineteenth to twentieth centuries especially the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah Sufi Order (*tarekat*) expanded rapidly in West Java.¹¹ *Pesantrens* (Islamic boarding schools) along with other Islamic propagation (*dakwah*) institutions played a central role in Islamising West

⁵ Robert Wessing, 'A Change in the Forest: Myth and History in West Java', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 24, 1 (March 1993), p. 3.

⁶ For more general information about this process, see M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c. 1200* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, fourth edition, 2008), pp. 39ff.

⁷ The earliest recorded instance of the implementation of the *shari'ah* involved Sangka, an indigenous woman of royal descent who was baptised Helena van Bantam, probably in the late seventeenth century, in order to marry a Dutch Christian. Her conversion, however, was regarded as *riddah* (apostasy) in Islamic law, for which she was sentenced to death in 1704. See Mufti Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten* (Banten: Laboratorium Bantenologi, IAIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, 2009), pp. 45-46.

⁸ Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society*, pp. 176-213.

⁹ E.S. Ekadjati (ed.), 'Sejarah Sunda', in *Masyarakat Sunda dan Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: Girimukti Pusaka, 1984), p. 82; Interview, Prof. Sobana Hardjasaputra, Bandung, 15 April 2009.

¹⁰ For a history of the study of Sufism in Indonesia, see Martin van Bruinessen, 'Studies of Sufism and the Sufi Orders in Indonesia', in *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Vol. 38, Issue 2 (1998) pp. 192-219.

¹¹ Martin van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam di Indonesia* (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), p. 200.

Java. The importance of the Islamic school tradition in Indonesia is probably most clearly stated by Geertz: ‘...The Muslim educational system is the master institution in the perpetuation of Islamic tradition and the creation of Islamic society, as well as the locus of the most serious present efforts to modernise that tradition and that society’.¹² We will come back to the last part of this quote further on in the book.

The significance of Islam manifested itself in the Sundanese’ adoption of an Islamic identity. This identity was not only Islamic but also included aspects of the pre-Islamic Sundanese self. In all, they observed and practiced the five pillars (*rukun*) of Islam, practiced *adat* and indulged in native syncretic creeds and practices. Moreover, they believed in spiritual forces. Irrespective of their background the Sundanese were tolerant towards Islamic values. Naturally, they were especially tolerant of those aspects that could easily be accommodated to Sundanese culture and identity.

Despite the overwhelming presence of Islam, this did not mean that other world religions such as Christianity never took roots in Sundanese society as well. We will see below that, since the second half of the nineteenth century, some non-Islamic Sundanese chose Christianity for a variety of economic, social and religious reasons. Of course, the impact of the presence of the Colonial power cannot be denied in this process.

Muslim Sundanese and Variety of Islamic Practices

Islamic Pillars, Mysticism and Myth

Islam is central to the life of the vast majority of the Sundanese. For them, it is an obligation to observe religion in daily life which finds its expression in their maxim “*agama kudu jeung darigama*”: Religion (Islam) should be observed as a daily obligation.¹³ This notion materialises in society. That Muslims indeed practiced the five pillars of Islam (*rukun Islam*) is evidenced, for instance, in Gijsman’s letter to Dutch Missionary Association

¹² Clifford Geertz, ‘Modernization in a Muslim Society: The Indonesian Case’, in Robert N. Bellah, *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 93-108.

¹³ A. Suhandi Suhamihardja, ‘Agama, Kepercayaan dan Sistem Pengetahuan’, in Edi S. Ekadjati (ed.), *Masyarakat dan Kebudayaan Sunda* (Bandung: Pusat Ilmiah dan Pembangunan Regional, Jawa Barat, 1984), p. 213.

(Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging, NZV) in the Netherlands dated 30 December 1872. He observed that the Sundanese he encountered were studying Arabic, read the Quran, went to the mosque or *musalla*, fasted during Ramadan, went on the *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca); performed the five pillars of Islam, paid their tithe and circumcised their sons, and celebrated Islamic festivals with passion.¹⁴ Gijsman concluded that “all these and many other things show us that the whole society is structured in accordance with Islamic patterns.”¹⁵ In other words, in many respects the Sundanese were practicing Muslims.

Most Sundanese Muslims celebrate religious ceremonies and festivals such as *slametan*, *idul fitri*, *maulud*, *isra' mi'raj*, *nisfu sha'ban night*, etcetera.¹⁶ Traditionalist Sundanese have played a pivotal role in preserving these practices which contain many remnants of a variety of local customs (collectively dubbed *adat*). They also played a leading role in transmitting Islam and in preserving Islamic traditions. One of the most important contributions of the Traditionalists is the Sufi order or *tarekat*. Across West Java there are a number of Sufi orders that have existed since the seventeenth century, namely the Qadiriyyah (seventeenth century), the Shatariyyah (seventeenth century), the Naqshabandiyah (nineteenth century)¹⁷ and the Tijaniyyah¹⁸ (twentieth century), among others. In the nineteenth century, Shaikh Abdul Khatib Sambas, the great *Qadiriyyah* teacher (*murshid*), merged the Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah traditions and called it the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah (Qadiriyyah and Naqshabandiyah or TQN).¹⁹ From the early twentieth century, the Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah was officially embraced and popularised by Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya thanks to K.H. Abdullah Mubarak and his successor Shaikh Shahibul Wafa Tajul Arifin, widely known as Abah

¹⁴ Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, p. 159.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 160.

¹⁶ Nisfu sha'ban or 15 Sha'ban night festivals is celebrated largely by Traditionalists seeking God's forgiveness and rewards. See G.F. Pijper, *Empat Penelitian tentang Agama Islam di Indonesia 1930-1950* (Jakarta: UI-Press, 1992), pp. 5-22. See also Suhamihardja, 'Agama, Kepercayaan dan Sistem Pengetahuan', p. 213.

¹⁷ Nina Herlina Lubis (et al.), *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat* (Yayasan Masyarakat Sejarawan Indonesia Cabang Jawa Barat, 2011), pp. 50-51.

¹⁸ Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica*, p. 2.

¹⁹ Lubis (et al.), *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat*, p. 159.

Anom.²⁰ Abah Anom died in 2010 and his confidant, Muhammad Abdul Gaos Saefulloh Maslul, popularly known as Abah Gaos, won Anom's followers' support to succeed him as a *murshid* despite some objections from others.²¹ Over time, support for Abah Gaos' leadership strengthened as evidenced among others by the great turnout of a wide range of TQN followers to the monthly *manakiban* festival sheld under his direction in either state-owned mosques or in private residences since 2005.²²

The Tarekat Shatariyah has been present in West Java since the seventeenth century after having been introduced in Cirebon and Priangan by Shaikh Abdulmuhyi (1650-1730) who died in Tasikmalaya. His grave in Pamijahan has remained a pilgrimage destination to this date and people from in and outside Java came to visit the graveyard.²³ He was succeeded by his son, Shaikh Haji Muhyiddin, who wrote a treatise entitled *Martabat Kang Pitutu* (al-'Awalim al-Sab'ah or the [Doctrine of] Seven Grades) said to contain the Sufi teachings of his father.²⁴

The Tarekat Tijaniyah was first introduced to Java in the 1920s by the Medina-born *ulama*, Ali bin Abdullah al-Tayyib al-Azhari. In his *Fragmenta Islamica*, the Dutch expert on Islam, G.F. Pijper, notes that Al-Azhari lived in Tasikmalaya and had authored a book entitled *Munyat al-Murid*.²⁵ Among his other works was the *Kitab Al-Tadhkirat al-Munirah li-ahl al-Bashirah* (Garut, 1344 H [1925-1926]), in which he attacked Islamic reformism.²⁶ K.H. Anas bin Abdul Jamil was the first *ulama* to embrace and popularise this *tarekat* in his Pesantren Buntet in Cirebon. Pijper describes

²⁰ The history of Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya is comprehensively described in Unang Sunardjo, *Menelusuri perjalanan sejarah pondok pesantren Suryalaya, pusat pengembangan tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqsyabandiyyah abad kedua puluh* (Tasikmalaya: Yayasan Serba Bakti Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya, 1995). Lubis (et al.), *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat*, p. 162.

²¹ My own observation to recent development of the Tarekat Qadiriyyah wa Naqshabandiyah Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya in 2013.

²² Interview, ustadz Zainal Abidin, an active member of Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqshabandiyah [TQN] Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya, Serpong, 09 November 2013.

²³ Lubis (et al.), *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat*, p. 155-156.

²⁴ <http://www.sasak.org/2010/04/23/syeikh-abdul-muhyi-1650-1730wali-allah-ulama-besar-di-jawa-barat-asli-sasak/>. Manuscripts of these treatises are preserved in the Library of Leiden University and may be found under shelf numbers Cod. Or. 7465, Cod. Or. 7527, and Cod. Or. 7705.

²⁵ Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica*, p. 82.

²⁶ *Idem*, p. 87.

that by 1928 and until 1932 the Tarekat Tijaniyah was known to exist in various places in West Java including Cirebon, Kuningan, Ciamis, Tasikmalaya and various parts of Central Java, including Brebes, Pekalongan and Tegal.²⁷

Martin van Bruinessen, in his *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, observes that Sufism and Sufi orders have become an integral part of *pesantren* intellectual and religious life.²⁸ In a number of *pesantrens* in West Java, Sufi works are available and studied. Van Bruinessen encountered various important books on Sufism that have become works of reference in these Islamic boarding schools including the *Ihya' 'Ulumuddin* (Al-Ghazali), *Bidayatul Hidayah*, *Minhajul 'Abidin*, *Sairus Salikin* and *Hidayatus Salikin* (Al-Palimbani) in which elements of the *wahdat al-wujud* are apparent.²⁹

It has to be noted that there are some other *tarekats* across West Java which cannot be discussed here because it would lead away too far from the central topic of this book. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Sufi *gurus*, the *tarekats* grew and expanded over time. Most important is that all *tarekats* contributed to promoting a style of Islam that is accommodative to adjustments and modifications in order to meet local customs and the spiritual needs of the Sundanese.³⁰

Wali veneration, as practiced by *tarekat* followers in Sundanese society is perhaps the best example of how Islam was accommodated to local practices.³¹ A *wali* is a saint or a holy man. Some Muslims are convinced that a *wali* is endowed with supernatural power enabling him to offer “benefit in this world and the next.”³² *Tarekat* followers hold that one can obtain material and spiritual happiness through the visitation of places deemed sacred such as graves or caves.³³ The best examples of saint veneration practices are visits (*ziarah*) to the graves of Sunan Gunung Jati

²⁷ *Idem*.

²⁸ Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, pp. 19-21.

²⁹ *Idem*, pp. 162-166.

³⁰ Lubis (et al.), *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat*, p. 174.

³¹ Moh. Ali Fadillah, ‘Pengultusan Orang Suci Pada Masyarakat Sunda: Sebuah Kontinuitas Unsur Budaya Lokal dalam Ritual Keagamaan Islam’, in Ajip Rosidi, H. Edi S. Ekadjati and A. Chaedar Alwasilah (eds.), *Prosiding Konferensi Internasional Budaya Sunda Jilid 1* (Bandung: Yayasan Kebudayaan Rancagé, 2006), pp. 419-432.

³² Millie, *Splashed by the saint*, p. 1.

³³ Interview, ustadz Toha, a follower of Tarekat Qadiriyyah-Naqshabandiyah (TQN) Pondok Pesantren Suryalaya, Serpong, 17 November 2013.

in Cirebon and that of Shaikh Abdulmuhyi in Pamijahan in Tasikmalaya.³⁴ If we look at how *ziarah* is observed, we find in it a substantial continuity of Islamic practices and pre-Islamic paganism.³⁵

In his *Nine Saints of Java*, D.A. Rinkes relates how in Pamijahan the grave of Shaikh Abdulmuhyi was venerated.³⁶ Until the present, crowds of people with all sorts of intentions and objectives make routine visits to the cave and pay homage at his grave. Rinkes observed:

Shaikh Abdulmuhyi is what one might call an 'all round man'; he is not a holy man for particular purposes, who mainly helps on specific request, but he is one who gladly shows his interest in all daily needs and wants, and who tries to alleviate everyone's difficulties. If a childless woman requests the Saint's mediation that she might acquire motherhood, in her dream she might, for example, see a hen with chicks, showing that her wish will be granted. A young *magang*³⁷ might desire promotion; he would go to Pamijahan and near the grave, having made his request, would burn *menyan* (incense) and recite a set of formulae, then dream of a person carrying a *payung* [umbrella], or indeed that he climbs a ladder or a tree. This indicates that the Saint is favourably disposed towards him. A merchant desiring property in commerce would consider himself fortunate if the Saint caused him to dream of shooting a deer while hunting.³⁸

Rinkes also describes how visitors to Shaikh Abdulmuhyi's grave paid homage at another cave nearby. He continues:

Just as a visit to Medina is customary for those making the *hajj* to Mecca, so is it necessary for a visitor to Shaikh Abdulmuhyi's grave to go to the cave and to Panyalahan to pay homage to the mysterious powers there. The entrance to this cave is about ten minutes' walk from Pamijahan. Amply provided with bamboo torches and oil lamps, one

³⁴ A valuable reference on grave visitation (*ziarah*) is Henri Chambert-Loir and Claude Guillot, *Ziarah dan Wali di Dunia Islam* (Jakarta: Serambi, 2007).

³⁵ Fadillah, 'Pengultusan Orang Suci', p. 419.

³⁶ D.A. Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Sociological Research Institute, 1996). See also Tommy Christomy, 'Pamijahan as the Centre of the Shattariyah Order in 17th Century', in Ajip Rosidi, H. Edi S. Ekadjati and A. Chaedar Alwasilah (eds.), *Prosiding Konferensi*, pp. 343-358.

³⁷ *Magang*; candidate for a post in the civil administration who volunteers in an office while awaiting appointment.

³⁷ Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, p. 3.

³⁸ *Idem*.

enters a place where water drips from the rocks above. Each in turn puts his or her mouth under it to drink the icy water. Opinion is that this is '*chai jamjam*', or water that trickles through from the Zamzam well in Mecca, the beneficial power of which is famous.³⁹

In his conclusion, Rinkes argues that there is a possible connection with and a continuity between this grave veneration and earlier non-Islamic practices. He argues that "It is known that many places which had been worshipped or venerated by a former generation kept that veneration after the population converted to a new religion, on condition, however, that the places also took part in the transition."⁴⁰ The Sundanese have maintained this mystical phenomenon to this date and they continue to uphold mystical practices their predecessors had adopted regardless of their religions. This also shows that previous non-Islamic practices which are strongly *adat*-inspired are essential in the life of the Sundanese people.

The *tarekat* tradition is not the only crucial element that helped Islamising the Sundanese. Islam was predominantly disseminated through *dakwah* and education in mosques, *pesantren* and *madrasah*. *Ulama* provided classes in Quranic instruction for youths and adults, the elderly and the under aged, both male and female. In Priangan District, Quranic classes were held in the *pesantren* for underage students under the guidance of Islamic teachers (*ajengan*). After having finished the reading of the entire Quran, a graduation session was held to celebrate the achievement of the graduates. Elderly people, both male and female, regularly held religious sessions and services according to their interests and needs.⁴¹

Pijper witnessed the dynamics of the transmission of Islamic knowledge and practices in various regions in West Java in the early twentieth century. He witnessed women's participation in Islamic learning-teaching activities where the teacher's and the *ajengan*'s wives and female pupils of higher classes acted as religious instructors.⁴² Interestingly, female pupils apparently did not often wear a *tiyung* or *kukudung* (headscarf).⁴³ For most Sundanese, Islam's successful transmission came

³⁹ Rinkes, *Nine Saints of Java*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, p. 12.

⁴¹ Suhamihardja, 'Agama, Kepercayaan dan Sistem Pengetahuan', p. 213.

⁴² Pijper, *Fragmenta Islamica*, p. 16.

⁴³ *Idem*, p. 17.

about because Muslim preachers made adjustments to the fundamentals of the Islamic teachings to make them accord with Sundanese worldviews and *adat*.⁴⁴ This ingrained Islam in the social life of the Sundanese people as faith, culture and identity.

The transmission of Islam presented extraordinary challenges to Christian missionaries. Dutch missionary accounts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reveal the frustration among the missionaries who were serving in various parts of West Java and the astonishing challenges they faced in proselytising among the Sundanese people.⁴⁵ Th. van den End and J. Weitjens S.J. argued that the meagre success of their conversion efforts stemmed from the fact that Islam was already entrenched in Sundanese social and cultural life.⁴⁶ It is probably because of this history that scholars of Islam in West Java have consistently argued that the region has become more deeply influenced by Islam than Central and East Java. In Indonesia, it is common knowledge that the Sundanese have been more observant Muslims than the Javanese.

Although commonly considered observant Muslims, some Sundanese believe in material and immaterial objects and rituals somewhat alien to Islamic tenets. Julian Millie observes:

Hasan Moestapa⁴⁷ represents Sundanese *adat* as a body of practices and rituals somewhat different from Islam. These include the belief in the influence of the spirits of deceased ancestors; the belief that certain places, notably graves and places of natural beauty, and objects, especially knives and other steel items, are inhabited by these spirits; a ritual symbolism rooted in agriculture and reverence for the rice goddess Dewi Sri; a conviction that mantras are useful for achieving worldly goals; a repository of norms made up of sayings and patterned speech...⁴⁸

The belief in natural beauty is manifested in the Sundanese conviction that there are spirits (*guriang*) that control the mountains and who possess supernatural powers that bring and guarantee prosperity and safeguard the life of every Sundanese. The Sundanese people value the

⁴⁴ Interview, Abah Cakra Waluya Wirapati, Bandung, 15 April 2009.

⁴⁵ Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, S.J., *Ragi Carita 2: Sejarah Gereja di Indonesia 1860an-sekarang* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), p. 222.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, pp. 222-223.

⁴⁷ We will return to him below.

⁴⁸ Millie, *Splashed by the saint*, p. 14.

beauty and power of their natural landscape. The three important mountains in the land of Sunda, Mount Gede, Mount Putri and Mount Padang, are believed to be sacred and powerful.⁴⁹ The Sundanese celebrate rites and ceremonies in pursuit of the blessings of the spirits of their late ancestors (*karuhun*) by offering them food and other items.⁵⁰ They also acknowledge the existence of other spirits such as *dedemit*, *jurig* and *ririwa* and it is not uncommon among the Sundanese that children, young girls and pregnant women are prohibited from visiting sites like cemeteries, big stones and trees during specific moments in time in order to safeguard them from the harm caused by these malevolent spirits.⁵¹ The character most discussed in Sundanese mythology of the spirit world is Nyai Roro Kidul. This myth occupies a special place in the mystical world of the Javanese. She is believed to be the goddess of the Southern Sea (i.e. Indian Ocean) who is also said to be a Sundanese princess, namely the daughter of a Pajajaran ruler.⁵² Although other sources claim that the princess hailed from a kingdom in East Java, either Kediri or Koripan, Pajajaran is most often mentioned.⁵³

Robert Wessing argues that belief in supernatural forces influenced the religious life of the Sundanese. He points out that:

A major feature of the Sundanese belief system is the conviction that life is influenced by various supernatural forces, both beneficent and deleterious. It is important therefore in conduct of daily affairs to determine where the positive and negative influences are located since these forces are not stationary. To this end the Sundanese have developed divination devices which are described in their *Paririmbón* (divining books). If a Sundanese wants to conduct some business in a given place he must ask in which direction his objective is located relative to himself. He then consults his *Paririmbón* in order to find out where the evil influence is located on that particular day. If the evil is located in a direction other than the one he must take, he may set out directly toward his goal. Should his goal and the evil coincide, however, it would be best not to go at all. If one must go then it is best to start by heading in the direction opposite to

⁴⁹ Interview, Hawe Setiawan, Bandung, 18 April 2009.

⁵⁰ Suhamiharja, 'Agama, Kepercayaan dan Sistem Pengetahuan', p. 215.

⁵¹ *Idem*.

⁵² Robert Wessing, 'A Princess from Sunda: Some Aspects of Nyai Roro Kidul' in *Asian Folklore Studies*, Volume 56, 1997: pp. 317-318.

⁵³ *Idem*, p. 319.

the one in which the evil influence is located and only later curve toward one's objective.⁵⁴

These practices are certainly not Islamic but seem to be derived from Hindu-Buddhist traditions or perhaps from native beliefs. Observers claim that there is an intricate mix of various religious traditions of Islam, Indian Hinduism and Buddhism and native beliefs. As Wessing notes, these belief systems seem to be "like a layer cake with each influence superimposed on the previous one."⁵⁵

Ulama and Adat

I shall underline from the outset that by discussing *ulama* and *adat*, I do not mean to subscribe to the often seen statement that 'Sunda is Islam,' which seems to imply that 'Sunda is Islamic.' Julian Millie is correct when he criticised that "this statement involves a radical effacement of difference".⁵⁶ The point I want to make here by discussing this theme is that *adat* is important, and for the *ulama* such as Hasan Moestapa (1852-1930), it is often relevant to help 'Islamising' the Sundanese or, the other way around, 'Sundanising' Islam.

Adat is a complex mix of customs and values which has served to maintain the ancestral heritage. It is central to the social, cultural, spiritual and ritual lives of *ulama*, Sundanese *menak* (aristocracy, *priyayi* in Javanese), and ordinary people.⁵⁷ The Dutch colonial government realised this social capital and promoted *adat* over religion. Dutch Advisor on Native Affairs, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, even argued for the precedence of *adat* over Islam in society. Snouck Hurgronje's '*receptie*' theory posited that this precedence would mean that Islamic law could

⁵⁴ R. Wessing, 'Life in the Cosmic Village: Cognitive Models in Sundanese Life' in Edward M. Bruner and Judith O. Becker (eds.), *Art, Ritual and Society in Indonesia* (Papers in International Studies Southeast Asia Series No. 53 (Ohio University Center for International Studies, Southeast Asia Program, Athens, Ohio, 1979), p. 104.

⁵⁵ R. Wessing, *Cosmology and Social Behaviour in a West Javanese Settlement* (Ohio University: Center for International Studies Southeast Asia Series No. 47, 1978), p. 14.

⁵⁶ Millie, *Splashed by the saint*, p. 13.

⁵⁷ Nina H. Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak Priangan 1800-1942* (Bandung: Pusat Informasi Kebudayaan Sunda, 1998), p. 257.

only be observed by indigenous people after having been filtered and deemed compatible with local *adat*. For Snouck Hurgronje, *adat* was not to be subordinated to a kind of Islam as the Arabs professed it. In order to implement *adat* in West Java, Snouck Hurgronje approached the *menak* and Muslim leaders to seek political and religious support for his policy. Haji Hasan Moestapa was his most important ally in championing *adat's* primacy.

Haji Hasan Moestapa was born in Cikajang, Garut, on 3 June 1852 into a *menak* family. His father was Mas Sastramanggala, a descendant of Tumenggung Wiratanubaya, the Regent of Parakanmuncang. His mother was Nyi Mas Salpah, a daughter of Mas Kartapraja, the head of the Cikajang sub-district and descendant of Dalem Sunan Pagerjaya of Suci Garut. His mother's family members were pious Muslims and some were known as *ulama*, including Kyai Hasan Basari and Kyai Cibunut. From childhood age, his parents made him recite from the Quran twice a day, in the morning and evening, without fail. At the age of seven, he undertook religious studies under the supervision of Kyai Hasan Basari. At the tender age of eight years, he made the pilgrimage to Mecca with his father. Upon his return, he studied a number of Islamic subjects with various *kyais*, including Rd. H. Yahya, Kyai Abdul Halim, Kyai Muhammad, and Kyai Abdul Kahar.⁵⁸ When he was seventeen years old, his father sent him to Mecca to study. After ten years in the holy land, he returned and studied Sufism under his grandfather, Ajengan Cibunut. He also studied with his uncle, Muhammad Irja'i, who had just returned from Madura after studying Islam with the local Kyai Khalil.⁵⁹ From 1874 to 1882 he returned to Mecca to study with Syaikh Hasbullah and Syaikh Abdul Hamid Dagastani, as well as with Syaikh Muhammad, Syaikh Umar Sani, Syaikh Mustomal Apipi, Sayid Bakri and Sayid Abdullah Janawi. He claimed to have mastered sixteen religious sciences.⁶⁰ Upon his return, his prominence saw him becoming

⁵⁸ This short biography of Haji Hasan Moestapa rests on Tini Kartini and Ningrum Djulaeha (eds.), *Biografi dan Karya Pujangga Haji Hasan Mustafa* (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1985), p. 13. For a discussion of recent publications on Haji Hasan Mustafa's work see Millie 2014.

⁵⁹ Ajip Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda* (Bandung: Kiblat, 2009), p. 149.

⁶⁰ In 1882, Raden Haji Moehammad Moesa, the chief Penghulu of Garut, asked Haji Hasan Moestapa to return home to address tensions between the *ulama* in Garut. He played the role of mediator very well and became the most important

acquainted with Dutch orientalist like K.F. Holle. J.L.A. Brandes, Ph.S. van Ronkel, G.A.J. Hazeu, and D.A. Rinkes later in his life. In 1889, Snouck Hurgronje asked Hasan Moestapa to accompany him on his travels around Java and Madura.⁶¹ In 1893, upon Snouck Hurgronje's request, Hasan Moestapa was appointed Chief Penghulu in Kutaraja, Aceh (1893-95),⁶² where he arrived on 22 February. Snouck Hurgronje praised Hasan Moestapa's abilities in a letter to the Governor-General on 22 May 1894, stating: "It is obvious that he could easily develop relations with the Acehnese and has a grasp of the local situation."⁶³

After having served the Dutch colonial government in Kutaraja for two years, Haji Hasan Moestapa was promoted to Chief Penghulu in Bandung (1895-1917). During his time in Bandung, he contributed much to the synthesis between Islam and Sundanese *adat* and language. He proselytised in Sundanese in a way that blended Islam with local values.⁶⁴ His understanding of Islam, coupled with an amazing mastery of the Arabic language, enabled him to translate and paraphrase Arabic in Sundanese in such a way that the Sundanese were able to understand it without too much trouble. In doing so, Hasan Moestapa made Arabic consonants sound familiar to the ears and minds of his Sundanese audience.⁶⁵ This, his greatest contribution, rendered Islam more familiar to the Sundanese, and was extraordinarily useful in maintaining the harmonious Islam-Sunda synthesis. His unique expertise and leadership has attracted much scholarship.⁶⁶

ulama serving his people day and night, based in the Garut Grand Mosque, for seven years. See Kartini and Djulaeha (eds.), pp. 16-17. See also Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 149.

⁶¹ Jajang Jahroni, 'The Life and Mystical Thought of Haji Hasan Mustafa (1852-1930)', MA thesis, Leiden University, 1999, p. 24.

⁶² Kartini and Djulaeha (eds.), *Biografi dan Karya Pujangga*, p. 17.

⁶³ Jahroni, 'The Life and Mystical Thought', p. 25. See also P.Sj. van Koningsveld, 'Nasehat-Nasehat Snouck Hurgronje sebagai Sumber Sejarah Zaman Penjajahan', in E. Gobee and C. Adriaanse (eds.), *Nasihat-Nasihat C. Snouck Hurgronje Semasa Kepegawaiannya Kepada Pemerintah Hindia Belanda 1889 - 1936* volume I (Jakarta: Seri Khusus INIS, 1990), pp. XIII-LXXV.

⁶⁴ Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 153.

⁶⁵ Interview, Hawe Setiawan, Bandung, 18 April 2009.

⁶⁶ Haji Hasan Moestapa authored a great number of works on various themes, spanning Sundanese literature, Islam and society. His best-known monograph is about *adat* and entitled *Adat-adat Urang Priangan jeung Sunda lianna ti eta*

Haji Hasan Moestapa's intellectual enterprise sought to maintain *adat* central to 'Sundanese-ness.' For him, Islam should be understood and observed within the framework of *adat*. He argued that Islamic movements which ignored *adat* could never be sustained.⁶⁷ His efforts to synthesise Sundanese *adat* and Islam were incomparable. A leading expert on Sundanese literature and culture, Ajip Rosidi, acknowledged Moestapa's contribution. In his *Manusia Sunda*, Ajip observes that Haji Hasan Moestapa was deeply concerned with making Islam compatible with local culture in a way that would not stifle the future growth of the *adat*. He cited how Haji Hasan Moestapa's work on Quranic exegesis contains only 105 verses which were interpreted and translated into the Sundanese language. For Hasan Moestapa, these verses were most relevant to the Sundanese.⁶⁸ The rest, he said, were difficult for the Sundanese to understand because they were revealed in an Arabic context alien to Sundanese culture.

Hasan Moestapa paid considerable attention to the central role *adat* played in shaping society's cultural and spiritual lives. His adoption of *adat* into religious practices meant that his 'Islamic' practices were sometimes at odds with those of the more orthodox masses. When his beloved son, Toha Firdaus, passed away in a car accident, his corpse was brought from their home to the cemetery accompanied by a *keroncong* orchestra,⁶⁹ instead of *tahlil*,⁷⁰ as traditionally-observed. This was done as a mark of respect to Toha, who had been a leading *keroncong* artist and had headed a *keroncong* orchestra ensemble.⁷¹ Due to his unusual religious practices, Moestapa was accused of having deviated from the *Ahlu al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*⁷²

(1913). It was translated into Dutch by leading Dutch expert on Native affairs, R.A. Kern, under the title *Over Gewoonten en Gebruiken der Sundaneezen door Haji Hasan Moestapa* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1946). See Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 147.

⁶⁷ Kartini and Djulaeha (eds.), *Biografi dan Karya Pujangga*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁸ Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 153.

⁶⁹ *Keroncong* is a type of Indonesian musical ensemble that typically uses a violin, flute, guitar, ukulele, banjo, cello, and a string bass with a female or male singer.' See <http://kbbi.web.id/> (accessed 5th of February 2014).

⁷⁰ *Tahlil* is the reading of *lā ilāha illa Allāhu* which means No God but Allah.

⁷¹ Kartini and Djulaeha (eds.), *Biografi dan Karya Pujangga*, pp. 12-13. Also Interview, Hawe Setiawan, Bandung, 18 April 2009.

⁷² *Ahlu al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, Muslims who follow the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad and the [consensus] of the Islamic community; long-hand term for the majority Sunni branch within Islam.

orthodoxy. The prominent mufti of Batavia, Sayyid Uthman, criticised Moestafa for his eccentric and controversial interpretations of Islam.⁷³

Hasan Moestapa's friendship with Snouck Hurgronje, as with other Dutch orientalist, influenced his intellectual and political choices. Snouck Hurgronje was active as Advisor for Native and Islamic Affairs in Indonesia (1889-1906).⁷⁴ Their strong bond is illustrated in their correspondence between 1893 and 1895. Writing to Snouck Hurgronje, Hasan Moestapa liked to sign off with "your friend in Allah" or "your faithful friend."⁷⁵ He was proud of Snouck Hurgronje and called him "my brilliant friend forever, who knows everything."⁷⁶ In one of his books, his *Aji Wiwitan Istilah*, Hasan Moestapa denied that this friendship stemmed from his allegiance to him or to the Dutch colonial government. Rather, he said, "I am a descendant of *ulama* loved by the Dutch..... all of them love me not because of my expertise, but because I am concerned and patient."⁷⁷

The Dutch Government deeply trusted Hasan Moestapa because of his loyalty to his Dutch friends. Snouck Hurgronje's own theories had probably influenced Hasan Moestapa's devotion to the *adat* and was unhappy with Sarekat Islam's negative views about the *adat*. This inspired him to warn the movement, in its Congress in Bandung from 17 to 24 June 1916, to forget its purification mission as this could jeopardise the *adat*'s precedence and confuse the community.⁷⁸ He maintained that a social movement which overlooked *adat* and did not care for commoners would certainly disintegrate.⁷⁹

⁷³ Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 151.

⁷⁴ Aqib Suminto, *Politik Islam Hindia Belanda* (Jakarta: LP3ES, third edition, 1996), p. 115.

⁷⁵ Jahroni, 'The Life and Mystical Thought', p. 26.

⁷⁶ *Idem*, pp. 26-27.

⁷⁷ Kartini and Djulaeha (eds.), *Biografi dan Karya Pujangga*, pp. 44-45. In the *Aji Wiwitan Istilah*, R.A.A. Moeharam Wiranatakoesoema expressed his recognition of the book's originality, claiming that the book was authored by Hasan Moestapa. This also attests to the close relation between them.

⁷⁸ Kartini and Djulaeha (eds.), *Biografi dan Karya Pujangga*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁹ *Idem*, pp. 3 and 12-13. See also Jahroni, 'The Life and Mystical Thought', pp. 49-51. Haji Hasan Moestapa had been one of the greatest and most knowledgeable Muslim scholars who had spent much of his time studying Islam and serving the *ummat*. In the fields of Islamic studies and Sundanese literature his works are invaluable. Garut and Bandung are two regions where he spent much of his life. In respect of his contribution, generations after him paid tribute to him. In

These warm ties, however, were challenged and some notables, among them Sayyid Uthman, considered them a treacherous conspiracy against Islam.⁸⁰ The Modernist Sarekat Islam (SI) and PERSIS were also known to be critical of Hasan Moestapa. H.O.S. Tjokroaminoto opposed the acculturation agenda Hasan Moestapa pushed. Tjokroaminoto thought that Islam promoted ethical and spiritual foundations and he stated:

Our culture is based on a religion whose strong ethical and spiritual foundations (especially *Tauhid*) best fulfil human needs, in a way that best agrees with reason. The Islamic faith on which our culture is based possesses a Book revealed by God, a perfect ethical guide unrivalled by any other book seen or possessed by man.⁸¹

This quote was also intended as an attack against the Nationalist movement, which claimed to promote 'authentic' Indonesian culture. For Tjokroaminoto, the Nationalists sought to revive Hindu culture. While this was true to some extent, his critique was insufficiently discriminating and to some extent also implicated local culture, which Muslim communities had in fact generally accepted. It was ironic that he adopted such a stance given the fact that he was a descent of a *priyayi* family whose cultural life was mostly rooted in syncretic traditions.⁸²

Hasan Moestapa accused Tjokroaminoto and his SI of trying to articulate the puritanical Wahhabi orientation and hence he cautioned SI leaders that their movement might alienate their own support-base if it

1965, for example, the Governor of West Java presented Hasan Moestapa with an award in recognition of his achievements. Soeharto's New Order government awarded him the esteemed cultural title of national Sundanese poet.

⁸⁰ Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narration of a Sufi Past* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 168-169.

⁸¹ Tjokroaminoto, *Pembela Islam*, (P.I), No. 59, pp. 11, n.d. The original version of this quote is as follows: "*Cultuur kita berdasar atas soeatoe agama yang paling koeat dasar boedi dan kebatinannja (teristimewa sekali Tauhid) jang paling sempoerna memenoehi keperloean dan keboetoehan manoesia, dan paling setoejoe dengan akal. Agama Islam jang mendjadi dasarnja cultuur kita adalah mempoenjai Kitab jang diwahjoekan oleh Toehan, jang paling sempoerna mendjadi pedoman boedi pekerti sehingga tak ada bandingannja di antara segala kitab jang pernah dilihat dan diempenjai oleh manoesia.*"

⁸² Budi Setyarso and Redaksi KPG, *Tjokroaminoto Guru Pendiri Bangsa* (Jakarta: KPG [Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia], 2011), p. 28.

maintained its uncompromising attitude. It was ironic too that SI adopted such a stance, given that their own constituency comprised mostly of the rural peasantry whose *adat* and culture were inspired by ‘animistic’ and Hindu traditions. In the following years, however, the SI, later known as PSII (Partai Sarekat Islam Indonesia/Indonesian Islamic Sarekat Party), changed its attitude as it realised that *adat* practices remained common among SI members. In the end this provoked criticism from PERSIS leaders, who accused the SI of perpetuating *bid’a* (innovation not based on the Quran or *Sunnah*), and of betraying its own principles.⁸³

Despite PERSIS’ early bitter opposition, its attitude to *adat* was ambivalent. In the late 1960s, for example, PERSIS leader, Endang Saefuddin Anshari, astonished many Sundanese leaders by stressing the need to defend the Islam-Sunda synthesis since, for him, “Islam *teh* Sunda, Sunda *teh* Islam” (Islam is Sunda, Sunda is Islam).⁸⁴ While this synthesis revealed the intimate association between Islam and Sunda, many saw this as the outcome of mixing Islamic practices and Sundanese *adat* which is strongly animistic or Hindu.⁸⁵ The proponents of the Islam-Sunda synthesis strived to develop a cultural and religious justification to sustain the inter-relation between the two. Probably because of this nexus, Karel Steenbrink observed that among the Sundanese the differences between *santri* and *abangan* are not so obvious.⁸⁶ While the latent tension between Islam and *adat* remained, the Modernists and Traditionalists continued to push Islamisation through different approaches.⁸⁷ The Traditionalists sought to maintain tradition, while the Modernists promoted education and social services.

Menak and Islam

From the nineteenth until the first quarter of the twentieth century, Islam became increasingly rooted in Sundanese society and had become the

⁸³ A.M., ‘Bid’ah Dengan Pergerakan’, in *Pembela Islam*, No. 61, n.d. pp. 3-5.

⁸⁴ Interview, Hawe Setiawan, Bandung, 18 April 2009.

⁸⁵ Lubis (et al.), *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam*, pp. vi-vii.

⁸⁶ Karel Steenbrink, ‘A Catholic Sadrach: The Contested Conversion of Madrais Adherents in West-Java Between 1960-2000’, in Chr. G.F. de Jong (ed.), *Een vakkraacht in het Koninkrijk. Kerk- en zendings historische opstellen aangeboden aan dr. Th. van den End ter gelegenheid van zijn vijfenzestigste verjaardag*. Heerenveen: Groen, 2005, p. 288.

⁸⁷ Interview, Azyumardi Azra, Singapore, 23 May 2011.

religion of the Sundanese aristocrats, the *menak*, as well as that of the commoners.⁸⁸ Most members of the *menak* observed Islamic worship such as the daily prayers but they also mostly performed the *hajj* to the *Ka'bah* for which many travelled to Mecca. The Sundanese elite sent its children to *pesantren* (Islamic schools). It also celebrated festivals such as *Idul fitri* and its members donned Arab-style dress during official public ceremonies.⁸⁹

In 1924, the Regent of Bandung, R.A.A. Moeharam Wiranatakoesoema,⁹⁰ made the pilgrimage to Mecca.⁹¹ A leading expert on Indonesian Islam, Azyumardi Azra, observed that on the ship taking him to Mecca, Wiranatakoesoema noted a great diversity of ordinary men and women, young and old, who enthusiastically expressed their impatience to get to Mecca. He wondered what motivated these people to leave their relatives and to risk their lives to embark on such a costly and exhausting journey. In Mecca, he saw thousands of Muslims from around the world who were still living under colonial rule, congregating in a desert valley for the sake of their God.⁹² Wiranatakoesoema met the Governor of the Hijaz, Hidayat Sharif. In recognition of his reputation as a Muslim leader, Sharif presented him the Istiqlal Star, an honorary award usually reserved for distinguished guests.⁹³

However, Wiranatakoesoema did not seem to have found his *hajj* experience as entirely uplifting. Contrarily, in most respects, he experienced awful things during his pilgrimage trip. As observed by Ricklefs, Wiranatakoesoema criticised “the exploitation and extortion of the pilgrims by local Arabs, of the threat of highwaymen and murderers and, when the *hajis* reached Mecca, of finding there, the Islam’s holiest place, ‘people who unscrupulously sin against the holy prescriptions’.”⁹⁴ But, in spite of those awful experiences, Wiranatakoesoema found the *hajj*

⁸⁸ Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak*, p. 253.

⁹⁰ Moeharam Wiranatakoesoema served as the Regent of Cianjur from 1912 to 1920 and was subsequently promoted as Regent of Bandung from 1920 to 1931 and again from 1935 to 1942.

⁹¹ Upon his return, Wiranatakoesoema wrote down his travel experience in a book entitled *Mijn reis naar Mecca*. Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak*, p. 253. Also Interview, Mira Richard Gnagey, Bandung, 16 April 2009.

⁹² Interview, Azyumardi Azra, Singapore, 23 May 2011.

⁹³ Interview, Mira Richard Gnagey, Bandung, 16 April 2009.

⁹⁴ Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society*, pp. 219-220.

experience moving, especially it what he viewed as 'Islam's universal reach.'⁹⁵

Upon his return, Wiranatakoesoema was called Kangjeng Haji or Dalem Haji. His attention and devotion to Islam also increased.⁹⁶ Some of his relatives described him as a Muslim who was inclined always to observe his Islamic obligations including praying, *zakat*, fasting in the month of *Ramadan*, giving alms and undertaking the *haji*.⁹⁷ As noted by the expert on the history of West Java, Nina H. Lubis, the Regent Wiranatakoesoema supported the construction of Bandung's grand mosque (*masjid agung*) even though his Dutch superior, Assistant Resident Hillen, disapproved it.⁹⁸ Wiranatakoesoema was strongly attached to Islam, an attachment which he expressed in the public sphere. He, for example, liked to sing Quranic verses in *kidung* form.⁹⁹ He was known for his habit of opening his public speeches by singing a *kidung fatihah*.¹⁰⁰

Kangjeng Haji's articulation of Islam in the Sundanese language and by using traditional poetry (*tembang*) was impressive as well as rare. By singing the *kidung fatihah*, which is *bid'a* in the eyes of many puritan Modernists, Kangjeng Haji sought to express Quranic meanings through a cultural form familiar to the Sundanese. Though it seems unpretentious, the singing of *al-fatihah* during his official speeches expressed Kangjeng Haji's endeavour to lend a sense of 'Sundaneness' to the articulation of the Quran's opening chapter. Such an original and native articulation of religion was a serious experiment at the time. The expert of Sundanese literature and culture, Hawe Setiawan, maintained that it was one of the few genuine attempts to make Islam Sundanese.¹⁰¹

Aria Suriaatmaja is another Sundanese *menak* who was a practising Muslim.¹⁰² Nina Lubis observes that, serving as Regent of the Priangan, he was known as the 'Prince of Mecca'. His people believed that he was

⁹⁵ *Idem*, p. 220.

⁹⁶ Rosidi and Ekadjati (eds.), *Ensiklopedi Sunda: Alam, Manusia, dan Budaya termasuk Budaya Cirebon dan Betawi* (Bandung: Pustaka Jaya, 2000), pp. 702-703. See also Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak*, p. 254.

⁹⁷ Interview, Mira Richard Gnagey, Bandung, 16 April 2009.

⁹⁸ Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak*, p. 253.

⁹⁹ *Kidung* is a form of traditional Javanese poetry.

¹⁰⁰ Rosidi and Ekadjati (eds.), *Ensiklopedi Sunda*, p. 703.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Hawe Setiawan, Bandung, 18 April 2009.

¹⁰² The following account rests upon Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak*, pp. 255-257.

endowed with *keramat* (sanctity) much like a saint. He was trusted and well-respected by the people in general as well as by his subordinates who used to rush to visit him during *Idul fitri*, in the hope of receiving blessings through him. Lubis explains that Raden Haji Muhammad Musa was yet another *menak* who paid attention to Islam, especially to the *shari'ah* and he warned the Regent of Lebak to maintain observing his daily prayers in order to remain a true and proper Regent. Another Regent of Bandung, R.A.A. Martanagara, liked to visit *pesantrens*. Meanwhile, the Regent of Tasikmalaya established good relationships with *kyais* and thereby allowing himself to be a patron of the *Al-Imtisal* magazine Martanagara and the *kyais* published together.¹⁰³

The widespread interest in Islam encouraged the *menak* to sustain good relationships with Muslim leaders such as the *ulama* and the *penghulu*, which no doubt strengthened their socio-cultural position. From a political perspective, such relationships were also useful in maintaining stability, especially since the *menak* were in fact Dutch government officials. Wiranatakoesoema, for example, was a close friend of Haji Hasan Moestapa, the *Hoofdpenghulu* of Bandung and both entertained warm relations with the Dutch Advisor on Native and Arabic Affairs, C. Snouck Hurgronje. They were also devoted promoters of the Islam-Sunda synthesis.¹⁰⁴ These acquaintances played an extraordinary role in the cultural and socio-political aspects of their society, especially between the 1890s to the 1920s.

Penghayat and Native-Syncretic Creeds

The Sundanese people constituted a remarkable diversity of believers. Besides Muslims who display a notable diversity of religious observances and interpretations, some Sundanese have a rich religious vision that includes the belief in one or another native-syncretic creed, which promotes values and practices different from any world religion. The native-syncretic creeds and practices are variously termed 'indigenous syncretism', and 'peasant religious syncretism'.¹⁰⁵ The particular syncretism to be addressed below may be designated as *Aliran Kebatinan*,

¹⁰³ Lubis, *Kehidupan Kaum Menak*, p. 257.

¹⁰⁴ Rosidi, *Manusia Sunda*, p. 144.

¹⁰⁵ Geertz, 'Ritual and Social Change', p. 39.

which originates from the Javanese *weltanschauung* postulating “the essential unity of all Existence.”¹⁰⁶ The leading expert on Javanese religion, Niels Mulder, calls it ‘Javanism’¹⁰⁷ and argues that this worldview is “more encompassing than religion and it views human existence within its cosmological context, making life itself a religious experience.”¹⁰⁸ This worldview sees life as a unity between all forms of existence and thus denies the “separation between religious and non-religious elements.”¹⁰⁹ In West Java, *Aliran Kebatinan* followers are called *Penghayat*, some sort of Sundanese *abangan*, to borrow part of Clifford Geertz’s typology of the Javanese society.¹¹⁰

In what follows I will discuss the contribution of two Sundanese *Penghayat* leaders who were most outspoken in inspiring the religious way of life and the religious outlook of the Sundanese. The first is Kyai Madrais (the popular designation of Kyai Muhammad Rais), from Cigugur, Kuningan, West Java. The second is Mei Kartawinata from Cimerta, Subang, West Java. Both argued for the significance of self-identity and authenticity over Islam. Kyai Madrais is the founder and was the leader of Agama Djawa Sunda (ADS) or Madraism while Mei Kartawinata led the establishment and promulgation of Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan (AKP), especially across West Java. Even under intensified Islamisation, both leaders remained unwilling to accept Islam and remained loyal to what they claimed was an authentic Sundanese syncretic creed, which they deemed superior to Islam and other religions.

Kyai Madrais and the Significance of Self: Agama Djawa Soenda (ADS)

Kiai Madrais Sadewa Alibassa Kusumah Wijaya Ningrat (1835-1939) was born to Raden Kestawil and Pangeran Alibassa Kusumawijayaningrat, known as Pangeran Surya Nata. Pangeran Alibassa was the son of Pangeran Sutawijaya, who was dismissed as *pangeran* of Gebang on the Dutch charge

¹⁰⁶ Mulder, ‘Aliran Kebatinan as an Expression of Javanese Worldview’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 2 (Sept., 1970), p. 105.

¹⁰⁷ Although one might argue that ‘Javanism’ would seem to point to the Javanese part of the population of Java, the Sundanese adhered to much the same kind of religious outlook. Therefore the term will be used also furtheron in the book.

¹⁰⁸ Mulder, ‘Aliran Kebatinan’, p. 105.

¹⁰⁹ *Idem*.

¹¹⁰ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960).

that he exploited his subjects.¹¹¹ As a consequence, his territories were confiscated and divided between the Residencies of Cirebon and Priangan. This had severe consequences for Pangeran Alibassa, who was marginalised and forced to live in Gebang Udik. Alibassa died in this rural area before Madrais was born and the orphan was brought up by Ki Sastrawardana, who was asked to accept the baby as his son.¹¹²

Madrais was trained in *pesantrens* in Cirebon and neighbouring areas, such as Leuweungbata, Brebes, Ciawigebang led by Kyai Ishak, Heubeul Isuk and Ciwedus.¹¹³ Various well-known Muslim leaders of his generation had graduated from these *pesantrens*. They include the founder of Persatuan Umat Islam (Islamic Community Union, PUI), K.H. Abdul Halim, Haji Muhammad Thohir, who was Madrais' bitter opponent, and a mystic progenitor, Sastrosudibyo.¹¹⁴ Because mysticism was widely practiced at that time, this tradition had very much attracted Madrais' attention.¹¹⁵ When he was fifteen years old, he claimed to have received a *wangsit* (divine/spiritual inspiration).¹¹⁶ Not long after, he began to promulgate doctrines that are largely unheard of in popular authoritative Islamic texts. Alexander Matheus Basuki Nursena Ningrat, one of Madrais' loyal followers who married Madrais' granddaughter, said that the number of Madrais' following increased rapidly in the late nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ In 1925, the Dutch administration officially recognised the movement they named ADS (Agama Djawa Soenda, Sundanese-Javanese Religion).¹¹⁸

The fundamental doctrine of Madraism is a call to the awareness of what is conceptualised as 'self', which obliges man to reflect on his origin and identity. Fundamental to the Madrais community is the question 'who' the 'self' is, in other words, humanism is central to Madrais' spiritual teachings.¹¹⁹ In addition to the importance of the 'self' as involving

¹¹¹ Didin Nurul Rosidin, *Kebatinan, Islam and the State: The Dissolution of Madrais in 1964*, M.A Thesis, Leiden University, 2000, p. 36.

¹¹² Rosidin, *Kebatinan, Islam and the State*, p. 37.

¹¹³ *Idem*, p. 38.

¹¹⁴ *Idem*.

¹¹⁵ Interview, Ira Indrawardana, young leader of Madraism, Bandung, 14 August 2009.

¹¹⁶ Steenbrink, 'A Catholic Sadrach', p. 290.

¹¹⁷ Interview, Ira Indrawardana, Bandung, 14 August 2009.

¹¹⁸ *Idem*, p. 292.

¹¹⁹ *Idem*.

spirituality and identity, Madraism puts much emphasis on the concept of 'land.'¹²⁰ Land may be interpreted as one's home country, culture or norms or even ancestral wisdom. Ira Indrawardana understands the creed of the ADS as meaning to "choose and select life's spirit and pay respect to the place of gathering (*tanah pakumpulan*) and to reach the ultimate human spirit."¹²¹ Based on this, the followers of Madraism are obliged to love and respect their homeland, which is a strong element of their identity, in order to achieve the ultimate perfection as human beings.¹²² The proper combination of respect for self and land constitute the fundamentals through which ultimately human perfection can be achieved in this world.

Madraism's notion of the importance of 'self' was the most salient factor in inspiring the philosophy of the movement. Madraism entails "the obligation to achieve the ultimate perfection of the self rather than drowning in the theological debates that occurred in many Indonesian 'formalised' religions such as Islam and Christianity."¹²³ Didin Nurul Rosidin observes:

The ultimate perfection of human beings is seen as the ultimate goal of human life in this world, though such quality of life will only be met at the time when man dies and returns back to the origin, that is God, who had caused his existence in this crowded life. All doctrines of Madraism seem to be devoted towards guiding its members or other interested people to reach the ultimate goal of life, *sampurnaning hirup, sajaning pati* (to achieve perfection in life, then to attain the genuine death).¹²⁴

From the doctrinal perspective, Madraism resembles the *Aliran Kebatinan* movement, which is similarly rooted in Javanism. *Aliran Kebatinan* maintains the harmonious unity of all beings.¹²⁵ Its worldview projects a harmonious balance between human beings, religious doctrine, and the universe/nature. Madraism sanctifies the value of human life as integrated in the universe. Humanity and the universe coexist in a cosmology which demands that humans respect and protect the earth and

¹²⁰ *Idem.*

¹²¹ *Idem.*

¹²² *Idem.*

¹²³ Rosidin, *Kebatinan, Islam and the State*, p. 61.

¹²⁴ *Idem.*

¹²⁵ Mulder, 'Aliran Kebatinan', p. 105.

each other. These elements cannot destroy one another.¹²⁶ The confluence in this movement of nativism, spiritualism and local identity put it in a diametrically opposed position to Muslim Modernism which sought to assert the superiority of Islam over all other worldviews unless they could be reconciled with Islam's fundamental doctrines.

Notwithstanding its Sundanese essence, Madraism seems to have been influenced by Islamic doctrine. This is exemplified by the *pikukuh tilu* (three principles). These are *ngaji badan* (literally means 'reading the body'), *mituhu kana tanah* (literally denotes belief in one's land), and *ngandep* or *ngiblating ka ratu raja* (faithful to king/queen).¹²⁷ The first principle refers to its specific and cosmic conception of 'self' called '*ngaji badan*'. Steenbrink traced the origins of this principle back to Islamic mystical teachings. He claims that this doctrine "must be understood in the context of the famous mystic *hadith qudsi*: *man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu* (whomsoever knows himself, knows his Lord).¹²⁸ As God's creation, the body is believed to contain symbolic messages that are decipherable on contemplation.¹²⁹

Together with this cosmic understanding of the human body, Madraism believes in the one and only God, *Ka Gusti Sikang Sawiji Wiji*¹³⁰ where the spirits of God and human beings unite (*manunggal*).¹³¹ Like energy, God is omnipresent. Madrais also believed in God's unicity, commonly declared as *laysa kamithlihi shai'un* (there is nothing comparable to Him), an Islamic precept adopted by the ADS community.¹³² Because God is the absolute One and without equivalent, Madrais decided that differences between religions are superficial. This being so he realised that this superficiality did not really exclude the possibility that all religions might arrive at a common ground and at mutual recognition. Nonetheless,

¹²⁶ Interview, Ira Indrawardana, Bandung, 14 August 2009.

¹²⁷ *Pemaparan Singkat Jejak Sejarah Komunitas ADS (Agama Djawa Sunda) ke Komunitas AKUR (Adat Karuhun Urang) di Cigugur Kuningan Jawa Barat* (Kuningan: Masyarakat Adat Karuhun Urang Sunda, 2008), p. 7.

¹²⁸ Steenbrink, 'A Catholic Sadrach', p. 292.

¹²⁹ Rosidin, *Kebatinan, Islam and the State*, p. 61.

¹³⁰ 'Custom of Sundanese Ancestors: Explanation of Spiritual Culture' (Cigugur-Kuningan: National Foundation Study of Indonesian Culture, 2000), p. 9.

¹³¹ Interview, Pangeran Jatikusuma (Chairman of Paguyuban Adat Cara Karuhun Urang, Adat Association for Ancestors' PACKU), Cigugur, Kuningan, 5 August 2009.

¹³² *Idem*.

religion should not become a barrier in human beings' efforts in creating what Jatikusuma called "one understanding" namely that all of them are the community (*ummat*) of God, the One and Only.¹³³ Jatikusuma argued that this shared understanding should evolve into becoming "one belief" which should then serve as the foundation for the various communities of believers to unite upon.

Aside from Madrais' mystical dimensions, it also had nationalist inclinations as *mituhu kana tanah*.¹³⁴ *Mituhu kana tanah* had two connotations with regards to *tanah* (land); the first is *tanah amparan* which means home land, and the second, *tanah adegan*, which means land as the location in which the human psyche and man's ego or self are manifested.¹³⁵ *Mituhu kana tanah* is described as follows:

A human being, as a part of a nation or community, must value and love his nation. Therefore he must be able to maintain, observe and perpetuate his nation's identity/attributes. Man must respect and value other nations. The existence of different national identities constitutes the will of God.¹³⁶

These beliefs came together in a loosely-created and rather vague construct of mysticism and identity. This vagueness has remained due to the fact that no religious text was ever produced and transmitted across generations. Most of the Madrais' discourse has been transmitted in the form of oral traditions vulnerable to varying interpretations.

As a consequence of ADS's commitment to its own culture and nation, like other native-syncretic movements, it saw Islam as an opponent that endangered its existence. The ADS was critical of Islam not on doctrinal grounds, but because it saw Islam as imported culture. ADS leaders denounced Islam's medium of the Arabic language and argued that Islam is the religion of the Arabs. Over time, their hostility towards Islam appeared to have increased. Sartono Kartodirdjo observes that Madrais had tried to spread the ADS for some forty years before his native-syncretic movement achieved official recognition in 1925. It was clear that Madrais was adamant to propagate this movement as he engaged many envoys (*badals*)

¹³³ *Idem*.

¹³⁴ Rosidin, *Kebatinan, Islam and the State*, p. 61.

¹³⁵ *Pemaparan Singkat Jejak Sejarah Komunitas ADS (Agama Djawa Sunda)*, p. 8.

¹³⁶ *Idem*.

to assist him in spreading his movement across the region. The major targets of propagation were people in rural areas and those in the mountains and hills. Sartono was astonished to learn that Madrais' manifesto did not seem to be "messianic in character" although it was not free from "expressed millenarian expectations."¹³⁷ Nevertheless, he argues, this characteristic was largely articulated in terms of "a rather extreme nativism."¹³⁸ Sartono observes:

An apparently conscious effort was made to revive selected elements of Javanese and Sundanese culture. Much emphasis was put on one's duty to the fatherland. Ancient native magical and animistic rituals were re-introduced in the celebration of feasts or in religious performances. The movement even went so far as to argue that Islam was the religion of the Arabs and was not intended for the Javanese.¹³⁹

The argument that Islam was the religion of the Arabs and thus not intended for the Javanese and the Sundanese people was common among the followers of this native-syncretic creed. The argument about the universality of world religions, such as Islam and Christianity, was not relevant as they saw elements of locality, nativity and also ethnicity in each religion. This anti-Islam mentality gave rise to uneasy relationships with Muslims.¹⁴⁰

Although in 1922-23 the movement's reputation suffered due to the fraudulent behaviour of some of Madrais' envoys, the Dutch officially recognised the movement's statute in 1925. The statute posited that the movement was nativist in vision, with religious mission as its goal, arguing that God bestowed upon the Sundanese and Javanese people their own faith based on their own culture of origin. For our purpose, the most important point made in the statute was its declaration that the movement had abandoned Islam. As noted by Rosidin in his study, the statute was formulated by Madrais' son, Tedjabuana, his son-in-law, Raden Satria

¹³⁷ Sartono Kartodirdjo, *Protest Movements in Rural Java: A Study of Agrarian Unrest in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 128-129.

¹³⁸ *Idem*, p. 129.

¹³⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Sobana Hardjasaputra, Bandung, 15 April 2009.

Kusuma, and allegedly by a mysterious Dutchman, Mr. J.L. Jacobs.¹⁴¹ The report did not specify Madrais' role in the drafting of this statue, so his endorsement of this declaration remains in question.

As Rosidin noted, it seems that in 1922 the Dutch attempted to confront Madraism and Muslims. Rosidin said that:

In 1922, *Fazar Asia* reported that an anonymous Dutch agitator had incited an official of the Cirebon branch of the Sarekat Islam (SI) to take steps to halt the development of Madraism because of its anti-Islam proclivities. He claimed that Madraism would establish a new religion of the Galuh (Sundanese), which was not in accordance with Islam. Surprisingly, in a reply the SI official did not give any expected response to this incitement because, as the SI official stated, he had never heard this issue before. He suggested the Dutchman report this movement to the authorities, if the latter considered that Madrais had broken the law.¹⁴²

The incident described above raises questions about the involvement of the Dutch Jacobs in developing ADS's statute, especially with regards to the declaration that the movement had abandoned Islam; I suspect that there was a *divide et impera* logic at work. It is also important to be critical of the Dutch role in organising this local syncretic community and naming it 'ADS'. Ira Indrawardana, a young ADS leader, argues that Kyai Madrais never intended to turn his mystical and spiritual community into an organised religion.¹⁴³ The explicit mention of the 'abandonment' of Islam was in fact peculiar because Madrais' followers had never embraced Islam or any other world religion in the first place. So, how could they turn away from Islam? As stated above, Steenbrink suggests that certain doctrinal aspects of Madraism originated from the Islamic mystical tradition. There was thus a connection, so while Madraism and Sufism were two traditions that shared certain elements in some respects, they also had sufficient differences which potentially could lead to conflict. However, both traditions had a common enemy in the Modernism (at the time called Wahhabism) which came up in the 1920s.

¹⁴¹ Rosidin, *Kebatinan, Islam and the State*, pp. 43-46. I have been unable to identify who this Mr. Jacobs is. Accidentally, Rosidin also failed to do so.

¹⁴² *Idem*, p. 47. See also *Fazar Asia*, Tuesday, 14-8, 1922, p. 2, as quoted by Rosidin.

¹⁴³ Interview, Ira Indrawardana, Bandung, 14 August 2009.

Mei Kartawinata and His Doctrine: Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan (AKP)

Mei Kartawinata was born in Kebon Jati, Bandung on 1 May 1897 to Raden Kartowidjojo and Raden Siti Mariah from Citereup, Bogor. He grew up in the Kanoman Palace of the Sultan of Cirebon.¹⁴⁴ His father, Kartowidjojo, is said to be descended from King Brawijaya of the East Javanese kingdom Majapahit. His mother is a daughter of Pangeran Sageri, the grandson of Panembahan Rakean Sake who is claimed to be descended from the Pajajaran Kingdom of Bogor. Thus, Mei Kartawinata is heir to two prominent kingdoms: East-Javanese Majapahit and Sundanese Pajajaran.¹⁴⁵ Unlike other members of the *kaum menak* who attended traditional Islamic schools, Mei did not. On the contrary, he went to the private Hollandsch Indische Zending School and took various courses to become a junior-level officer.¹⁴⁶ Because of this education, Mei was familiar with the fundamentals of Christian theology and acquainted with Dutch values.¹⁴⁷

In 1914, after having finished his formal training he sought a job and was hired by a printing company in Bandung. By 1922, he had joined the Indische Drukkerij Bond (IDB) labour union. It was probably during this time that Mei became involved in the Nationalist Movement that was flourishing in the region, in which Soekarno played a leading role. In 1925, when he was 28, Mei married Sukinah in Cirebon who was the daughter of Perwatadisastra from Kuningan, Cirebon. Upon his marriage he worked at a British-owned printing house in Atelir, Subang.¹⁴⁸

On 17 September 1927, Mei claimed that he had received a *wangsit* (divine guidance) while at the bank of the Celeuleuy River in Cimerta, Subang, West Java in the company of his best friends, M. Rashid and Sumitra.¹⁴⁹ The *wangsit* contained ten messages which came to constitute the fundamental doctrine of the AKP. They are: (1 and 2) commands to stand upright and never to let anybody affront you since that would also

¹⁴⁴ Abdul Rozak has made a very interesting study of this nativist current. See Abdul Rozak, *Teologi Kebatinan Sunda: Kajian Antropologi Agama tentang Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan* (Bandung: Kiblat Buku Utama, 2005), p. 123.

¹⁴⁵ Interview, Asep Setia, Bandung, 08 June 2008.

¹⁴⁶ *Pangeling-ngeling Ajaran Mei Kartawinata* (Bandung: 2007).

¹⁴⁷ Abd. Mutholib Ilyas and Abd. Ghofur Imam, *Aliran Kepercayaan & Kebatinan di Indonesia* (Surabaya: CV. Amin Surabaya, 1988), p. 68.

¹⁴⁸ *Pangeling-ngeling Ajaran Mei Kartawinata*.

¹⁴⁹ *Budaya Spiritual Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan* (Bandung: DMP AKP, 2005), p. 1. See also Abdul Rozak, *Teologi Kebatinan Sunda*, p. 119.

mean disrespect toward your parents and your nation's ancestors; (3) there is no power superior to the power of God, the most beneficent and compassionate, and this recognition must be reflected in one's personal attitude; (4) to take pride in one's self as each individual's perfection is a divine gift; (5) to recognise God's omnipresence; (6) that momentous change in the status quo will come, which in the end will bring freedom to the nation; (7) that abuse of knowledge and power for the fulfilment of one's own *hawa nafsu* (desires) will result in resentment, resistance and retaliation. Conversely, putting them to use for those in need will bring affection and induce a sense of brotherhood; (8) to love one's fellow beings regardless of appearances; (9) that one's achievements depend on one's efforts; (10) to rise for the good of the oppressed Indonesian people.¹⁵⁰

These 'Ten Commandments' provided Mei with the doctrinal system which earlier was lacking and which cohered around three main themes: divinity, humanity and patriotic fraternity.¹⁵¹ *First*, God is the most powerful, beneficent, compassionate and present; divine compassion must illuminate one's attitude. *Second*, help those in need and love all mankind regardless of racial and social background. *Third*, protect one's dignity, help those under oppression and be part of future efforts to challenge it.¹⁵²

The way Mei's doctrines developed owes much to his society's natural and cultural circumstances. His humanism, for example, was inspired by the natural environment at the Cileuleuy riverside. Mei once sat at the riverside and reflected on the origin of the water and the benefit it provides to creation. He stated that "the river actually starts with some drops of mountain water which swells to create an enormous volume of water flowing down to the ocean."¹⁵³ He maintained that the water of the river should have run out before it could reach the ocean. This was, however, not the case. He wondered how this could happen. After some time, he speculated that the water volume must have increased due to the advantage it dispersed to creation. He came to the conclusion that the water kept flowing because of its generosity to those in need. Mei Kartawinata then said by himself, "If the river water can benefit others,

¹⁵⁰ Details of the contents of the *Wangsit* can be found in *Idem*, pp. 2-5.

¹⁵¹ *Pangeling-ngeling Ajaran Mei Kartawinata*.

¹⁵² *Budaya Spiritual Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan*, pp. 2-5.

¹⁵³ Interview, Andre Hernandi and Engkus Ruswana, Bandung, 7 July 2010 and 27 July 2010.

what about myself, a creature of God's, endowed with sound body and mind?" Upon his personal reflection, Mei disseminated his thoughts to the people. At that time he was convinced that abiding to the *wangsit's* messages of divinity, humanity and patriotic fraternity would bring back the nation's past glory, wisdom and noble character.¹⁵⁴

In 1930, Mei lived in Ciateul Street in Bandung where he had the opportunity to share his thoughts with Soekarno, Indonesia's founding father.¹⁵⁵ Mei's encounter with Soekarno was probably made possible through his political activism. The IDB, which he served, struggled to obtain equal rights for the indigenous people. Mei's reputation as a pro-nationalist meant he was very much under surveillance by the Dutch Colonial Administration.¹⁵⁶ Because of his political activities, he was arrested several times by the Dutch as well as by the Japanese occupation forces. He was first arrested in 1937 in Bandung. In 1943, the Japanese occupation forces arrested him because of his political activism. He was detained yet again in Cirebon in 1947 and once more arrested and jailed in Glodok, Jakarta, two years later.¹⁵⁷

Mei believed that the *wangsit* contained values that were compatible with the nation's cultural heritage and which might revive that heritage through political activism. He demonstrated his commitment to reinventing these values and to implement them into Sundanese society through his political activities. Mei's involvement in the Nationalist movement was probably linked to and influenced by his native-syncretic thoughts.

Like Kyai Madrais from Cigugur, Kuningan, Mei Kartawinata of Cimerta, Subang held nativist-mystical thoughts which cohered around the notion of the authentic Sundanese self. They soon resonated with the

¹⁵⁴ *Pangeling-ngeling Ajaran Mei Kartawinata*.

¹⁵⁵ Arriving in Bandung in June 1921 to study at Bandung's *Technische Hoge School*, now Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Soekarno soon married his landlady, Inggit Garnasih, after having divorced Cokroaminoto's daughter, Utari. Only after two years, his youthful activism saw him gain prominence in what he himself called a nationalist movement, frontline contender against the Dutch colonial administration. The nationalist movement in Bandung might have influenced the birth and growth of other social movements, such as the one led by Mei Kartawinata. See *Soekarno an Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams* (Indianapolis - Kansas city - New York: The Bobb-Merill Company, 1965), pp. 11-68.

¹⁵⁶ Ilyas and Abd. Ghofur Imam, *Aliran Kepercayaan*, p. 69.

¹⁵⁷ *Pangeling-ngeling Ajaran Mei Kartawinata*.

nationalist discourse on sovereignty that demanded political freedom from colonial power and sought cultural supremacy and legitimacy over other religious and cultural visions. Their search for cultural supremacy and legitimacy challenged efforts to Islamise Sundanese culture. This kind of opposition to Islam shows how Islamisation and Islam as a religion were continuously contested while it confirms that a religious vision other than Islam existed and also demonstrates the confidence of various Sundanese leaders to promote and defend what they believed as the true and genuine religion of their society.

The Christian Sundanese Community

This section examines the origins and the expansion of Christianity in West Java. It analyses how Christian Sundanese leaders tried to neutralise the increasing influence of Islam through the tireless promotion of Christian missions across West Java from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. During that period, Christianisation had successfully garnered a tiny minority of the Sundanese in Cikuya, Banten; Cikembar, Sukabumi; Ciranjang, Cianjur; Pondok Melati and Kampung Sawah, Bekasi, among other localities. That success owed much to the mission's leadership, who appreciated indigenous culture and adopted a low profile approach. In particular Frederik Lodewijk Anthing (1820-83) who had made missionary work his life, made great contributions towards this end.¹⁵⁸ I selected a well-known Muslim-majority area, the Ciranjang district in Cianjur for my case study to present the history of the arrival of Christianity in the area and how the Christians established an exclusive settlement in a Muslim neighbourhood. Although the converts constituted only a tiny minority, it is important to learn how these reputedly strict Muslim people of Sundanese origin came to embrace Christianity. They claimed they descended from Raden Karadinata of the Sultanate of Cirebon, who was nota bene a Muslim with a *pesantren* background. The Christian leaders claimed that the first generation of Karadinata's descendants had migrated to Banten in the early nineteenth century and had converted to Christianity mid-century. Church leaders in Ciranjang admit that Islam is the religion of the vast majority of the Sundanese but refuse to deprive adherents of other faiths of their

¹⁵⁸ Gerald H. Anderson (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions* (Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 24-25.

‘Sundanese-ness’.¹⁵⁹ When questioned about their choice of Christianity amidst the Muslim majority, they wondered what might be wrong being Christians in Sundanese society.¹⁶⁰

Batavia was an important hub for the Christian mission in West Java as a strategic international port city. In his *Visible Cities*, Leonard Blussé argues that in the eighteenth century, along with Canton in China and Nagasaki in Japan, Batavia was one of the most important port cities in Asia. They were often written about and “fired the imaginations of sailors and writers alike because of their extraordinary appearance and exotic attractions.”¹⁶¹ As an international port, Batavia became a centre for trade, culture and socio-religious activities. From 1620 to 1844, Batavia evolved into the centre of Christian activity in Java, in addition to the Moluccas and the lesser Sunda Islands.¹⁶² Denys Lombard observed that Batavia had been a city of Christian pastors long before other Javanese port cities such as Semarang and Surabaya became attractive to them.¹⁶³ In 1714, he says, a member of the Indies Council, Cornelis Chastelein, contributed to forming a Christian community in Depok.¹⁶⁴ Particularly after the 1830s, Batavia became the central post for European missionaries before they obtained permission to carry out their missionary activities in other regions in the country.¹⁶⁵ It was in Batavia that the Zending Consulate Office was situated. From 1822 to 1842, W.H. Medhurst from England stayed in Batavia and did what he could to win the sympathy of the Batavian Chinese. He propagated Christianity through the dissemination of Christian books which were printed by a small printing house in Prapatan, South Jakarta. This endeavour was subsequently continued by Anthing.¹⁶⁶

Although the Christian mission had been present since the eighteenth century, systematic attempts at conversion in Batavia only began in the

¹⁵⁹ Interview, pastor Nupelus Marchasan, Ruchman Marchasan, and Martan Marchasan, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

¹⁶⁰ *Idem*.

¹⁶¹ Léonard Blussé, *Visible Cities: Canton, Nagasaki and Batavia and the Coming of the Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 2-3.

¹⁶² Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, pp. 218-219. See also Denys Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya, Batas-Batas Pembaratan* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), p. 98.

¹⁶³ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya*, p. 98.

¹⁶⁴ *Idem*, p. 100.

¹⁶⁵ Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 219.

¹⁶⁶ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya*, p. 102.

1850s after which it expanded to other regions. S. Coolsma, a Dutch missionary and historian of the Christian mission in Indonesia, called the nineteenth century the “Century of Mission” (*Zendingseeuw*).¹⁶⁷ Karel Steenbrink explains the motive behind the waves of Christian missionaryism as follows: “Frustration caused by failure at home, idealism, a sense of adventure, and a longing to perform great and heroic deeds all contributed in different ways to the motivations and attitudes of many of the Dutch citizens who decided to go overseas.”¹⁶⁸

The rise of the Christian missionary age in the East Indies was due to the Christian leaders’ initiative to reverse the Christian mission’s inward-looking orientation. The mission expanded its previous focus on Batavia to include a larger area across West Java. This shift was initiated in 1851 by Christian leaders including F.L. Anthing, J. Esser, and E.W. King. They founded an association called the *Genootschap voor In- en Uitwendige Zending te Batavia* (Organisation for Inward and Outward Missionary Activities in Batavia) aiming to disseminate the Gospel outside Batavia, particularly among the Sundanese.¹⁶⁹ A Christian of Chinese origin, Gan Kwee, supported this initiative. He contributed by building the first Christian mission network across Cirebon, Sukabumi and Bandung in West Java and Purworejo and Purbolinggo in East Java.¹⁷⁰ Lombard observes that during the twentieth century, a wave of Chinese, most of whom were rich and generous, were ushered into Christianity.¹⁷¹ The Chinese integration into Christianity continued after independence and was deepened during

¹⁶⁷ Karel Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam: Contacts and Conflicts 1596-1950* (Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 2006), p. 98. See also S. Coolsma, *De Zendingseeuw voor Nederlandsch Oost-Indië* (Utrecht, 1901).

¹⁶⁸ Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism*. p. 98.

¹⁶⁹ F.L. Anthing and J. Esser advised the NZV to send missionaries to West Java. Esser argued that “since 1569, there has not been a single Dutch Christian missionary who organised his mission in West Java whereas the Priangan contributed a lion’s share to the Dutch treasury.” He challenged his fellow Dutchmen by questioning how the Netherlands would reciprocate. He asserted that there had been no contribution to the Sundanese. “The time had come for the Netherlands to do something for the people who had so far been marginalised by means of delivering some ‘Kabar Keselamatan’ to them.” Koernia Atje Soejana, *Benih Yang Tumbuh II: Suatu Survey Mengenai Gereja Kristen Pasundan* (Bandung: Badan Pekerja Sinode Gereja Kristen Pasundan, 1974), pp. 19, 23, and 32.

¹⁷⁰ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa: Silang Budaya*, p. 102.

¹⁷¹ *Idem*.

the New Order and Reform eras.

The Jemaat Cikuya: The Origin of Christian Sundanese

Before the arrival of the Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging, Adolf Mühlnickel had started his mission activities in this region on a voluntary basis. He was based in Cikuya, Banten and carried out missionary work for the Dutch *Zending Tukang* (ZT).¹⁷² ZT sought evangelists who wanted to work (as a *Tukang* 'worker') to serve the mission (Zending) and this seems to have been the first initiative to the voluntary mission project in West Java. As we will see in the following pages, Mühlnickel established the first Sundanese parish in Cikuya, Banten, known as the Cikuya parish (Jemaat Cikuya), and inspired the growth and development of missionarism in Banten and West Java in the following decades.

Mühlnickel's contribution towards the conversion of the Sundanese to Christianity was telling.¹⁷³ ZT sent missionaries across the country with little financial support. This forced the volunteers to work hard in order to support both themselves and their missionary activities. Mühlnickel had to work first before he could set out on his missionary trips. He sought and was offered work on a plantation in Cikuya owned by a European named Reesink. Mühlnickel was prepared to accept Reesink's offer on the condition that he be provided with a church and with a school to proselytise. Reesink agreed.¹⁷⁴

In 1854, Mühlnickel opened a school in Cikuya and built a church in the same place two years later. He worked on the plantation during working hours and served the mission after that. While working on the plantation, Mühlnickel met Minggu, who later worked for him as a house maid.¹⁷⁵ After some time, he met a young man named Sarma. Under

¹⁷² During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries there were no significant evangelist activities. The emergent interest in evangelism was attested to in the seventeenth century by the founding of missionary organisations, for instance the one with the curious name *Zending Tukang* in Cikuya by Adolf Mühlnickel. See Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, p. 429 footnote 1.

¹⁷³ Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten*, pp. 55-56, 96. Also Interview, pastor Koernia Atje Soejana, Bekasi, 11 May 2010.

¹⁷⁴ *Idem*, p. 56.

¹⁷⁵ There is no account why Minggu and Sarma wanted to convert to Christianity. Also, there is no account of the faith they subscribed to before that. However, it is quite clear that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the vast majority

Mühlnickel's influence, Minggu and Sarma converted and were officially baptised in the Willemskerk (Williams Church) near the Gambir railway station in Central Batavia in 1855.¹⁷⁶ With this baptism, the pair were among the first indigenous Sundanese Muslims in Banten who had converted to Christianity after Helena van Bantam (d. 1704). After having been baptised, they returned to Cikuya to offer Christian services. With Mühlnickel's support, Minggu and Sarma established a Christian parish in Cikuya, Banten.¹⁷⁷ In the following years, Sarma's children, Sondjat and Esther, played central roles in propagating Christianity in Cikuya.

After some years, the Cikuya parish came to Anthing's attention. The association of Anthing with the Cikuya congregation energised missionary activities there in terms of finance, target and approach. With Anthing's support, the mission began to aim at converting the Baduy.¹⁷⁸ This mission did not work out well, however, as only one family converted while the rest of the Baduy rejected Christianity and since the Baduy continued to refuse to convert, the mission among them was halted in the end. This termination was also due to the financial constraints Anthing and his missionaries faced.

In their mission to convert the Baduy, the indigenous missionaries used *ngelmu*,¹⁷⁹ mystical sciences commonly believed to empower its

of the West Javanese population were Muslims. Interview with pastor Koernia Atje Soejana, Jakarta, 7 July 2009.

¹⁷⁶ *Idem*.

¹⁷⁷ The *Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging* (NZV), the most important evangelist organisation in West Java, realised that there were only few documents furnishing information on the Cikuya parish. See Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, p. 429.

¹⁷⁸ "Baduy is a popular designation for the land/area and people of Kanekes given by outsiders. The naming of Baduy links to two matters. Firstly, it points to a location named Baduy, a Mountain called Baduy and a River called Cibaduy, which all three are close to each another. For the Kanekes people themselves, only those who settled in Baduy are properly called Baduy. It is possible that the identification originated from visitors to the place. Second, it was possible that the designation was linked to a group of desert Arabs considered uncivilised. They were desert nomads." See Rosidi and. Ekadjati (eds.), *Ensiklopedi Sunda*, pp. 81-82. Also Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten*, p. 98.

¹⁷⁹ Eringa translates *elmu* as 'wetenschap, kennis, leer; geheime (esoterische) wetenschap; kunsten (in ongunstige zin)' (knowledge; secret (esoteric) knowledge; arts (in a negative sense). See F.S. Eringa, *Soendaas-Nederlands Woordenboek*, p. 201.

practitioners in order to influence people. At the time, *ngelmu* was popular in Banten, Batavia and other parts of West Java. People living in this region continued to believe in it and remained reluctant to abandon it even after conversion to Islam or Christianity. Sarma from Rangkas, for example, was a *ngelmu* seeker and although he had embraced Christianity¹⁸⁰ he continued to use it to convert locals, who were fascinated by these practices.¹⁸¹ The most prominent evangelist, Anthing, also practiced *ngelmu* and used it in his proselytisation efforts with the help of Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung, a Javanese disciple. Although some Christian missionaries condemned his 'mantrasising' of Biblical verses was, Anthing's 'mystical' approach afforded Christianity a veneer of familiarity which made it more attractive to the Sundanese.¹⁸² This approach was also useful in promoting mutual respect and understanding between the missionaries and their audience. Perhaps one very good example in this regard was demonstrated by Conrad Laurens Coolen in mid-nineteenth century interior East Java.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, pp. 251-252.

¹⁸¹ Interview, pastor Koernia Atje Soejana, Bekasi, 11 May 2010.

¹⁸² Interview, pastor Mintarya Sondjat, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

¹⁸³ As told by Ricklefs, Coolen was born in Semarang to a Russian father and a Javanese mother said to be descended from an aristocratic family from Surakarta, c. 1773. He married a European wife who bore him five children and a Javanese Muslim woman who gave him six. Coolen began spreading his mission on land leased in Ngara South of Majaagung in 1830. He built a church at the centre of the plot, using the rest for agriculture. His estate was well organised and eventually piqued Javanese interest. By 1844 many Javanese wanted to move to Coolen's estate situated on the low lands of Mt. Kelud. It is also probable that the Javanese interest in Coolen's mission was due to his charismatic personality and syncretic religious doctrines and practices, a combination of essential Christian tenets and Islamic symbolism wrapped in Javanese culture. No baptism was required for his converts. Coolen translated Christian doctrines into Javanese in both the linguistic and cultural senses and created a prayer for his parish that mixed Javanese tradition and the Islamic profession of faith. In Ricklefs' words: "Coolen translated basic doctrines into Javanese, not only in a linguistic but also in a cultural sense. He took over the Javanese custom of a leader ritually ploughing the soil while singing an invocation in Javanese verse of the rice-goddess Dewi Sri and her brother Sedana, whose union promised fertility. A prayer by Coolen has been preserved that shows how he Christianised this Javanese tradition, employing the Islamic profession that there is no God but God (*La ilaha illa 'llah*) and presenting the Christian idea of the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a way that would, indeed, have made European missionaries uncomfortable:

Anthing and his followers realised the importance of indigenous culture in their mission. Sondjat, a talented singer (*penembang*), for example, often sang *tembang* and sometimes he used allegories and metaphors to attract his audience to the Gospels.¹⁸⁴ In Cikuya, Sondjat built a church using modest building materials like bamboo for its walls and palm leaves and grass for its roof. After serving his parish with patience, he managed to attract others to the Cikuya parish and it is clear that his belief in Christianity was profound and manifested itself through a remarkable dedication towards his newly adopted faith. Sondjat was a poor man but he consistently served the Cikuya parish and continued to teach the Bible around the village and in rural areas.¹⁸⁵ Sondjat continued his father's efforts in the development of the Jemaat Cikuya parish with Anthing's support. Later he became the first apostle of the apostolic church.¹⁸⁶ During his wanderings in Banten, Sondjat met Anthing, who eventually appointed him as his assistant in the Cikuya parish.

In the 1880s, the NZV set up a plan to expand its mission across Banten to include Serang, Pandeglang, Caringin, Leuwidamar, and Lebak. The Governor-General, however, rejected this ambitious plan. He disappointed the NZV by allowing the establishment of only one mission post in Leuwidamar, Lebak. The well-known missionary, A.A. Pennings,

Mount Semeru we sing of,
the sign of the land of Java:
may my farming endure
in the pleasure of Sri and Sedana,
who take the form of rice.
Who gives me leave is Allah the Most Pure.
Yea, there is no God but God (*la ilaha ilelah*) and Jesus Christ is the Spirit of
God.

Through this syncretic approach, Coolen converted hundreds of Javanese who felt at home with a 'Christianity' which was not mutually-exclusive with regards to Javanism. See Ricklefs, *Polarising Javanese Society*, pp. 109-113.

¹⁸⁴ Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, pp. 282-283 and 429.

¹⁸⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁸⁶ Interview, pastor Mintarya Sondjat, Cianjur, 12 August 2009. In 1855, Sondjat was 15 years old when his father Sarma was officially baptised. Before assuming his religious responsibilities, Sondjat liked to travel across Java. Once he visited Banten and was so impressed with the tradition of the *orang Baduy* that he decided to settle in the area for several years.

was appointed to serve there and he began his mission in 1894.¹⁸⁷ To support his mission, Pennings established a clinic and a church and he built a house nearby. Pennings' mission in Leuwidamar did not produce the fruitful results he had expected; only one family converted after several years of missionary activity. This failure was in part due to Muslims' resistance to missionary activities. In 1902, Pennings was found dead after having been poisoned, although the official NZV account concealed this, claiming that Pennings had died of cholera.¹⁸⁸ Pennings' death froze the Christian missionary activities in this location. Towards independence the anti-Christian missionary attitude in the area had not changed much. After independence the situation became even worse, especially when churches in Leuwidamar and Cikuya were burned down.¹⁸⁹ Because of this violent action, the forty-five members of the Leuwidamar and Cikuya parishes were forced to relocate to Sukabumi (Cikembar) and Bogor (Gunung Putri), where they built new churches.¹⁹⁰

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Christian missionaries kept struggling to win the hearts of the people in Batavia and West Java despite being challenged from doing so by indigenous Muslims and by restrictions imposed by the Dutch Colonial Administration. The NZV was the first European missionary organisation to carry out extensive missionary work in Batavia and West Java. It was established on 2 December 1858 and it sent three missionaries, C. Albers, D.J. van der Linden, and G.J. Grashuis to the Priangan in 1862.¹⁹¹ On 5 January 1863, they arrived in Batavia and after several days they continued their trip to Bandung, which was selected to be the hub of their missionary work in West Java.¹⁹² They arrived in Bandung in March 1863 but could not start their work immediately because the Dutch colonial administration strictly

¹⁸⁷ Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten*, pp. 108-109.

¹⁸⁸ *Idem*, p. 117.

¹⁸⁹ By that time, the heads of the church were Sainim and Esther respectively. Interview, Mufti Ali, Singapore, 23 April 2011.

¹⁹⁰ Esther and Sondjat followed the caravan while Sarma remained in Cikuya and spent the rest of his life there. Interview, pastor Mintarya Sondjat, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

¹⁹¹ Koernia Atje Soejana, *Sejarah Komunikasi Injil di Tanah Pasundan*, PhD Dissertation, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jakarta, 1997, p. 254.

¹⁹² *Idem*, p. 254. See also Van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending*, pp. 3-8.

prohibited missionary work in the colony.¹⁹³ This ban was aimed at maintaining *rust en orde* (peace and order) and to prevent instability among the Sundanese, the majority of whom adhered to Islam. The colonisers were well aware of the trouble that might ensue if they failed to keep control of missionary activities in the region.¹⁹⁴ Years after the prohibition was lifted, the Dutch administration still adopted a cautious approach on the issue by banning the presence of more than one missionary association in the same place at the same time.¹⁹⁵

In 1865, a license was eventually issued by the Colonial Administration to allow missionary activities. Missionary C. Albers obtained his license to work in Cianjur in 1865. His colleague Van der Linden, who had already arrived in Cirebon in 1863 and who had subsequently moved to Indramayu in 1864, was also given permission to do his missionary work. Ds. Krol and G.J. Grashuis were asked to learn the Sundanese language and to translate the Bible into Sundanese. Grashuis returned to the Netherlands in 1865 to carry out this work but failing to accomplish it was forced to leave the NZV in 1868.¹⁹⁶

The evangelist missionaries eventually succeeded in paying visits to nearly all the important places across West Java, including Bandung

¹⁹³ This ban caused much inconvenience to the Christian missionaries. It also provoked reactions in The Hague, especially from liberal politicians, who forced the Colonial Administration to modify its policy. This demand for change stemmed from the liberal atmosphere prevailing in the Netherlands in particular and in Europe in general during the 1880s. Corresponding with the winds of change, the Administration effected some changes in its policy, adopting a more positive attitude towards missionary associations. The NZV was now at liberty to expand its mission into the Priangan and other places in West Java including Cirebon and Indramayu on the north coast areas and to the environs of Batavia including Bogor, Karawang, and Tangerang. NZV named locales targeted by evangelists a '*pos*', referring to a place where an evangelist resides. A place where an evangelist teacher lived was called a '*cabang*' or '*pos luar*'. In the twentieth century the name '*pos*' was replaced by '*resor*'. Prior to the twentieth century, the number of '*pos*' in West Java was not well-recorded. Nonetheless, in 1926 a report revealed that there were 9 '*resor*' in the area. In 1944, however, the number had dropped to five: Bandung, Batavia, Cirebon, Garut and Jatikebon. Van den End, *Sejarah Gereja di Jawa Barat*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁹⁴ Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 221.

¹⁹⁵ Jan S. Arifonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Islam dan Kristen di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2005), p. 79.

¹⁹⁶ Soejana, *Sejarah Komunikasi Injil*, pp. 254-255. See also Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 221.

(1870), Sukabumi and Sumedang (1872), Jatinegara (1884), Tangerang (1889), Lebak (1894) and Tasikmalaya (1898). Initially, the NZV mainly targeted the Sundanese for its missionary activities but in later years it also tried to include the Chinese. This was because the NZV found that some Chinese on the north coast had already embraced Christianity.¹⁹⁷ The NZV found a Christian parish on the north coast that had a large number of Chinese members. This reality forced the missionaries no longer only to focus their attention on the indigenous Sundanese (who spoke three languages: Sundanese, Javanese and Malay) but also on the Chinese community. It appeared somewhat easier to convert the Chinese than to convert the Sundanese.¹⁹⁸ There is no report, however, that mentions which missionary organisations had arrived on the north coast of West Java and the manner in which they attracted the Chinese to Christianity.

Changes in the Netherlands had also caused changes in the emphasis, content, and direction of NZV's mission in West Java. It shifted its emphasis from religion to social empowerment and capacity-building. This shift aimed to support the colonial administration's program for the promotion of the people's wellbeing by advancing education, health, agriculture and transportation. Inspired by the spirit of the "*Ethische Politiek*" (Ethical Politics) after 1901, the colonial administration and the evangelist organisations cooperated in running the government's social programs particularly in education and health services aimed at improving the quality of life of the people in the Netherlands East Indies.¹⁹⁹ In the early years of their presence in West Java, NZV missionaries also became increasingly involved in, and worked for, government schools. In collaboration with NZV missionaries as their agents of development, the Administration managed to organise its programs efficiently.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Van den End, *Sejarah Gereja di Jawa Barat*, p. 9.

¹⁹⁸ Once, all the students in a class in Cirebon converted to Christianity. Massive conversion was unheard of in the Priangan, while there were few who converted to Christianity. Interview, Koernia Atje Soejana. Bekasi, 7 July 2009. Little has changed about Christian missionaryism in recent times. Interview, Fabianus who served in the Liturgy Commission of the Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia (KWI), in the Keuskupan Bogor and currently acts as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of Parahyangan University, Bandung, 15 June 2009.

¹⁹⁹ Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 221.

²⁰⁰ *Idem*, p. 6. Despite the challenge of missionary work in an overwhelmingly Muslim environment, the NZV expended much effort to win over the

It is a truism in Sundanese society that abandoning Islam is regarded as a betrayal of religion, ethnicity and culture. This may be related to the fact that Islam had been the religion of the Sundanese majority for a long time although the quality and the level of acceptance and observance of Islam varied.²⁰¹ The social stigma attached to the grave sin of apostasy thus served as another bulwark against conversion attempts. Apostates were labelled '*murtad*' and this dishonour alone served as a social and cultural barrier to conversion. Abandonment of their faith entailed the alienation from their families and communities. The new converts thus left their homes and sought others like themselves, amongst whom they would be accepted.

This cultural impediment meant that missionary efforts in the Priangan yielded little success even after thirty years. By 1898, the NZV had established 24 parish groups in West Java with 2,260 listed Christians. The number of churches increased, although not significantly. There was a Christian church in Pangharepan, Sukabumi with 308 members, one third of whom originated from the Chinese following of the late Anthing.²⁰² Only the conversion of indigenous people could be credited to NZV efforts. The Priangan prospects for the Christian mission remained rather bleak compared to the situation in other places in the Dutch East Indies.

Sundanese, as illustrated by the following initiatives. The first expert on agriculture the NZV sent to Indonesia was M. Ottow. He arrived in 1918. He was followed the next year (1919) by doctor W.J.L. Dake. The NZV also appointed various new indigenous converts to help the mission in managing its activities in religious affairs, and to further support their educational programs. In the following years, the NZV received more support from the Netherlands with the arrival of various agricultural and medical experts. From only seventeen Protestant ministers, twenty-seven missionaries and nine Roman Catholic priests in 1850, these numbers increased to seventy-seven, seventy-three and forty-nine respectively in 1900, and continued to increase after that. See Van den End, *Sejarah Gereja di Jawa Barat*, pp. 11-24; Soejana, *Benih Yang Tumbuh II*, pp. 39-41; Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism*, p. 98.

²⁰¹ Almost all pastors in charge in the churches in Ciranjang, Cianjur expressed similar opinions. Interview with Dody S. Truna, Bandung, 3 April 2009.

²⁰² Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 222. Sadi'in (Petrus) joined the Pangharepan parish after Anthing's death in 1883 following his brother Sariun who had already joined the parish much earlier.

The Christian Community in Pangharepan, Sukabumi

In 1872, P.N. Gijsman was sent from Cianjur to Sukabumi and, ten years later, he had managed to convert twenty-five people.²⁰³ In 1883, the NZV appointed Simon van Eendenburg as missionary in Sukabumi to replace Gijsman. Eendenburg purchased plantation land in Pangharepan, Cikembar only 18 km from Sukabumi in the direction of Pelabuhan Ratu, which was also used to build residences and a village for the new Christian converts who were alienated from their people. The converts would be assigned to work on the plantation, for which they were paid. At the same time they could dedicate themselves to church services.

In 1886, the Pangharepan settlement was ready for habitation. The Christians relocated there and began a new life. Among the migrants were Sariun and Sadi'in, two brothers who had been born into the Marchasan family who originated from Leuwidahu in Banten and who were formerly loyal followers of Anthing's. As noted by Koernia Atje, Sariun had been in Sukabumi since 1877 after having been instructed by Anthing to help NZV missionary, Gijsman. That year, Djimun, a follower from Batavia, introduced Sadi'in to Anthing, who warmly welcomed him. He offered to put Sadi'in, baptised as Petrus, up at his residence, during which he would undergo intensive training before being sent on missionary activities.

Petrus was assigned to carry out his mission in Cikuya, Banten, where he married Nyai Bani from Cigelam, Serang. There is no account of Petrus' missionary activities in Cikuya.²⁰⁴ Soon after Anthing's death in 1883, however, Petrus left Cikuya for Batavia to seek employment before he finally joined his brother Sariun in Pangharepan, Sukabumi.²⁰⁵ Simon van Eendenburg was in charge in Sukabumi before he took up residence on the settlement in 1888. By that time, the Pangharepan Christian population numbered 272, the largest Christian community in West Java.²⁰⁶ Van Eendenburg served the Pangharepan parish for twelve years. By 1900, Hendri Muller was appointed to replace him. Muller served the NZV until 1905 but failed to keep the parish united as we will see below.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Soejana, *Benih Yang Tumbuh II*, p. 34.

²⁰⁴ Interview, pastor Mintarya Sondjat, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

²⁰⁵ Soejana, 'Gereja Kerasulan Rawaselang: Mengenal Gereja Kerasulan Tertua di Jawa Barat.' unpublished paper (Jakarta, June 2006), pp. 18-19.

²⁰⁶ *Idem*, p. 17.

²⁰⁷ Interview, pastor Mintarya Sondjat, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

Koernia Atje states that Petrus or Sadi'in is said to have attended a *pesantren* before embracing Christianity. Petrus was the grandson of a Muslim nobleman from Cirebon named Raden Karadinata, who had left Cirebon in the first half of the nineteenth century to go to Serang, Banten, because of a quarrel he had had with his stepmother. There are no details about Karadinata's ancestry but his marriage to the daughter of the *penghulu* of Banten, who bore him six daughters, suggests his linkage to the Cirebon aristocracy. One daughter, Dewi Sai, married the son of the *penghulu* of Serang, whose name is unfortunately unknown. Her first son was Mukayam, whose children were Marchasan, Ibu Maat, Sadi'in, Sariun and Ibu Karsiah.²⁰⁸ Thus Mukayam, the grandson of Raden Karadinata, was the direct ancestor of the first generation of Christian Bantenese. Not only did they convert to Christianity, they also played an instrumental role in leading their fellow Bantenese to adopt the faith through their involvement in the mission work carried out by Anthing and the NZV across Banten, Sukabumi and Cianjur. Mukayam's sons, Sadi'in and Sariun, converted to Christianity in the second half of the nineteenth century. The reason for their conversion is unknown but Martan Marchasan, a third-generation descendant of Karadinata, put it down to God's call.²⁰⁹ Martan also suggested that their decision might also have been influenced by the close relationship they maintained with Chinese and Dutch individuals.²¹⁰

The brothers later became the leaders of NZV's Pangharepan Parish in Sukabumi. After having joined the parish, Petrus, Sariun and their friends, however, could not really appreciate the Christian canon as promoted by the NZV. Instead, they endlessly tried to revive Anthing's doctrine whom they very much appreciated for his humility, generosity and his respect for their identity and culture. This was most clearly manifested in his preference for tailoring the Christian precepts to match the indigenous context. Although he was Dutch, he interacted with his followers with full respect for indigenous tradition and values. It seemed that Anthing's legacy remained firmly rooted. It was therefore his indigenous - if not quite his nationalist - sentiment that factored in the separation between the indigenous Christians and their Dutch landlord-

²⁰⁸ Soejana, *Gereja Kerasulan Rawaselang*, pp. 17-19.

²⁰⁹ Interview, pastor Nupelus Marchasan, Ruchman Marchasan and Martan Marchasan, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

²¹⁰ *Idem*.

cum-Pastor, Hendri Muller.²¹¹ Under Petrus' and Sariun's leadership, the entire congregation of fifty-seven Christians left the Pangharepan parish and migrated to Ciranjang in the early twentieth century. On arriving there, they established a settlement with the assistance of an irrigation worker named Armin, who at that time was in the service of the Dutch administration. Armin converted to Christianity after having been born into a Muslim family.²¹²

Anthing's followers consisted mostly of people who were related to one another through shared familial linkages, namely through Mukayam and Raden Karadinata. Therefore, filial sentiments and interest seem to have been an important element in their bond and unity.²¹³ Until recently, various individuals who claimed to be descendants from Karadinata and Mukayam played leadership roles in several churches. I found their influence in at least two large churches; namely the Kerasulan Baru Church and the Kerasulan Pusaka Church, both located in Rawaselang, Cianjur.²¹⁴

The Christian Community in Gunung Halu, Cianjur

In the late nineteenth century, the Christians began to consolidate their identity with the establishment of a village whose inhabitants comprised Sundanese converts. Over time, their number increased slowly but surely, thanks to NZV's tireless missionary work. By the 1880s, the first Christian community was formed in Pangharepan, Sukabumi, West Java. Years later, two more Christian communities came into existence in Palalangan and Rawaselang in Gunung Halu, Ciranjang, Cianjur.²¹⁵

From the start, the NZV considered Cianjur an important target.

²¹¹ Soejana, *Gereja Kerasulan Rawaselang*, p. 23.

²¹² Interview, pastor Nupelus Marchasan, Ruchman Marchasan and Martan Marchasan, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

²¹³ *Idem*. Almost all of them came from Banten. Petrus (Sadi'in) of Leuwidahu, probably with support from his brother Sariun and other close friends was upset with the leadership of the 'zendeling' Hendri Muller. Soejana, *Gereja Kerasulan Rawaselang*, p. 20.

²¹⁴ Interview, Martan Marchasan, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

²¹⁵ Gunung Halu is now divided into four villages: Sindangjaya, Kertajaya, Sindangsari, and Gunungsari. These villages are situated in Ciranjang, Cianjur. Among these villages, Sindangjaya and Kertajaya are inhabited by a majority of Christians. There is also a significant number of Christians in the other two villages even if they do not outnumber those in Kertajaya and Sindangjaya.

Therefore, in 1863, it sent C.J. Albers to head the mission there. The mission work obtained permission to operate only in 1865, but a report shows that in December 1863, a Sundanese couple named Ismail and Murti had already embraced Christianity.²¹⁶ Although the mission failed to result in massive conversion, NZV missionaries declined to give up their efforts but patiently persisted. In the early twentieth century, there were seventy Christians. Although insignificant in terms of numbers, through this achievement the NZV had actually planted the seed for the further growth of Christianity in West Java. Forty years after NZV's arrival in Cianjur, the Christian community had grown. The increase was not only due to proselytisation, but also to immigration from other places in West Java, especially from Bandung and Pangharepan, Sukabumi.

It seemed obvious that Cianjur would become a training laboratory for missionaries. P.N. Gijsman and S. Coolsma were appointed to work first in Cianjur before their appointments in Sukabumi and Bogor respectively. S. Coolsma was sent to Bogor in 1869 and after fourteen years, six persons had embraced Christianity. Coolsma wrote a grammar and a dictionary of the Sundanese language.²¹⁷ These efforts aimed to improve the understanding of the Sundanese language and its culture among the missionaries. Coolsma's important contribution was that he translated the Bible into the Sundanese language.²¹⁸

In 1903, Muller could not prevent the exodus of parishioners from Pangharepan. This group of Anthing's followers migrated to Kampung Rawaselang, which is close to the NZV's Kampung Palalangan. Under Petrus' leadership, they started a new religious life away from the influence of Muller's Dutch NZV tradition. Since Anthing was no longer there, Petrus and his followers enjoyed great autonomy in the organisation and in the management of their religious institution and they continued to act upon their own tradition. The reaction to the NZV appeared to have strongly informed the religious tradition they constructed. Soon after their arrival they established a denomination named the *Gereja Kerasulan Baru* (New Apostolic Church).

In 1902, a year before the arrival of the Christians from the Pangharepan settlement, NZV followers under Bouke Minnes Alkema's

²¹⁶ Soejana, *Benih Yang Tumbuh II*, p. 27.

²¹⁷ Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 222.

²¹⁸ *Idem*.

leadership had already arrived in Cianjur and had settled in Palalangan village. Alkema erected his first church in Palalangan, Kertajaya village, Ciranjang sub-district and called it the Pasundan Christian Church (GKP) Palalangan. The NZV church, with only 30 parishioners, was the first to bring Christianity to Cianjur in 1902.²¹⁹ Economic hardship had compelled them to migrate from Bandung. Lacking agricultural land to sustain them economically, the situation in Cianjur was not much better for the migrants. Alkema, who chaired the NZV Bandung 'pos' (1893-1903), along with other pastors responsible for Cianjur, was aware of the situation and sought to establish an agricultural settlement for the community.

In support of his efforts, the Dutch administration granted the NZV 130 *bau* (1 *bau* is 0,71 ha) of land in Cianjur. In 1901, Alkema, accompanied by Wedana Sabri and seven indigenous Christians, travelled around in search of suitable land. They went all the way along the Citarum River and eventually arrived at what they felt was a good location. They erected emergency shelters and opened up space in the tropical forest, which process lasted nearly one year. By May 1902, the work was finished and subsequently nine households comprising of 21 people from Cianjur moved in to inhabit the new settlement under the leadership of Pastor Elipas.²²⁰

Right from the outset, Alkema had the concrete plan to establish a Christian village using traditional designs and concepts. This involved a town square with residences for common use: church, schools, office buildings for the village administration, clinic, and residence for the Pastors. The people's residences were to be built around this square.²²¹

The village was named Palalangan, which means 'lookout post'.²²² In

²¹⁹ Interview, pastor Mintarya Sondjat, Cianjur, 12 August 2009.

²²⁰ There is no account offering the exact number of the first generation of immigrants to the Palalangan village. According to Pastor Putu Suwintana, the first group to come to Palalangan consisted of seven persons. Interview with pastor Putu Suwintana, Cianjur, 11 May 2010; Koernia Atje Soejana nonetheless talked about nine persons. Soejana, *Sejarah Komunikasi Injil*, p. 286.

²²¹ Interview, pastor Putu Suwintana, Cianjur, 11 May 2010; See also Soejana, *Sejarah Komunikasi Injil*, p. 285. When I visited Palalangan in 2009 and 2010, the village landscape indeed appears to have been shaped according to Alkema's initial conception - the town square is situated in the centre with public buildings including church, school, office and minister residence. The residences of the parishioners are situated surrounding the public buildings.

²²² 'Palalangan Bersinar', <http://www.palalanganbersinar.com> (accessed 24 June 2009).

the following years, the parish gradually grew through marriage and birth as well as by the arrival of Christian families from places in West Java such as Pasirkaliki in Karawang, Cikembar in Sukabumi, and Gunung Putri in Bogor. As we will briefly discuss below, some Christians from Gunung Putri in Bogor maintained good relations with their relatives in Kampung Melati in Bekasi. This caused an inflow of adherents and enabled the expansion of the Christian mission in Bekasi in the late-nineteenth century from Bogor.

The Christian Community in Kampung Sawah, Bekasi

The Christianisation of Bekasi²²³ started in the nineteenth century (c.1870s) and was the result of the expansion of the mission into various parts of West Java like Bandung, Cianjur, Sukabumi and Bogor. Like in many parts of this region, the expansion of the Christian mission into Bekasi seems to have been a continuation of the Christian mission's earlier presence and its settlement in Bogor. The initial stages of Christianisation in the area owe much to Anthing and his disciples. Prior to their arrival in Pondok Melati and Kampung Sawah in Bekasi, Anthing's disciples held services in Gunung Putri, Bogor.

Koernia Atje Soejana maintains that before Christianity was started to be propagated in Pondok Melati and Kampung Sawah, the majority of the villagers, who are of Betawi origin, adhered to Islam.²²⁴ Aside from practicing Islam, Betawi Muslims also observed animistic practices like making food offerings and they believed that spirits guard mountains, empty lands and houses, big rocks, et cetera. They used to perform rituals which consisted of charitable offerings (*sedekahan*) in order to obtain permission to enter those places.²²⁵ They also have *wisit*, supernatural objects they believe can bring fortune.²²⁶ The majority of the villagers in

²²³ The District of Bekasi was established by Law Number 14/1950 with Jatinegara as its center. After some years the center moved to Ir. H. Juanda Street and subsequently to Jend. A. Yani street in downtown Bekasi. Bekasi has 13 sub-districts, one of which is named Bekasi.

²²⁴ Koernia Atje Soejana, *Berakar, Tumbuh, Berkembang dan Berbuah: Mengupas Kisah Perjalanan Injil di GKP Jemaat Kampung Sawah* (Bekasi: Majelis Jemaat GKP Kampung Sawah, 2008), p. 5.

²²⁵ *Sedekahan* literally means giving something of value to others.

²²⁶ *Wisit* is a Sundanese word which means "*milik teu pahili-hili, bagja teu paalala teu paliili milik jelema sabab unggal jelema geus pada boga milik sorangan*" (No person's luck and happiness can be changed because each individual's fate

these places were rice farmers. From the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries they held a *slametan* in each stage of the rice growing cycle up to harvest. These ceremonies are testament to their belief in a variety of deities including *Dewi Sri*, the Goddess of fertility and the Goddess of rice.²²⁷

The first indigenous person in Pondok Melati who converted to Christianity was Semain Empi, a *ngelmu* seeker, who conceded the superiority of the evangelists' *ngelmu sejati*²²⁸ over his *ngelmu*. He was of Betawi origin and he was most likely a nominal Muslim who sought *ngelmu* to demonstrate his supernatural powers in order to win the respect and the following of the people in his surroundings. The pursuit of *ngelmu* and its practice was a common phenomenon in Batavia and all across Java. The missionaries, especially those who served under Anthing, were aware of these mystical practices and they tried to find out how to counter the influence of *ngelmu* practitioners.

Having acquired a small following in Pondok Melati, the evangelists pursued the Christianisation of Kampung Sawah, two kilometres to the east. This effort was highly successful with the help of Anthing's disciple, Paul Rikin, and his son, Loekas. Loekas underwent evangelist training in Sumedang under the supervision of S.A. Schilstra. After finishing his training he went west to serve Albers' mission in Cianjur.²²⁹

Culture-based Christianisation

The Christianisation of Pondok Melati and Kampung Sawah owes much to Anthing's cultural approach towards the indigenous people and the capitalizing on their social connections for the recruitment of new converts. Anthing and his disciples used the social bond between the Christians in Gunung Putri and Cigelam in Bogor and their relatives and friends in Pondok Melati. This approach was effective in attracting the indigenous Betawi to Christianity. In 1885, there were 80 Christian converts in Gunung Putri and after some twenty years their number had increased to more

has been decided in advance). See R.A. Danadibrata, *Kamus Basa Sunda* (Panitia Penerbitan Kamus Basa Sunda, second edition, 2009), p. 441.

²²⁷ Soejana, *Berakar, Tumbuh, Berkembang dan Berbuah*, p. 6.

²²⁸ *Ngelmu sejati* is true mystical sciences, which Christian missionaries claimed could be derived from the Bible.

²²⁹ Soejana, *Berakar, Tumbuh, Berkembang dan Berbuah*, pp. 30-31.

than 100.²³⁰ The initial Christianisation of Bekasi owes much to the Christians in Gunung Putri, Bogor. The Christianisation in this part of Bekasi was also due to Anthing's missionaries' tireless efforts in building relations with the indigenous people in this place, eventually winning them over.²³¹ There are at least three reasons for Anthing's success. The *first* is that he used the right approach in communicating with the people. He studied their culture and communicated with them in their language. *Second*, Anthing empathised with and respected them. *Third*, Anthing tried to understand the spiritual life of these people and attempted to learn about their magic and superstition practices. He equipped his missionaries with the proper knowledge about *ngelmu sejati* using mantras born out of the Bible to counter *ngelmu* practices employed by local leaders.²³² However, according to the leading Dutch missionary, Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965), the missionaries did not seem to have properly understood the social, cultural and religious aspects of the Sundanese. To him, these missionaries did not intimately interact with the Sundanese people. Rather, they created parishes in places that isolated them and their church from Sundanese society.²³³

The Christian Javanese

It is believed that the Christian Javanese, migrants from Mt. Muria in Jepara, Central Java and Mojowarno, East Java, were the first generation of Christians to settle in Kampung Sawah, possibly by the late nineteenth century before the arrival of the people from Batavia. Their presence benefited from the help of Ibrahim Tunggul Wulung and Sadrach who went to Batavia in 1865. They were brilliant disciples of Anthing's, who met in the early nineteenth century in Semarang where Anthing served the Dutch. They became two well-known Javanese proselytisers. Tunggul Wulung took Sadrach, known as Radin Abas, to Batavia in 1865, and both helped Anthing in his proselytising activities there and in surrounding areas. After a couple of years of working with Anthing, however, Tunggul Wulung and Sadrach returned to Java.

The Javanese presence in Kampung Sawah is also evident in

²³⁰ Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten*, p. 63.

²³¹ Soejana, *Berakar, Tumbuh, Berkembang dan Berbuah*, pp. 25-29.

²³² *Idem*, pp. 28-30.

²³³ Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 223.

Anthing's Trinity formulae, one of which reads in Javanese as follows:

*Bapa Allah, Putra Allah, Roh Suci Allah, telu-telune dadi siji, upas racun dadi tawa, lemah sangar kayu angker dadi tawa, isti Gusti, Tuhan Yesus Kristus juru slamet kami slami-lamine.*²³⁴

(Allah the Father, Allah the Son, Allah the Holy Ghost, three become one, poison becomes cure, enchanted places and woods no longer harm and lose their power by the will of Allah, Jesus Christ is the eternal saviour).

The use of Javanese shows Anthing's appreciation of the significance of language and culture in missionary work. As described above, Anthing's mission mainly targeted the Javanese before he started his service in Batavia and West Java. Anthing's missionary contribution in Batavia, Depok and other parts in West Java and Banten was profound. He contributed to the establishment of a seminary in Depok - a training centre that churned out missionaries from the late nineteenth to the first quarter of the twentieth century. One of the mission's founding fathers, Hendrik Kraemer, praised Anthing for his dedication to the faith. Anthing was also generous. He lent his property in Kramat for the mission's use as a training centre for the induction of indigenous missionaries.²³⁵ Anthing died in 1883, leaving his invaluable legacy for the missionary world across Java, from the East to the West.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how Islam and other religions in West Java developed and describes how their followers created a plural, dynamic society. It shows the importance of Islam as a faith, a set of practices and an identity for the vast majority of the Sundanese people since the nineteenth century. Their observance of Islamic practices (*rukun Islam*) and their adoption of an Islamic identity, however, did not stop some of them from practicing *adat*, engaging in native mystical practices and believing in spiritual forces.

²³⁴ Letter from C. Albers to NZV (10 April 1899) as cited in Soejana, *Berakar, Tumbuh, Berkembang dan Berbuah*, p. 18.

²³⁵ Ali, *Misionarisme di Banten*, p. 62

Sundanese religious identity rests upon intimate and dialectical relations between Islam and *adat* which also enabled Islamic co-existence with the tiny Christian minority.

Members of the Sundanese elite, such as Moeharam Wiranatakoesoema and Haji Hasan Moestapa, were aware of this social capital and they continued to maintain *adat* blended in Islamic practices. This relationship between Islam and *adat* was sustained with the intellectual and political support from the Dutch expert on Islam and native affairs, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. These three men represent the special proponents of the Islam-*adat* 'synthesis.' Their religious, intellectual and cultural contributions were instrumental in keeping the Islam-Sunda relation intimate and for sustaining the blending of Islamic practices into local *adat*.

Although there was a certain degree of resistance towards Islamisation, it failed to polarise Sundanese society along cultural and religious lines. During 1920s-1960s, for example, opposition to Islam emerged from *Aliran Kebatinan* followers who embraced native-mystical practices that underpinned a belief in a native value system and in supernatural forces other than the ones embraced by world religions. AK leaders and followers sought the supremacy of local values over those promoted by world religions, especially Islam. They saw Islam as a threat to their supremacy, legitimacy and legacy. They held nativist-mystical ideas, which cohered around the notion of an authentic Sundanese identity which resonated with the Nationalist movement that sought sovereignty for Indonesia as an independent state. Islam, particularly in its Modernist guise, was contested for its continuous efforts to gain cultural supremacy they deemed threatening to their authentic Sundanese identity. Although this kind of opposition was insufficient to temper the Islamisation of Sundanese society, it nevertheless shows that some Sundanese leaders were in favour of 'a true Sundanese religion' other than Islam. This polarisation, however, did not exist until the twentieth century. Resistance to Islam reached its apogee when some of the Sundanese leaders together with thousands of followers embraced Christianity in 1964, as will be discussed below in Chapter Two. Although this opposition seems to have separated practicing Muslims from non-practicing ones, it failed to produce social categories such as *santri* and *abangan*, as Geertz had observed in East Java. As evidence, these terms (*santri* and *abangan*) or the like are

unknown in Sundanese society.

The conversion to Christianity by many Sundanese was in part the result of tireless efforts by Christian missionaries to promote Christianity. Above I discussed how the Christian mission and its institutions played instrumental roles in the conversion of Muslim Sundanese to Christianity since the second half of the nineteenth century. The conversion in the early years of missionary work in West Java was heavily driven by socio-political and economic motives through which converts recast their relationship with the Dutch. Most of the converts were the needy who embraced Christianity to secure their livelihoods and future prospects.²³⁶ Socio-economic motives aside, conversions also depended highly on the missionaries' ability to promote the adjustment of Christian practices to local culture and identity in promoting a 'Sunda Kristen' identity to smooth relations between Dutch missionaries and their converts. Anthing and his well-trained indigenous missionaries were especially skilled in this regard. Although the missionaries failed to convert on a mass scale, over time interest in Christianity increased.

²³⁶ Lombard, *Nusa Jawa*, p. 101.