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CHAPTER FIVE

ISLAMISING LEMBANG: OBSERVING *ALIRAN KEBATINAN*'S DECLINE AND ITS STRUGGLE TO REVIVE IN RURAL WEST JAVA (1998-2011)

Above we have seen the impact of the New Order's policy on religions on deeper Islamisation and on the steady development of *Dakwahism* after Muslim student leaders took the initiative in leading campus *dakwah* and transformed the ITB into the centre for *dakwah* activists. This development had significant consequences for society, particularly among Muslims in urban areas. This case study examines the process of Islamisation in Lembang and tries to answer the question of how Islam entered rural areas and how it built the institutions that increasingly influenced and changed the religious life of the Sundanese. This chapter goes back briefly to the development starting in the 1950s of Islamic institutions in three different villages across rural Lembang and discusses the effects of *dakwah* institutions and organisations on deeper Islamisation. The second major question addressed in this chapter is how the *Aliran Kebatinan* defended itself during the process of deepening Islamisation and what enabled it to endure and eventually to revive. As case studies, I have selected *Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan* (AKP) and *Budidaya*, both coming from the same roots and asserting significant influence in Lembang, West Java.

Social Change that Leads to Islamisation

Lembang's Geography and Socio-Demography

Lembang is located in West Bandung, south of Subang which border is only a few kilometres away. Lembang and Subang are separated by the famous Tangkuban Perahu Volcano. Lembang is located across mountainous highlands, parts of which belong to Subang territory.

Perhaps because of this geographic nexus, the AKP native-syncretic movement easily penetrated to the south, that is, from Lembang in West Bandung down to Ciparay in the east from which it expanded in the eastern region towards the north, across Sumedang, Majalengka, and Cirebon. There was also a sprinkling of AKP followers in Ciamis and Tasikmalaya.¹⁵⁹

Since the 1920s, Lembang, like Subang and Bandung, became a stronghold of the nationalist movement and home to the Indonesian Nationalist Party (PNI).¹⁶⁰ The territorial propinquity of three nationalist bases strengthened the ideological network across the area. This also inspired the breeding of nationalist and native-syncretic movements such as the AKP. While the movement was founded in Subang, its influence has flowed down south, where it emerged stronger. In Lembang, a road map of AKP influence would begin in Mekarwangi and continue across Langansari, Pagarwangi, Kayu Ambon, Cibogo, Cikole, Cikidang down to the village of Wangunharja. It thus formed a circle across the mountainous Lembang district throughout agricultural lands.¹⁶¹

The Lembang district occupies 10,620 ha and consists of 16 villages. According to data recently published by the District Administration Office, Lembang's total population is 156,078¹⁶² of which 14,446 persons are peasants who work as labourers in the agricultural industry, 11,562 people till the land while 6,047 are livestock farmers. 3,561 Persons work in informal sectors, 775 are entrepreneurs and 1804 work in small-scale enterprises. More than 5,000 people are employed by the government as civil servants, soldiers and members of the police force.¹⁶³ The vast majority of Budidaya followers are peasants and many of them are low-income workers. The General Secretary of the West Bandung Budidaya branch, Asep Hari, is a peasant. Given that the livelihood of the majority of the people depends to a large extent on the availability and affordability of land for rent or purchase, land is a major issue in the region.

Lembang is home to 148,263 Muslims, 5,200 Protestants and

¹⁵⁹ Interview, Engkus Ruswana, Bandung, 27 July 2010.

¹⁶⁰ *Idem*. See *Soekarno: An Autobiography as Told to Cindy Adams*, pp. 11-68.

¹⁶¹ Interview, Ayi Endang, Lembang, 02 October 2009.

¹⁶² *Profil Kecamatan Lembang* (Lembang: Kantor Kecamatan Lembang, 2010).

¹⁶³ *Idem*

2,502 Catholics and the remaining includes some Buddhists and Hindus. From the total Muslim population, 87,651 are categorised as tithes-payers (*muzakki*).¹⁶⁴ In terms of contributions to Islamic propagation (*dakwah*), state organs played a role in supporting Islamic institutions, but this support was not as significant compared to that provided in Cimanggung, Sumedang (as discussed in Chapter Three). Successful *dakwah* efforts across Lembang over the last five decades depended primarily on help from individuals from private and civil organisations.

This demographic reality should provide sufficient caution against characterising Sunda as entirely Islamic. One Modernist leader argues that it is true that Islam has had an expansive presence throughout West Java but that it would be wrong to assume that the Sundanese possess an in-depth understanding or strict observance of Islam.¹⁶⁵ There are some places in the region where Islamic influence was dominant and where Muslims were more observant than in other places. These include Tasikmalaya, Ciamis and Garut in the south, Majalengka and Sumedang in the centre, and Cianjur and Sukabumi in the west. Purwakarta, Subang, Indramayu, Karawang and Bandung are territories where Islamic influence was less significant.¹⁶⁶ It is thus not surprising that since independence, Ciparay and Lembang, both in Bandung, became the bases of the native syncretic culture and currents.

The major *Aliran Kebatinan* organisation, the AKP, was strong in this region, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, but has weakened since the 1970s. In the 1980s it was divided, giving birth to a new organisation named Budidaya. While this split added to the drop in *Aliran Kebatinan's* influence, it is interesting that Budidaya has survived and retains a following there to date. In the meantime, Islam permeated into Lembang since the 1950s, and its doctrine and institutions were promoted in this established native-syncretic community, which in the end changed society.

Muslim Migration into Lembang

Readers should notice that the socio-political contexts during the 1940s to the 1960s had a tremendous impact on religious development across

¹⁶⁴ Data collected from Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama, KUA), Lembang, 27 July 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Interview, Dody S. Truna, Bandung, 3 April 2009.

¹⁶⁶ Interview, Hawe Setiawan, Bandung, 14 July 2010.

West Java, especially in Lembang. The political context was the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion, which caused social and political damage, anxiety and bloodshed and a forced migration of observing Muslims into other places in the region. Kees van Dijk's, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam: The Darul Islam in Indonesia*, sheds much light to understanding the damage the Darul Islam rebellion had on Sundanese society from its declaration in 1948 until its extermination in 1962. He points out that the rebellion had inflicted material damage and changed the lives of many people in West Java. He said "in the first quarter of 1952, Darul Islam inflicted damage to the tune of Rp. 9,981,366,- and 11,016 people were evacuated or fled their homes. From 1955 to 1962 the number of evacuees fluctuated between 209,355 in 1962 and 303,764 in 1958."¹⁶⁷ As hundreds of thousands of people evacuated from the areas and thousands of them fled their homes, there was thus a large number of migrants who entered secure places across West Java.

Hiroko Horikoshi in her study on the Darul Islam movement argued that the DI's insurgents jeopardised the internal security in the Priangan and thus brought about the general deterioration of the social conditions in this area which in the end created serious social and economic damage.¹⁶⁸ Horikoshi observes:

In the next decade Indonesia underwent both political and economical decline, and in Priangan the virtual absence of internal security caused by the DI insurgents contributed to the general deterioration of social conditions. Refugees from the fertile Priangan hills and plains flooded the major cities, thereby increasing the urban population along with the number of administrative problems. A sudden drop in agricultural productivity and a virtual cessation of commodity flows between regions, resulting from disruptions of the transportation system, worsened the already inflationary conditions in DI areas. The possibility of destroying the DI began to emerge only after the political climate in Jakarta changed in the early 1960s when Guided Democracy was put into effect.¹⁶⁹

In the Lembang case, the refugees or migrants included Muslims like religious teachers (*ustadz*) such as Haji Muhammad Ishak and Haji

¹⁶⁷ Van Dijk, *Rebellion under the Banner of Islam*, p. 105.

¹⁶⁸ Hiroko Horikoshi, 'The Dar ul-Islam Movement in West Java (1948-62): An Experience in the Historical Process', *Indonesia*, Vol. 20 (Oct, 1975), p. 77.

¹⁶⁹ *Idem*.

Mohammad Otong from Tasikmalaya and Haji Syarif Muhidin from Garut. The other important migrants were Haji Junaidi from Cianjur and Haji Ahmad Masduki from Central Jawa.¹⁷⁰ In their new surroundings, the migrants worked and lived a normal life. Those who were trained in Islamic schools or *pesantrens* brought Islamic values and practices with them. In a simple way, in their new social environment, the Traditionalists sought to maintain what they were obliged to perform according to the Islamic laws and doctrines they adhered to. They prayed, fasted, read the Quran and celebrated festivals including *mauludan*, *rajaban*, *nisfu sha'ban* and others.¹⁷¹ As they had to pray the communal Friday prayers, they struggled to build mosques for that purpose.¹⁷² Having inherited Islamic traditions and living the Islamic way, practicing Muslims played important roles in promoting Islamic practices and in organising *dakwah* activities and hence in furthering the Islamisation of Lembang.

Let me take Haji Mohammad Otong by way of example, even though other Muslim leaders may have made greater contributions. Haji Mohammad Otong was born in Tasikmalaya and attended Pesantren Cintawana in Tasik and Pesantren Sempur in Purwakarta. In 1960 he moved to Lembang to escape the DI/TII rebellion. With his religious training, ustadz Otong served as a religious teacher while promoting Islamic propagation (*dakwah*). This helped in his proposal to marry Mariam, the daughter of Haji Mohammad Toyib, then a well-known figure in Nyelindung Cikole, Lembang, and after his marriage, he joined his father-in-law in strengthening *dakwah* in the village. He used the mosque established by Haji Mohammad Toyib as the centre for religious and educational activities. By 1968 he established an Islamic elementary school named Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah (MI) in the mosque's compound. After a few years, many people of different social backgrounds came to study at the *madrasah* and attended religious activities in the mosque compound. As the religious activities increased, the mosque and the *madrasah* became centres of *dakwah* and increasingly counterbalanced *Aliran Kebatinan* practices and activities

¹⁷⁰ Interview, Haji Tatang Haidar, Lembang, 28 July 2010 and ustadz Asep, Bandung, 1 September 2014.

¹⁷¹ See Glossary.

¹⁷² Interview, Haji Tatang Haidar, Lembang, 28 July 2010 and ustadz Asep, Bandung, 1 September 2014.

in the village.¹⁷³ It is worth noting that Muslim individuals such as religious teachers who organised informal religious activities in private residences and in mosques had contributed substantially to introducing Islamic practices among the local people. And this success was strengthened by the increased presence of Islamic institutions such as mosques and *madrasahs*, *pesantrens* and others. As readers will see in what follows below, the growth of Islamic institutions very much helped the further expansion of *dakwah* activities among the local people in the rural areas of Lembang.

The Growth of Islamic Institutions and the Transmission of its Doctrines

As argued above, the migration of Muslims including the likes of religious teachers such as Haji Muhammad Ishak, Haji Otong, Haji Muhidin, Haji Junaidi and Haji Ahmad Masduki into Lembang, helped the consolidation of *Dakwahism* and Islamic institutions since the 1960s, and this also factored in the Islamisation of Lembang in the following years.¹⁷⁴ The growth of mosques as well as other institutions including Islamic schools (*madrasah*), Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), Islamic kindergarten (TPA) and Islamic religious group (*majlis taklim*) across the villages and districts was instrumental to this Islamisation. The mosques became centres of doctrine, worship, and of socio-religious activities. From the 1960s till 1970s, the most popular Islamic activity at mosques was learning the Quran and practicing daily prayers (*solat*). By the 1980s, the most popular Islamic activity was *pengajian* (learning the Quran and other religious subjects) at *majlis taklim*. These informal religious sessions organised in mosques or sometimes at private residences, attracted many people.¹⁷⁵ In Cikole, Mekarwangi and Wangunharja, *dakwah* challenged the growth of the *Aliran Kebatinan* community.¹⁷⁶

Let us look at the development of Islamic institutions in

¹⁷³ Interview, Haji Tajuddin, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

¹⁷⁴ Ibnu Hajar Apandi, 'Sekilas Perkembangan Islam di Desa Wangunharja Kecamatan Lembang Kabupaten Bandung Barat', unpublished document, Lembang, 26 March 2011. pp. 1-6.

¹⁷⁵ Interview, Haji Tatang Haidar, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

¹⁷⁶ Interview, Haji Tajuddin, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

Wangunharja village in Lembang as an example.¹⁷⁷ Wangunharja is one of 14 villages located across the Lembang sub-district of West Bandung. In the 1940s to the 1960s, the majority of Wangunharja's population were nominal Muslims. Mosques or *dakwah* efforts were rarely found. Folklore was a big element in popular culture and the commoners were devoted of mystical practices such as *ruwatan*, *slametan*, food offerings, et cetera.¹⁷⁸ The Islamisation of the village took place slowly, with the 1940s-1950s probably representing its initial stage. Muslim leaders in the village reported that this was when the first mosque was established before other Muslim institutions in subsequent decades.

The gradual Islamisation began with the founding of the Al-Ikhlâs Mosque in the sub-village of Cikawari. According to Masri Hidayat, the MUI head of Wangunharja village, the mosque was established in the 1950s. Another Muslim leader, ustadz Soleh Abdullah, claimed that the mosque had been built even earlier, in the 1940s. The building of this mosque owed much to Muslim *da'i* (preacher) such as Haji Kosasih, R. Hidayat, Haji Mansyur and ustadz Iip Sadikin. However, the holding of the congregational Friday prayers attracted only a few people. In the 1960s, the mosque augmented its *dakwah* activities by building an Islamic elementary school, named Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Cikawari.¹⁷⁹

In the 1960s, through the efforts of ustadz Iip Sadikin, Haji Idi Alisan and Ahi Syahidin two further mosques were established, al-Huda and al-Mukmin. This project was linked to the religious campaign held with the support of the early New Order Regime. Upon the failed coup attempt on 30 September 1965, government officials worked with local religious leaders to promote "*operasi mental*" (mental operation), encouraging people to embrace Islamic teachings. The government officials, with the help of local Islamic leaders, intensified *dakwah* across the village. They established the mosques in the hope that people would be blessed with divine guidance (*al-huda*) by which they might be persuaded to become believers (*al-mukmin*). So the names of these mosques refer to this *dakwah* objective by targeting Communist

¹⁷⁷ This description largely rests on Ibnu Hajar Apandi, *Sekilas Perkembangan Islam*, pp. 1-6.

¹⁷⁸ Interview, Dede Atmaja, senior leader of Budidaya, Cikole, Lembang, 30 September, 2009.

¹⁷⁹ Interview, MUI head of Wangunharja, Lembang, 27 July 2010.

sympathisers and those Sundanese who remained observing the *adat* and the legacies of their ancestors.

From the 1970s to 2000s, six more mosques were built across the village including Miftahul Khoir, Nurul Arifin, Al-Hikmah, Nurul Iman, Al-Hidayah and Darussalam. Since *dakwah* activities centred in mosques they generally involved fewer female Muslims. However, since the mid-1980s, female Muslims began to hold regular congregations in the mosques and also they established a *majlis taklim* named al-Hidayah (1984), reminiscent of the one of the same name organised by the New Order ruling party, Golkar.¹⁸⁰

In the early 1990s, the *dakwah* in Wangunharja village intensified with the establishment of Pesantren Salafiyah Ar-Rochma in 1993. The *pesantren* was established by ustadz Dedeng Abdul Hamid from Garut. With the help of his wife, Euis Mumih, ustadz Dedeng initially based his *pesantren's* activities in the al-Huda mosque. This *pesantren* grew and eventually could afford the construction of its own building. In the following years, the *pesantren* introduced classes at kindergarten, secondary and high school levels. The development of this Islamic school paralleled that of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah of Cikawari which was centred in the al-Ikhlas mosque.

Due to the sustained interest in Islamic education, in 1991, Haji Otong from Tasikmalaya established a secondary school named Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) Nurul Huda. In 1992, Haji Otong died and he was succeeded by his son, Haji Tajuddin who attempted to continue his predecessors' *dakwah* albeit with some innovations. In 1994, he transformed Nurul Huda into an integrated boarding school named Pesantren Nurul Huda.¹⁸¹ He also established ties with the government to develop agro-business in the village. To this day, Muslims of Tasik descent still make important contributions to Lembang society. Amongst these is Aam Abdussalam, an important Muslim leader who graduated from Pesantren Sukahideng Tasikmalaya.¹⁸² Given the fact that Muslim leaders from Tasikmalaya come from Nahdlatul Ulama backgrounds, the socio-religious character of Lembang has been very much influenced by Muslim Traditionalism.

In the 2000s, the Al-Mansuriyah Assa'adah foundation was

¹⁸⁰ Interview, ustadz Dedeng, Lembang, 2 September 2014.

¹⁸¹ Interview, Haji Tajuddin, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

¹⁸² Interview, Haji Tatang Haidar, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

established with the objective of improving the educational levels of the people. The foundation also introduced new Islamic schools from kindergarten up to high school levels.¹⁸³

In 2007, Wangunharja female Muslims established another *majlis taklim* named al-Mubarak, which in Arabic means “the blessed.” Aside from these two *majlis taklim*, nearly every mosque in Wangunharja conducted Quranic recitation or other religious study sessions. These sessions were conducted by the Mosque Prosperity Council (DKM) with the support of the village office of the Indonesian Islamic Scholars’ Council (MUI). The development of *dakwah* in Wangunharja as visible in the growth of the number of mosques, *madrasah* and *majlis taklim* was similar to its development in other parts of Lembang.¹⁸⁴

From a handful of mosques in the 1950s, Lembang today has 151 mosques, 105 *langgar/mushalla*. Each village has numerous mosques. There are 156 *majlis taklim* and 320 teachers of Quranic recitation classes across the region. There are also 88 *khatibs* (preachers for Friday prayer) and 38 *muballighs* (common preachers), *dakwah* institutions for children abound and include 53 Quranic Kindergartens (TPA), 28 Islamic Kindergartens and 5 Islamic Elementary Schools (MI). There are 5 Islamic Secondary Schools (MTs), 1 Islamic High School (MA), 1 Islamic Tertiary School and 4 *pesantrens*. Almost all of these institutions are owned privately or by organisations. In comparison, Lembang has 7 churches and 1 *vihara*.¹⁸⁵

The head of Cikole village, Adang Soabana, argues that institutional growth enabled the intensification of Islamic doctrines’ transmission leading to higher rates of conversion. Adang mentioned the RW 13 neighbourhood as an example where there is now a mosque with an active *majlis taklim* organised by adult female Muslims. During the 1980s and 1990s, the vast majority of the neighbourhood were *Aliran Kebatinan* adherents.¹⁸⁶

In Mekarwangi, the influence of Islam has very much deepened.

¹⁸³ Ibnu Hajar Apandi, ‘Sekilas Perkembangan Islam’, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ Interview, ustadzah Euis Mumih, Lembang, 2 September 2014.

¹⁸⁵ Data collected from the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama, KUA), Lembang, 27 July 2010.

¹⁸⁶ RW refers to Rukun Warga or an administrative unit in a village which consists of several sub-administrative units the so called Rukun Tetangga (RT).

During the 1960s-1980s, for example, Mekarwangi village was known as an important *Aliran Kebatinan* centre. By the mid-1980s, the number of *Aliran Kebatinan* followers reached into the thousands. Since the 1990s, Islamisation, however, has decreased their strength. The pattern of Islamisation in Cikole and Mekarwangi was similar to that in Kampung Cibereum, Wangunharja.¹⁸⁷ In the mid-1980s a mosque was established by Haji Mana and used to promote Islamic doctrines among adults and children with the establishment of a *majlis taklim* and a TPA.

The most important doctrine the Islamic institutions addressed was the belief in the absolute unity of Allah, called *tauhid* (monotheism). Rejection of *tauhid* may lead to *shirk* (polytheism) or idolatry. *Shirk* means to associate or attribute anyone or anything with Allah and is regarded as an unforgivable act.¹⁸⁸ My informant in Lembang, Haji Tatang Haidar, pointed out that the major point stressed in *dakwah* during the 1960s to the 1980s was *aqidah*, especially teaching monotheism (*tauhid*) and the Islamic pillars (*rukun Islam*).¹⁸⁹ This stressing point aimed to counter syncretic practices upheld by the people in the region which is regarded as a form of polytheism. Islamisation's main focus was thus the promotion of monotheism which challenged the cultural syncretism especially the *Penghayat* upheld.

Changing of Land Ownership

The expansion of Islam over the last few decades has changed the structure of land-ownership through the increased demand for land by Muslims for *dakwah* usage, their own personal interests, or for a mix of *dakwah* and entrepreneurship. Haji Tajuddin, the owner of Pesantren Nurul Huda of Nyalindung, for example, owns a sizeable area of agricultural land. In the last couple of years, with the support of the Department of Agriculture, his *pesantren* was selected as a model for agro-business development. Haji Tajuddin said he established the *pesantren* for both economic and *dakwah* reasons:

In the last couple of years we have sought a creative way of conducting *dakwah* by promoting agricultural initiatives rather than merely through preaching and teaching. To make this initiative a

¹⁸⁷ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, 26 July 2010.

¹⁸⁸ Interview, Haji Tatang Haidar, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

¹⁸⁹ *Idem*.

dakwah, we included people from other faiths and cultural backgrounds. Many peasant members of the *Penghayat* community joined this agro-business program. We organised regular meetings with all peasants, often in mosques, in which the *Penghayat* participated too. When the time for prayer came, the Muslims went to pray while the *Penghayat* remained. Although they did not perform prayers, they joined us in this socio-economic interaction centred in the mosque. In order to make the business more viable, I am seeking more land to purchase in this area.¹⁹⁰

This shows religious expansion with an economic connection. Regarding land ownership, the expansion of agro-business will automatically require the purchase of more land in the village, which will increase land prices. While this project is still in the pipeline, I have been informed that in Wangunhardja, a village several kilometres from Nyalindung, land prices have gone up, ultimately causing unemployment in the village as poor *Penghayat* farmers can no longer afford to rent land to make a living.¹⁹¹ It is also true that the population growth in this area has become another factor in the rise of unemployment.

Asep Hari was anxious about the concentration of agricultural land in the hands of people from outside the village or by the wealthy in the village. He stated that these land holders included, for instance, the chairman of the consultative assembly of the Prosperity and Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), popularly called Pak Haji. Pak Haji is said to have purchased approximately 100,000 square metres in Cibereum in Wangunharja village in 2009. Some people in the village believe that it was the PKS that bought the land although the transaction was carried out in Pak Haji's name. Wangunharja's village secretary, Entar Sutarya, said that to the best of his knowledge, the land purchased was to be used for social needs, that is, for the construction of a training centre. Prior to the transaction, the land was used to grow hardwood trees. According to Entar, there is serious concern about this transaction among the villagers, some of whom protested due to the fact that the transaction raised land prices. Most recently, the PKS used

¹⁹⁰ Interview, Haji Tajuddin, Cikole, Lembang, 28 July 2010.

¹⁹¹ Interview, Entar Sutarya, Lembang, 1 October 2009. The rest of this sub chapter is also largely based on this interview.

philanthropic funds from Kuwait for the construction of mosques and for the execution of socio-religious programs in the village.

For poor people in the village, this price hike creates huge economic problems as it places the land outside their financial capacity to rent, let alone to purchase. Since 2010, the unemployment rate in the village has increased significantly and caused an unprecedented exodus of villagers seeking work overseas as Indonesian Workers (Tenaga Kerja Indonesia, TKI). The village has never before seen emigration on this scale. Asep Hari's concern about this problem led him to meet with Pak Haji. In the meeting Pak Haji claimed that the land was taken over to create a community project and to promote human resource development and training, especially for disadvantaged locals. Until now, the anticipated community project has yet to be realised. Asep Hari's attempt at obtaining an explanation as to why Pak Haji's promise never materialised received no satisfactory answer.¹⁹² Rather, what Pak Haji and his allies from PKS seemed to have done was to help *dakwah* activities in the village with philanthropic funds from the Middle East. For the *Penghayat* in the village, the *dakwah* programs the PKS promoted with aid from Arab countries is unacceptable.¹⁹³ A *Penghayat* in Wangunharja protested why the mosque, constructed as an Islamic trust (*wakaf*), was built in the village office compound whereas the land is owned by the state and therefore its use for mosque construction should have been prevented.

Aliran Kebatinan in Decline

The Weakening of the Syncretic Basis

With the significant growth of Islamic institutions and considerable spread of Islamic doctrines and *dakwah* in Lembang since the mid-1960s, Islam grew steadily in sharp contrast to *Aliran Kebatinan's* constant decline. The introduction of Islamic institutions and the

¹⁹² A leader of the Budidaya organisation from Wangunharja told me recently that Pak Haji purchased sizeable plots of land and used them to raise cattle and to plant grass; while other remaining parts were unused. As far as I am aware, there is no evidence to show that the land has been used for community development programs as promised. Interview with Ayi Endang, Lembang, 21 February 2014.

¹⁹³ Interview, Ayi Endang, Lembang, 25 March 2014.

practices they promoted came at the expense of Sundanese syncretic practices such as *sesajen*, *ruwatan* and *wayang* performances, which were observed especially in mountainous areas. This decline resulted from the weakening of, to borrow Geertz' phrase, 'the syncretic basis'¹⁹⁴ of the Sundanese culture on the one hand, and internal divisions within AKP, on the other.¹⁹⁵

Gauging by the increased attendance at the mosques and *pengajian* sessions conducted by religious teachers, popular adherence to Islam increased significantly. All the religious teachers I met admitted their involvement in teaching the people in the mosques and in their surroundings in Lembang to read and understand the Quran, the *aqidah* (Islamic theology), and the *ibadat* (Islamic compulsory worship).¹⁹⁶ These teachers usually came from a Traditionalist *pesantren* background in which they had been instructed by using many standard textbooks, commonly known as *kitab kuning* (yellow books). The teachers told me that in their teaching they went back to what they had learned from these books, such as, for instance, *Tijan al-Durari*¹⁹⁷ and *Tuhfatul Murid*¹⁹⁸ authored by Shaikh Ibrahim al-Bajuri (d. 1860), and *Jauharat al-Tauhid* by Shaikh Ibrahim al-Laqqani (d. 1631) on *aqidah*. Textbooks on Islamic law they mentioned include the *Safinat al-Najah* by Shaikh Salim bin Sumair al-Hadrami (d. 1271 A.H), *Bulugul Maram* by Ibnu Hajar al-'Asqalani (d. 1449) and *Kifayat al-Akhyar*¹⁹⁹ by Imam Taqiyuddin bin Muhammad al-Husaini (d. 829 A.H). Of course they were very well versed in the contents of one of the most significant

¹⁹⁴ Geertz, 'Ritual and Social Change', pp. 32-54

¹⁹⁵ The leadership crisis of the AKP has split the movement into three groups. Apart from Budidaya that plays a leading role in Lembang to date, there are two other associations named Aji Dipa and Bumi Hantoro which identified themselves with AKP. Aji Dipa has some following in Pelabuhan Ratu, West Java and Bumi Hantoro has a following in Lampung, South Sumatra. Abd. Mutholib Ilyas and Abd Ghofur Imam, *Aliran Kepercayaan*, p. 81.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with K.H. Asep, ustadz Mahdi and ustadz Saeful Hakim, Lembang, 2-4 September 2014.

¹⁹⁷ The reviews and commentaries to *Tijan al-Durari* named *Syarh Tijan al-Durari* is authored by Shaikh Nawawi al-Jawi popularly known as Shaikh Nawawi al-Bantani (d. 1897).

¹⁹⁸ *Tuhfatul Murid* by al-Bajuri is the reviews and commentaries (*syarh*) to *Jauharat al-Tauhid*.

¹⁹⁹ *Kifayat al-Akhyar* is the reviews and commentaries (*syarh*) to *Ghayah wa al-Taqrif* authored by Abu Syuja' (d. 1196).

tafsirs for the study of the Quran, namely *Tafsir Jalalain* authored by Jalaluddin al-Mahalli (d. 1459) and Jalaluddin al-Suyuti (d. 1505). Last but not least mention should be made of *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, one of the best Islamic works in Sufism and ethics by Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111).²⁰⁰ Their socio-religious background as Traditionalists enabled them to approach the people in Lembang to embrace Islam without being confrontational but rather through friendly and appealing ways.²⁰¹

The Islamisation of Lembang was also linked to the region's prevailing social and political dynamics. With deep Islamisation and social change during the New Order, *Aliran Kebatinan* followers faced many social constraints, particularly in matters of education, employment and marriage. Adang Soabana explained that proof of one's official religion had to be produced when seeking admission to schools, in applications for work and to register marriages. Thus, he maintained that *Aliran Kebatinan* adherents faced religious discrimination when looking for employment.²⁰² School admission forms require applicants to answer a question about their religion or the religion of their parents. As a result, pupils whose parents adhere to *Aliran Kebatinan* must choose one of the five official religions, namely Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism in order to be admitted to schools because each pupil has to be instructed in one of these religions.²⁰³

Furthermore, all pupils must follow religious studies (*pelajaran agama*) and sit compulsory exams on the subject. This requirement induces them to learn about religious doctrines, particularly Islam and to interact with their Muslim schoolmates. This social interaction has to some extent increased their knowledge and interest in Islam, resulting in conversions from *Aliran Kebatinan* to Islam among the youth.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Interview, K.H. Asep and ustadz Mahdi, Lembang, 1-2 September 2014.

²⁰¹ Interview, K.H. Junaidi, Lembang, 03 September 2014. Van Bruinessen's *Kitab Kuning* is an important work that gives us valuable information about the textbooks which are used as teaching materials and *dakwah* references especially in Traditionalist *pesantrens*. Van Bruinessen, *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren dan Tarekat*, pp. 142-176.

²⁰² Interview, Adang Soabana, Lembang, 30 September 2009.

²⁰³ And more recently, Confucianism has been added as the state's official religion number six.

²⁰⁴ Interview, Adang Soabana, Lembang, 30 September 2009.

Islamisation progressively undermined *Aliran Kebatinan's* native-syncretic culture and caused disruptions in, to borrow Geertz' phrase, the 'simple uniformity of religious belief' of the *Penghayats* in Lembang as well as in other parts of West Java.²⁰⁵ This transformation corresponds to the changes that took place among the Javanese in the mid-twentieth century in East Java as Geertz observed.²⁰⁶ Geertz noted that the syncretic basis of Javanese culture has changed since the first half of the twentieth century. He argued:

.....in all but the most isolated parts of Java, both the simple territorial basis of village social integration and the syncretic basis of its cultural hegemony have been progressively undermined over the past fifty years. Population growth, urbanization, monetization, occupational differentiation, and the like, have combined to weaken the traditional ties of peasant social structure; and the winds of doctrines which have accompanied the appearance of these structural changes have disturbed the simple uniformity of religious belief and practice characteristic of an earlier period. The rise of nationalism, Marxism, and Islamic reform as ideologies, which resulted in part from the increasing complexity of Javanese society, has affected not only the large cities where these creeds first appeared and have always had their greatest strength, but has had heavy impact on the smaller towns and villages as well.²⁰⁷

This impact was increasingly apparent following the momentous changes in the mid-1960s, especially after the failed 30 September 1965 coup attempt. The attempt that killed six generals and a young daughter of general Nasution's, caused serious political turmoil. Rex Mortimer observed the developments after the abortive action, arguing that "although Soekarno insisted on devising a political solution to the crisis, and formidable punitive action, the army moved on its own volition to ban PKI activities, arrest Communists and suspects, and suspend members of the party holding official positions."²⁰⁸ Mortimer described:

A ruthless campaign of extermination of Communists and alleged Communists was inaugurated in Central Java and quickly spread to

²⁰⁵ Geertz, 'Ritual and Social Change', pp. 32-54.

²⁰⁶ *Idem.*

²⁰⁷ *Idem.*, p. 36.

²⁰⁸ Rex Mortimer, *Indonesian Communism under Soekarno* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 389.

East Java and other provinces. Most accounts agree that the army triggered the massacres that took place in Indonesia in the following months, but in most places it enlisted the aid of Moslem and other anti-Communist youth groups, who probably accounted for the greater part of the death toll.²⁰⁹

Because the PKI was strongly against any deeper penetration of Islam, especially in Java and also in West Java, this new social and political context paved the way for Islam to grow deeper and to expand. Ricklefs observed that the annihilation of the PKI demolished one of the pillars of *aliran* politics and thereby was undoubtedly essential in facilitating the Islamisation surge.²¹⁰ In Java, after the PKI was destroyed and the political party system had changed so that the many nationalist local parties had merged into one PNI party no longer with branches in the villages,²¹¹ the Nationalists experienced what Ricklefs called a “complete de-institutionalisation of *abangan* village life.”²¹² This institutional decline weakened the nationalist and *abangan* capability to “defend and promote *abangan* social, cultural and spiritual styles.”²¹³

In West Java, the PKI destruction allowed Muslims to strengthen their *dakwah* agenda and use this moment to support their institutionalisation of Islam largely through private initiatives but not rarely with the support of the state.²¹⁴ Muslim leaders promoted *dakwah* activities in both rural and urban areas. The Traditionalists played a greater role in rural areas while the Modernists successfully

²⁰⁹ *Idem*, p. 390.

²¹⁰ Ricklefs, *Islamisation and its Opponents in Java*, p. 162.

²¹¹ After the 1971 election, the New Order regime changed the political party system (officially since January 1973) by fusing all political parties into two party coalitions apart from Golkar, which claimed to be a functional group but in fact was used as the vehicle of the ruling class. These two party coalitions include the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), which united Traditionalists and Modernists, and Indonesian Democratic Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia, PDI), which fused Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia, PNI) and the Catholic and Protestant Parties. For details of this political party fusion see Ricklefs, *Islamisation and its Opponents in Java*, p. 163.

²¹² *Idem*, p. 164.

²¹³ *Idem*.

²¹⁴ Interview, Sobana Hardjasaputra, Bandung, 15 April 2009.

promoted and uplifted Islamic lifestyles in the cities. Their influence, however, sometimes overlapped. *Dakwah* in both areas revolved around mosques, *pesantrens*, universities, schools, communities, publications and fashion. I do not argue that urban Islamic activism was directly linked to the progress of rural *dakwah* activities, but rather I suggest that urban and rural *dakwah* expansion happened in sequence or probably in tandem. Adang Soabana said that since the 1980s, *dakwah* activity had increased significantly in Lembang and that this was clearly discernible by the increased number of mosques in the region that played an important role as agents for the dissemination of Islamic doctrines and cultures.²¹⁵ This trend continues to date.²¹⁶ This Islamisation pattern resembles that in other parts of the country, where the role of the mosques along with other Islamic institutions was central.²¹⁷

Preserving the Creed through Family Ties

Surprisingly, the Islamisation project across Lembang had not wiped out the *Aliran Kebatinan* or caused the total extermination of its influence in society. Rather, the *Penghayat* remained on the defence and did their best to survive with minimal expressions of their syncretic culture such as celebrating the *Saka* New Year, organising *slametan* and *sesajen* gatherings and such.²¹⁸ Most *Penghayats*, however, adopted a more cautious attitude toward Islam. Many of them accepted Islam as their religion on their identity cards but demonstrated little interest in observing Islamic rituals. Popularly known as 'Islam KTP', this group contributed to sustaining *Aliran Kebatinan* culture and later became the main agents of its revival in Lembang.

Several causes led to the continued existence of the *Aliran Kebatinan*. *First* was the strict preservation of its culture transmitted through family ties.²¹⁹ *Second*, the Islamic *dakwah* in some respects failed to reconcile aspects of Islamic doctrine with *Aliran Kebatinan* culture and values. As Niels Mulder noted, *Aliran Kebatinan* proponents

²¹⁵ Interview, Adang Soabana, Lembang, 30 September 2009.

²¹⁶ Interview, ustadz Mahdi, Lembang, 2 September, 2014.

²¹⁷ Interview, K.H. Maman Sumantri, Lembang's Chairman of Indonesian Islamic Scholars' Council (MUI), Lembang, 4 September 2014.

²¹⁸ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, 8 October 2009.

²¹⁹ Interview, Suparman, Lembang, 8 October 2009.

were dissatisfied with organised religion, especially given their commitment towards an authentic traditional belief, or in Niels Mulder's words, a "valid emotional form of personal cultural expression."²²⁰ *Third, dakwah* and its organisations failed to address the *Penghayat's* socio-economic needs. One good example is the purchase by a leader of a Muslim party of sizeable plots of land, which pushed up land prices in the village. This taking over of these plots of land was against the economic interests of the local people. *Penghayat*, most of whom are peasants and labourers who very much depend on affordable agricultural land and low-prices basic commodities, were naturally upset over this inconsiderate transaction.

Different from world religions with their books and prophets, history, intellectual traditions, sophisticated civilizations and institutions, *Aliran Kebatinan* only had their immediate surroundings and family at their disposal mainly working with simple doctrines and oral traditions incomparable with these world religions they had to face. To explain *Aliran Kebatinan* we need to have a look at these family ties in order to understand how it survived in Lembang in the deepening process of Islamisation and how it was contested by the personal convictions of its members sometimes causing them to go over to Islam or back.

Aliran Kebatinan's spread across Lembang took place from the 1950s to the 1980s. This was due to the contribution of some individuals of the first generation including, Anwar Wijaya, Wira, Umar, Emeh, Enjum and Suratma. These are believed to have been the first people to introduce the AKP to Lembang. Anwar Wijaya was the most prominent figure among the *Aliran Kebatinan* followers in this region. He travelled to various places across West Java.

Wira was known as the most prominent figure in the propagation of the *Aliran Kebatinan* in Cibedug in the Cikole village. In carrying out his mission, he was aided by his allies including Iko and Atmaja.²²¹ Wira's daughter, Edah, married Atmaja's son, Ade, currently known as a senior figure in the Cibedug *Penghayat* community. Atmaja's nephew, Ayep Supriatna, is among the new generation and enjoys a leadership role among the youth. Ayep married Euies who was born into a Muslim

²²⁰ Mulder, 'Aliran Kebatinan', p. 108.

²²¹ Interview, Ade Amas, Lembang, 8 October 2009.

family. His marriage was conducted according to Islamic law but his wife, Euies, eventually abandoned Islam for *Aliran Kebatinan*. The other, currently a senior leader in the area, is Rahmat, the son of Iko, who is known to have been an important ally of Wira's.

Similar to Cibedug, Budidaya membership in Wangunharja has been sustained by demanding family members' strict loyalty to the tradition. In Desa Wangunharja, almost all Budidaya members (approximately 50 people) belong to the family of Suratma. Suratma was a first-generation adherent and connected to Mei Kartawinata and his allies, who were involved in propagating *Aliran Kebatinan* in Lembang. Suratma's son, Ujang Yaya, has five children, Rika, Asep, Ayi, Ajang and Eden. Eden married Anwar Wijaya's grandson and is now an active member of the Budidaya organisation. Ayi, also an active member, married a Muslim woman, Nyi Wiwi. In order to avoid complications, Ayi married Nyi Wiwi according to Islamic law, which meant he had to hide his identity. One year after their wedding, Nyi Wiwi began to wonder why her husband never performed Islamic rituals such as *salat* (prayer), *ngaji* (reciting Quran), and why he never fasted in the month Ramadhan. She questioned her husband about this and was shocked to discover that her husband was a *Penghayat*. This confession created some turbulence in their one year-old marriage. Nyi Wiwi immediately left the house and returned to her parents. In order to save his marriage and family, Ayi tried to convince his wife about the reason why he embraced the religion, hoping that she would also convert. After several weeks of arguments and persuasion, Nyi Wiwi finally embraced her husband's belief. The reason behind her decision to become a *Penghayat*, as she related, was that its religious precepts are simpler, and offer her more happiness and security than Islam as she understood it. She claimed to have been frightened of the threat to go to *neraka* (hell) in Islam, while for her, belief in hell is not rational because nobody can ever know about life after death. "It is not our business," she stated.²²²

Suratma's grandson, Asep Hari, Ayi's brother, also married a Muslim woman named Tin Tin Nurhayati who was born into Haji Mulya's family. Like Wiwi, Nurhayati eventually abandoned Islam. In my interview with her, Nurhayati explained why she embraced *Aliran*

²²² Interview, Nyi Wiwi, Lembang, 7 October 2009.

Kebatinan. She stated that she found her new belief simple and comfortable because of the way its followers manifested it in social interaction. "My husband has been a good model as a husband, father and member of society; he has never overstepped the traditional limits of *mapipitu*, that is, *maen*, *maling*, *madon*, *madat*, *minum*, *mateni*, *mangani*."²²³ On the other hand, what Muslim preachers teach in mosques and during *pengajian* sessions has become mere empty teaching. Many Muslims are committing *mapipitu* and thus violate the values of their own religion. "In spite of the increasing presence of Muslim institutions and symbols elsewhere in the village, I have not seen Islam in the reality of Muslim society," she stated.²²⁴ "There is even an *ustadz* (religious teacher) who practices polygamy while the faith I now hold prohibits such practice," she asserted.²²⁵

Its insistence on monogamy has been an important reason why Wiwi was interested in and continued to adhere to this syncretic tradition. In her eyes, in his family, her husband was a key figure in leading and propagating *Aliran Kebatinan*. His leadership is authoritative and his contribution crucial in the recruitment of new followers. He is outspoken in promoting the economic interests and civil rights of his fellow *Penghayat*.

However, the most important reason behind Budidaya's recent state of affairs is the adoption of legal reform at the national level. As said above, in 2006 the government issued law number 32/2006 on population registration, which provided the legal basis for the protection of the *Penghayat's* civil rights. The law allows them to marry according to their *adat* and to register their marriages at the Registry

²²³ *Maen* is gambling; *maling* is thieving; *madon* is venting lust/womanizing; *madat* means using drugs, *minum* means drinking alcohol, *mateni* means killing and *mangani* means acting in a gluttonous way, greedy, voracious (*Penghayat* may also translate it as 'gossip'). R.R. Hardjadibrata, calls these seven prohibitions *mim pitu* rather than *mapipitu*. He explains *mim pitu* as follows: "*mim n.Ar.* the fifth letter of the Arabic alphabet, similar to m; *mim pitu Jav.* the seven Javanese commandments of *madat* opiate; *madon* womanizing; *maén* gambling; *minum* drinking; *mangani* gluttony; *maling* stealing; *maténi* killing." See *Sundanese English Dictionary* compiled by R.R. Hardjadibrata, Department of Asian Languages and Studies Monash University Clayton, Australia, Based on *Soendanees-Nederlands Woordenboek* by Eringa, pp. 521 and 536.

²²⁴ Interview, Tin Tin, Lembang, 8 October 2009.

²²⁵ *Idem*.

Office.²²⁶ In October 2009, Asep Hari, the leader of *Aliran Kebatinan* in Lembang celebrated the marriage of his daughter Neng Yeni Mulyani which was conducted according to *adat*. Neng Yeni was proposed to by a Muslim man named Asep Rudi Setiawan.²²⁷ Asep Rudi agreed that the marriage was to be undertaken in accordance with law number 32/2006. By doing so, Asep Rudi implicitly declined to marry according to Islamic law, as regulated by Law No. 1/1974 on marriages.

Recent Signs of Revival?

Obtaining Political Recognition in Law No. 23/2006

In the light of preserving their creed, the *Penghayat* struggled to survive and sought to re-emerge. Signs of its revival have been apparent since 2000 and is evident in their persistent search for the legal recognition of their civil rights and culture reconstruction, such as in the case of *adat* marriages and so on.²²⁸ They won this struggle with the issuance of Law Number 23/2006 regarding Population Registration. Since then, its membership has slowly but steadily increased. It is, however, not simple to obtain accurate statistics on the number of *Aliran Kebatinan* followers because many of them hide their true religious affiliations, refusing to reveal their religious identity for social and political reasons.²²⁹ One respondent said that the total number of *Penghayat*, especially those associated with the Budidaya organisation, is about eight hundred across Lembang.²³⁰ This constitutes a small minority within an overwhelmingly Muslim population.

Nursigit, of the Lembang District Office staff, confirmed this increase and affirmed that the *Aliran Kebatinan* seems to have been enjoying a revival in the Reform Era.²³¹ Its adherents have galvanised their struggle in defence of what they claim to be the only authentic

²²⁶ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, 07 October 2009.

²²⁷ *Idem*.

²²⁸ Interview, Engkus Ruswana, Bandung, 17 July 2010.

²²⁹ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, 08 October 2009.

²³⁰ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, 08 October 2009. This claim exceeds the official number issued by the Lembang District Administration Office, which is 407 persons. See *Profil Kecamatan Lembang* (Lembang: Kantor Kecamatan Lembang, 2010).

²³¹ Interview, Nursigit, Lembang District Office, Lembang, 27 July 2010.

Sundanese faith and culture.²³² Of late, more *Penghayats* have gained the courage to express their identity. Some of them even came to the Lembang District Office to declare that they were not Muslims, but that they have their own belief.²³³

This development inspired caution among Muslims. Muslim leaders in Cikole village pre-empted this revival with the construction of mosques and the promotion of *dakwah* activities. Moreover, in almost every village in Lembang one can find a Quranic Kindergarten (TPA). The exchange I had with Dede Atmadja, the *Aliran Kebatinan* leader in Cibedug village, epitomises how the cultural difference between *Aliran Kebatinan* followers and Muslims remains entrenched in the face of the intensified campaign of *dakwah*. His grand-daughter graduated from the TPA in his village. On a wall near in his living room hung his grand-daughter graduation picture, in which the child is wearing a headscarf. When asked, "How could your grand daughter join the Quranic class?" he replied with confidence, "Well, out there she might engage in Islamic training, but at home she indulges in *Aliran Kebatinan* customs."²³⁴

Attempts by *Penghayats'* leaders to consolidate the difference have mostly been articulated in various forms of resistance.²³⁵ *First*, in their hostility towards Islamic symbols. Niels Mulder describes this resistance as manifesting "an anti-Islamic mentality."²³⁶ This is also seen in their critical stance towards the collaboration of Islamic institutions with state organs at the grassroots. For instance, they denounce the growing presence of Islamic institutions and culture across the villages such as mosques, Islamic schools, Quranic kindergartens, Muslim dress and the mushrooming Islamic movements and organisations.²³⁷ The *second* important act of resistance among some Sundanese in Lembang was abandoning the practice of 'Islam KTP'²³⁸ which they had allowed to exist in less secure times. *Third*, is

²³² Interview, Toyibin Wiranatakoesoema, Bandung, 15 April, 2009.

²³³ Interview, Nursigit, Lembang, 27 July 2010.

²³⁴ Interview, Dede Atmaja, Cikole, Lembang, 30 September, 2009.

²³⁵ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, Bandung, 08 October 2009.

²³⁶ Mulder, 'Aliran Kebatinan', p. 109.

²³⁷ Interview, Ade Amas, Lembang, 7 October 2009.

²³⁸ 'Islam KTP' is a common term used in Indonesia to indicate nominal Muslims who embraced Islam but partly because of political reasons do not practice it.

their sustained rejection of Islam despite its increasing presence and dominance. *Penghayat* strongly uphold their faith and refuse to convert when they marry Muslims or people of other religions. The Budidaya chairman in West Java claims that in case of inter-religious marriages with Muslims, more Muslims than *Penghayats* would end up converting to each other's conviction. The protection of their syncretic creed was achieved through close ties with their families, which cements loyalty to their tradition. Since the group seeks to consolidate its identity, its concern has been in championing Sundanese symbols, institutions and culture over others. When I tried to attract their attention to the Traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama, which shares similar religious interests with them, particularly in honouring *adat*, a *Penghayat* leader contended that "all Muslims and their organisations are the same because they all are hostile to *Aliran Kebatinan*."²³⁹

Another front of resistance involved the struggle to obtain legal and political recognition, and the *Penghayat* passed up no opportunity to achieve this end. In the drafting of the Constitution (1945), Wongsonegoro, later the chairman of All-Indonesia Kebatinan Congress Body (BKKI), succeeded in inserting the word "Kepercayaan" into article 29 (2), which reads:

The State guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his/her religion and to perform rituals according to his/her religion and belief (*Kepercayaan*).²⁴⁰

This provided *Aliran Kebatinan* with a constitutional basis. However, immediately on gaining power in the aftermath of 1965 coup attempt, Soeharto led a profound socio-political transformation across the country. Since then, the Soeharto regime promoted religiosity yet restricted the development of *Aliran Kebatinan*. The state preferred to officially recognise world religions and categorised *Aliran Kebatinan* as a cultural feature of the nation. All its followers were encouraged to embrace one official religion while maintaining *Aliran Kebatinan* as their tradition. Many of the *Penghayat* wanted to keep only *Aliran*

²³⁹ Interview, Asep Hari, Lembang, 08 October 2009.

²⁴⁰ *Himpunan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan yang Berkaitan dengan Kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Nilai Budaya Seni dan Film, Direktorat Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, 2006), p. 4.

Kebatinan as their faith. This opposition created tension in many places across West Java.

In 1974 the government issued law number 1/1974 on marriages. Following this law, there were many regulations from various levels of government, from the President and ministers, down to the governor. These legal products largely address the implementation of the law, especially regarding marriage registration for *Penghayat*. Generally, they reflect the political line, which encouraged all citizens to embrace a sanctioned religion and to marry according to their respective religions. Exceptions were the decrees issued by Minister of Justice Mujiono in 1982, and by Minister of Home Affairs Rudini in 1990.²⁴¹ Mujiono's decree acknowledged *adat* marriage outright, while Rudini's decision was premised in legal and humanitarian arguments that made *adat* marriages conditional on judicial discretion (*Penetapan Pengadilan*).²⁴² This policy, however, was abolished in 1995 by the decree of Minister of Home Affairs Yogy S. Memet, signed by the Director-General for General Governance Affairs and Regional Autonomy, Sumitro Maskun.²⁴³

Another effort was undertaken in 2000 with the establishment of the Civil Registry Consortium, which sought to formulate a Civil Registry Bill. The draft was ready by 2004 and was then revised several times before it was brought before Parliament in 2006 under the name *Administrasi Kependudukan* or Population Registration as said above. This law includes various articles that regulate *adat* marriages.²⁴⁴ In order to provide the rules of the game, in 2009, the Ministers of Home Affairs and Culture and Tourism issued a joint decree providing detailed guidelines on the provision of services to *Penghayat*,²⁴⁵ who welcomed the law with much joy, declaring, "We have achieved

²⁴¹ *Idem*, pp. 374-376. Also Interview with Engkus Ruswana, Bandung, 2 July 2009.

²⁴² *Idem*.

²⁴³ *Idem*, pp. 378-383.

²⁴⁴ See *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 23 Tahun 2006 tentang Administrasi Kependudukan* (Jakarta: Departemen Dalam Negeri R.I., Direktorat Jenderal Administrasi Kependudukan, 2007). See articles, 8, 61, 64, 92, 105.

²⁴⁵ See *Peraturan Bersama Menteri Dalam Negeri dan Menteri Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Nomor 43 Tahun 2009 dan Nomor 41 Tahun 2009 tentang Pedoman Pelayanan Kepada Penghayat Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa* (Jakarta, 2009).

Sovereignty!”²⁴⁶ The law provided the legal foundations for the members of the *Penghayat* community to exercise their civil rights and liberties, including marriages according to their *adat*. The government also guaranteed the community’s right to burial in public cemeteries and according to *adat* rites.²⁴⁷ This has brought about great consequences in society, as became visible in the last couple of years.

The quest for securing legal recognition for the *Penghayat*, having begun during the New Order, thus finally bore fruit in 2006. This milestone in their struggle owed much to changes across the country in the reform era.²⁴⁸ The issuance of the law represents a breakthrough for the revival of *Aliran Kebatinan* across West Java. Its implementation on the ground, however, remains problematic since popular perceptions of the *Penghayat* as a deviant sect remain entrenched. Nanang, general secretary of AKP East Bandung branch, informed us that in most cases, government organs, from district down to village levels, were not prepared for this change. Nanang added: “We have anticipated this legal change and tried to implement it in cooperation with our members as well as with the local government. In Ciparay, East Bandung, the government officials did not know what to do. The irony is that they often ask us to consult the Indonesian Islamic Scholars’ Council (MUI), the fierce opponent of *Aliran Kebatinan*, in order to be acknowledged as *Aliran Kebatinan* adherents.”²⁴⁹

Conversions Away from Islam

The *Penghayat*’s sustained rejection of Islam and their obsession with

²⁴⁶ Interview, Sulisty Tirtokusumo, Jakarta, 31 May 2010.

²⁴⁷ Interview, Sigit Widodo, Direktorat Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan YME, Jakarta, 31 May 2010.

²⁴⁸ One day in 2006, the Department of Home Affairs held a public hearing in Parliament and invited the Director of Kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan YME, Sulisyo Tirtokusumo, to share his opinions with the Commissioners. Sulisty used the moment to convince the commissioners that the *Penghayat* community’s civil rights were violated and that they were in need of a resolution. He criticised the ministry and called for the attention of the Commissioners by showing them the Director General’s official letter, which refused the appeal of a large number of un-registered married couples from Cilacap and Kebumen in Central Java. Interview with Sulisty Tirtokusumo, former Director of Kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan YME, Jakarta, 31 May 2010.

²⁴⁹ Interview, Nanang, Ciparay, 20 July 2010.

Sundanese identity recently witnessed Muslims' conversions out of Islam. In the last three years, conversions out of Islam have involved primarily two groups of people in the Lembang district. The first group comprised of non-practicing Muslims who, while identifying themselves as Muslims in fact maintained their native-syncretic creed and practices. The second were either observant or nominal Muslims who developed an interest in *Aliran Kebatinan* after having integrated into the *Aliran Kebatinan* family through marriage or have adopted it as an alternative faith.

While the number of conversions is not yet significant, during 2009 there were several people who embraced *Aliran Kebatinan*. I selected some of them for my case studies in seeking to understand their motives as well as the social and cultural contexts of their conversions. One convert I interviewed was Eman, a man of 35 years of age. He was born into a Muslim family to a father named Haji Ujug from Wangunharja Lembang. Growing up, Eman practiced rituals including the obligatory daily prayers and fasting during Ramadhan. He can recite the Quran, having learnt recitation since childhood. Eman fathered two sons who graduated from a junior high school in Lembang and for fifteen years now he has been working as a farmer in northern Subang. He rented 1,000 square meters of land on which he planted *cabe merah* (red hot chillies). From his agricultural business he earns about IDR 1,000,000 with each harvest, every three months.²⁵⁰

His conversion process, to what he called "*agama Sunda*" or Sunda religion, commenced with a conversation he had in 2009 with Ayah of Subang, who works on an agricultural estate there. Ayah felt responsible for bringing back his fellow Sundanese to what he was convinced was the religion of their ancestors. After getting to know him better, Ayah informed Eman about *Aliran Kebatinan* as promoted by Budidaya. Eman was dumbfounded at his ignorance of his ancestors' religion.²⁵¹ Ayah advised him to meet Asep Hari of Wangunharja for a better understanding about *Aliran Kebatinan*.

By mid-2009, Eman returned to Wangunharja after his had business collapsed. For some time, he observed Islamic rituals, particularly Friday prayers, until one day it struck him that he had

²⁵⁰ Interview, Eman, Lembang, 08 October 2009.

²⁵¹ *Idem*.

never seen Asep during the congregational prayer sessions in the al-Ikhlas Mosque near his house. Curious as to why this was the case, Eman tried to find him. He finally met Asep and discussed the 'religion of their ancestors' which Ayah had earlier told him about. Eman then decided to leave Islam. Eman confessed as follows:

I had been a Muslim for 35 years and never felt fully comfortable with the religion. Islamic *shari'ah* is difficult and Muslims society is polarising. Recently I had the good luck of having met Ayah from Subang and Asep Hari from Wangunharja. They led me to the *Aliran Kebatinan Budidaya*, which maintains the simple traditional Sundanese worldview, uniformity and practices inherited from my ancestors. I do not know why I was so ignorant about this religion. However, I am now happy after having found this tradition, the religion of my ancestors, and having become a *Penghayat*.²⁵²

Apart from believing that *Aliran Kebatinan* is the legacy of his ancestors, Eman argued that his interest in the creed was also due to its adherents' deep commitment to *Aliran Kebatinan* principles. He thus saw the community of *Aliran Kebatinan* as true believers. Actually, Eman believes that Islam promotes similar values but he could not accept the contradiction he witnessed between Islamic precepts and Muslims' behaviour. This suggested to him that Islam is simply the religion on their identity cards and not a reality in their daily lives. Above all, he maintained that his conversion was cemented by his conviction that *Aliran Kebatinan* is the religion of the Sundanese, as opposed to Islam which is a foreign import, the religion of the Arabs.²⁵³

Another convert to *Aliran Kebatinan* I interviewed was Ujang who is 50 years old and was born into a Muslim family with six brothers and sisters. Financial difficulties meant he was unable even to complete elementary school in his village. Today he works as an agricultural labourer and earns IDR 20,000 per day. He decided to convert only in mid-2009. He claims that he is able to better identify with this Sunda religion. He stated, "The reason for my conversion is due to my recent encounter with this creed. I had never heard of it before. Islamic teachings are good but come from the Middle East and Islam is not the

²⁵² *Idem*.

²⁵³ *Idem*.

religion of the nation's ancestors."²⁵⁴ His encounter with Abas, a farmer from Capunagara, Subang, changed his belief. Ujang's sons, however, refused to follow him but he is hopeful that they will eventually change their minds.

Though Eman and Ujang from Wangunharja have embraced *Aliran Kebatinan*, they are still registered in the village administrative office as Muslims. The deepening influence of Muslim politics from national to district levels and the issue of legal procedures in many respects prevent equal recognition of the *Penghayat* as a faith community. While this does not really imply a systematic effort to violate the religious freedom of the *Penghayat*, it is obvious that the administrative process caused by changing their religious belief is far from easy. Even the administration fee charged to those wanting to register their conversions is prohibitive. Both my respondents could not afford the IDR 35,000 (USD 3) which is no small amount of money to them.²⁵⁵

Conclusion

This case study shows how, in rural Lembang, the political and social context shaped religious developments which had a tremendous impact and caused wide social change. As observed in this chapter, the social change that drove towards Islamisation in Lembang was due to several factors. The *first* was the Darul Islam (DI) rebellion from 1948-62 which caused much damage and loss of confidence in socio-economic security among the people living in the conflict areas, such as Tasikmalaya and Garut. It provided the setting for Muslims to escape from these places of origin and to make them look for a safe destination, particularly in Lembang. The migration of individuals into Lembang had social and cultural consequences because of their individual conduct and because they introduced Islamic doctrines and practices into their new environment.

Second, the contributions of these individuals continued to have significant consequences as they built Islamic institutions which strengthened the Islamic presence at the detriment of *Aliran Kebatinan* interests. The institutionalisation of Islamic propagation caused the

²⁵⁴ *Idem.*

²⁵⁵ *Idem.*

transformation of *dakwah* from being conducted as individual acts and as a personal obligation to institutional activities undertaken by groups of Muslim activists. This had a much more significant impact on society. The change was made possible after a vast range of Islamic institutions grew from the 1960s onward. The arrival and the spread of Islamic institutions like mosques, *pesantrens*, *majlis taklim*, *madrasahs*, and TPA in Lembang increasingly promoted Islamisation. These institutions functioned as *dakwah* centres and were important sources for the reproduction and the promulgation of established Islamic doctrine centred in *tauhid*. The institutions were also set up to promote Islamic cultures. After a few years, these institutions started to have tangible impacts at the grassroots level. More and more people started to visit mosques and *madrasahs* and they wanted to study the Quran and to seek for Islamic instruction and education.

Third, readers should bear in mind that at the start of the Soeharto era in mid-1967, the Islamisation of Lembang entered a new stage of development as the regime's politics on religions provided the setting for the religions to have more privileges. Although this shift in context was centred in Jakarta, its impact had reached far beyond the Capital and had influenced society at the grassroots in West Java.

Scholars who understand these developments in the religious lives of the Sundanese people who were living under great Islamic influence, would have thought that this transformation would have brought about the end of the native-syncretic creeds. This is in fact not really the case. Although *Penghayat* were living under tremendous pressure inflicted by the totalitarian regime and in the shadow of *Dakwahism*, this local faith had in fact never disappeared. I found that from roughly 1980 to 1998, this group had been on the defence and had waited for the right moment to revive.

The wind of change since 1998 provided them with the context and the moment for their comeback. The following factors enabled them to retain. The *first* factor is the claim that the *Aliran Kebatinan* is essentially a true Sunda religion that had been upheld by their Sundanese ancestors and should be considered superior and be defended against other religions, especially Islam which is foreign to Sundanese culture. Because they considered Islam as foreign, *Aliran Kebatinan* leaders sought to reclaim their place in indigenous Sundanese history and to legitimise their presence in recent times. This

claim rests on nativist and ethnic sentiments and aimed to reconstruct their identity. People from rural areas found it easier to entertain meaningful relationships with the ethnic symbols that already were embedded in everyday rural life. The growing appreciation of local symbols reflects the resurgent identification with their cultural heritage. One point made by my respondents about why their faith in the *Aliran Kebatinan* has not gone under amidst deepening Islamisation is the fact that its creed is simple compared to Islam or other religions. This is perhaps relevant to what Geertz called “the simple uniformity of religious belief and practice” as observed above.²⁵⁶

The *second* is that in the view of the *Penghayat*, the 1945 Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion to all citizens and thus provides *Aliran Kebatinan* with the right to live in co-existence and in harmony with other official religions, by interpreting the word ‘*kepercayaan*’ as ‘religion’ to denote their native-syncretic creed. While they had faced no serious challenges during Soekarno’s time, his downfall and the extermination of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) signalled trouble for them. Some of them were arrested, others were put under surveillance. The regime allowed religions to play a greater role in society and promoted them as fundamental aspects of Indonesian culture. This policy soon caused an imbalance in what Hefner phrased “the cultural power” structure of society as socio-political life increasingly favoured religions and weakened the *Aliran Kebatinan*.²⁵⁷

Third, the strong ties between family members and lineages which were maintained with extreme care and patience resulted in the *Aliran Kebatinan*’s resilience and its ability to defend its tradition. The Reform era provides the setting for them to revive some cultural elements of their faith and they were able to struggle to obtain the right to conduct marriages and funerals according to their *adat*. Although these phenomena signify the dynamics of the persistent old resistance of the *Penghayat* towards Islamisation, it is too optimistic to claim that this attempt will be able to temper the on-going Islamisation in West Java. Islam’s presence in West Java is too pertinent and the forces of Islamisation too strong to enable *Penghayat* members to completely

²⁵⁶ Geertz, ‘Ritual and Social Change’, p. 36.

²⁵⁷ Hefner, ‘Islamizing Java?’, p. 551.

withstand it. However, their resilience has shown that they can sustain while promoting transformations among themselves.

