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From respected hermits to ordinary citizens: The conversion of the Baduy, ethnicity, and politics of religion in Indonesia (1977 - 2019)
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Citation

Suryani, A. J. (2021, January 28). *From respected hermits to ordinary citizens: The conversion of the Baduy, ethnicity, and politics of religion in Indonesia (1977 - 2019)*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3134744>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Title: From respected hermits to ordinary citizens: The conversion of the Baduy, ethnicity, and politics of religion in Indonesia (1977 - 2019)

Issue Date: 2021-01-28

From Respected Hermits to Ordinary Citizens



The Conversion of the Baduy,
Ethnicity and Politics of Religion
in Indonesia (1977 - 2019)

Ade Jaya Suryani

From Respected Hermits to Ordinary Citizens

The Conversion of the Baduy,
Ethnicity and Politics of Religion
in Indonesia (1977 - 2019)

This dissertation argues that the conversion of the Baduy was influenced by their self-concept, which requires them to detach from modernity and development, the limited size of their land, and the increase of the population. This process of conversion was supported by the politics of religion, which differentiates local beliefs (kepercayaan) from state-recognised religions (agama) where adhering to a local belief was considered irreligious (tidak/ belum beragama) and backward. To make the adherents of local beliefs religious, the government allows followers of major religions to invite the adherents of local beliefs into their faith. Furthermore, to develop the adherents of local beliefs, the government created development policies, in particular a resettlement programme. The programme aimed at Baduy society began in 1977 and lasted until 1999. Besides developing the adat communities, this programme was also aimed at changing their beliefs so that they align with “monotheistic views”. The fact that Muslims and Christians were targeting the same group of people caused tension, contestation, and violence. Confronted with this situation, the adherents of local beliefs fought back and resisted the policies in various ways.

