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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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Conclusion

Before we go further to the conclusion, let us look again at the research questions of this dissertation: (1) Why did the Baduy convert? (2) What conditions have led them to conversion? (3) Why and how did the government impose the state's religious ideology upon *adat* communities in Indonesia, including the Baduy? (4) How did the Muslim and Christian groups utilise the politics of religion to gain more converts from the Baduy? (5) Why and how did the Muslims use the same politics of religion and the traditional narrative of the Baduy to counter the Christianisation of the Baduy? (6) And how did the Baduy respond to the government's policies on religion and development and the missionary activities?

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 a local belief was considered irreligious (*tidak/ belum beragama*) and backward. To make the adherents of local beliefs religious, the government allows the adherents of major religions to invite the adherents of local beliefs to their major religions. And to develop the adherents of local beliefs, the government created development policies, especially the resettlement programme. For the Baduy society, the programme started from 1977 and lasted until 1999. Besides to develop the *adat* communities, this programme was also to change their beliefs with "monotheistic views". Since Muslims and

Christians targeted the same people, they were involved in tension, contestation and violence. Facing these situations, the adherents of local beliefs fought back the policies in various ways.

A. No Single Approach of Conversion Is Enough, but Not All Are Needed

From studying the conversion of the Baduy, and some reading on the conversion of other groups, I could say that a conversion of a man or a group of people in one place and in a certain period to a new religion cannot be equated with a conversion of a man or a group of people from different backgrounds, even if the conversion is to the same religion. The complexity of environments influences very much the narratives and routes of their conversion. Even if the converts live in the same place (village, city or country), the degree of social, economic and political environments and the power relation among them will still influence the feature of their conversion. Because of this issue, when studying conversion a researcher cannot rely only on one single approach. And because of the absence of certain contexts, not all existing approaches and theories are needed.

When studying conversion, from the very beginning we have to bear in mind that the term of conversion itself is not free from bias. When talking about conversion, we directly think of a process of entering a new religion. Which often happens, a conversion is a process of leaving a religion and entering a new one. In the process of this religious change, a belief and membership move from a religion or non-religion to a new religion. From the perspective of the departed community, religious change is apostasy, whereas from the perspective of the receiving community it is a conversion (Jansen 2006: x, see also Austin-Broos 2003: 1). Even further, Muslim converts are reluctant to name their process of becoming Muslim as conversion, but reversion. They base their argument on the Prophet Muhammad's statement that every baby is born Muslim. It is their parents who make them a Jew, a Zoroastrian or a Christian or a follower of another religion.

Furthermore, because of the various dimensions of conversion, one approach is not enough. And because certain issues are not dominant in a conversion narrative, not all existing approaches are needed. So far scholars have tried to provide diverse approaches to conversion. *Handbook of Religious Conversion* (1992) and *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion* (2014) are two examples of how approaches to conversion need to be considered. They include psychology, sociology, history, demography, geography, anthropology, linguistics,

neuroscience, semiotics and political science. The existence of conversion theories in these disciplines shows us “the complexity and variety of conversion processes” (Rambo 1999: 259), but choosing certain approaches and theories is very much determined by their usefulness in explaining conversion.

“No theory is universally applicable (at least in the human sciences), and no theory is vast enough to embrace everything. In the study of conversion, various theories should be explored and assessed according to the degree to which they point to important and interesting dynamics, processes, and patterns of religious change. Some theories are more useful for particular religions and for certain historical situations.” (Rambo 1999: 260).

Since one approach and one theory are not enough, Rambo (1993) offers what he calls a holistic theory of conversion which he builds from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and religious studies. If possible, he advises a researcher of conversion could also address the issue of conversion from politics and economics. By studying conversion from these four disciplines, he develops his theory which covers seven stages of conversion: (1) context, (2) crisis, (3) quest, (4) encounter, (5) interaction, (6) commitment, and (7) consequences. These stages, in reality, could be a sequence, moving from one stage to other stages, or go back and forth between the stages. And more importantly, the significance of each of these stages is not the same in every experience of conversion. The stage of quest in the conversion of the Baduy, for example, played very few roles. Even for some converts, a commitment was initially not something serious. In most cases, the conversion of the Baduy was based on the consideration of family and community, rather than a personal choice.

Like what Rambo has expressed, a theory is not about right or wrong, but whether it is useful. In the context of the Baduy’s conversion, some theories can explain one or more aspects of conversion. For instance, it is true that the Baduy’s conversion is based on a rational choice because before converting they weighed the advantages and disadvantages of conversion, including which religion they would choose. But just saying that conversion is a rational choice does not give us full comprehension. Therefore, various perspectives are needed to see the many facets of conversion. Moreover, in studying the conversion of the Baduy I benefitted from history, religious studies, political science, and anthropology. The *historical perspective* has explained how the Baduy community changes over time as the result of contact with the wider society, especially with Muslims and Christians. This contact has changed many aspects of the Baduy’s life, including their belief systems.

The *perspective of Religious Studies* has shown, for example, that the core self-concept of the Baduy is asceticism, that the teaching of *da’wa* and mission

is inherent in Islam and Christianity, but its manifestation depends on its environment. Initially, the Muslim preachers understood *da'wa* as an effort to invite Muslims to become better. But this understanding was expanded to the invitation to non-Muslims (the Baduy) to become Muslims when they knew that the Christians did missionary activities among the Baduy. Even some preachers believed that countering mission was part of *da'wa*. Another example of the importance of Religious Studies in the study of conversion of the Baduy is the proximity between the teaching of Sunda Wiwitan and Islam, especially in the *shahāda* and circumcision. This closeness of the religions as the result of a long encounter made the Baduy prefer Islam to Christianity.

Moreover, since the context of Indonesia is religious, even religion becomes a matter of the state, locating conversion in *the political perspective* is inevitable. This dissertation has shown that the state/ government has produced numerous laws which manage the religious life of its citizens. One of them is the creation of the categories of “*kepercayaan*” (belief) and “*agama*” (religion). The first category refers to, among other things, local religions and the second to major and recognised religions. This differentiation has discriminated and affected the followers of local religions and because of this burden, many of them decided to convert to one of the six religions recognised by the state. Besides, the government takes the side of the major religions by permitting their followers to invite the followers of local beliefs to their religions. To hinder the development of Christianity in rural areas in Lebak, Muslims use these regulations on religion especially on proselytization and the foundation of worship places. In other areas where Christians are the majority, they use the same regulations.

Finally, the *anthropological perspective* has shown, for example, the identity formation of the Baduy, Muslim Baduy, and Christian Baduy, the language shift from “rude” to “polite” Sundanese, the processes and patterns of conversion, the ritual of conversion from and reversion to Sunda Wiwitan, and the new name-giving to the converts. This perspective has also revealed the dynamics of *da'wa* and missionary activities, including contestation and religious violence. In short, the anthropological perspective has provided the richness of these various elements and their interplay.

B. The Baduy's Conversion: Ethnicity, the Politics of Religion and Development, and Religious Missions

More than one thousand Baduy have converted to Islam and over hundred Baduy converted to Christianity. Most of the conversion happened after the resettlement

programme was implemented in 1977, but several individuals converted to the religions before that year. When the Baduy were about to leave Sunda Wiwitan, the state offered six religions. But religions which were readily available through preachers, friends, and neighbours were only Islam and Christianity. Islam which was very dominant in the social and religious contexts would certainly get more converts, but the conversion of the Baduy itself was dynamic where some Baduy converted (1) from Sunda Wiwitan to Islam, (2) from Sunda Wiwitan to Christianity, (3) from Sunda Wiwitan to Christianity and then to Islam, (4) from Sunda Wiwitan to Islam and then to Christianity, (5) from Sunda Wiwitan to Islam and reverted to Sunda Wiwitan, and (6) from Sunda Wiwitan to Islam, reverted to Sunda Wiwitan and back to Islam. In short, ethnicity, the politics of religion and development and religious missions were the determining factors of their conversion.

1. *Ethnicity: Asceticism, the Limited Land, and the Increase of the Population*

The existence of the Baduy might go back to the 13th century where they have witnessed political changes around them. Their religion Sunda Wiwitan teaches them that they are hermits and because of it they have to live in the *mandala* as simple as possible. Development and modernity are therefore taboos for them. This self-concept as hermits, however, has been challenged since at least the 1950s when the number of the population kept increasing while the size of their land is constant. The whole size of the Baduy land is 5,136.58 hectares where about 3,000 hectares of it is allocated for a protected forest and the rest is for farming and residence. This means that the farming and residence area which is only 2,136 hectares has to be shared by the whole population which was 11,699 people in 2018. In fact, not every Baduy has the same access to land. And because the Baduy marry at a very young age, around 14 for girls and 17 for boys, access to the land will be much harder in the future. Besides, Sunda Wiwitan does not permit the Baduy to live outside the *adat* land and to manage their fields with modern tools and techniques. Consequently, since at least the 1950s the Baduy have managed the fields of the non-Baduy and this has removed the Baduy farther from their customs.

The government of Lebak has tried to relocate some Baduy into a new area since the 1950s, but this plan failed. Then in the late 1970s the *jaro pamarentah*, Jaro Samin, made a contact with the government of West Java (before 2000 Banten was part of West Java) asking it to give land to the Baduy. The governor of West Java connected Jaro Samin to the Department of Social Affairs (Depsos). The Depsos then included the Baduy into the national programme of the resettlement of the isolated communities. The programme began in 1977 by

opening new villages in Gunung Tunggal (Cipangembar 1 and Cipangembar 2). In the following years new villages were opened in the surrounding of Gunung Tunggal. From 1977 to 1999 more than a thousand Baduy joined the resettlement programme (Saputra 1959, Bakels and Boevink 1988, Persoon 1994, Anggraeni 2000).

When the Baduy began to live in the resettlement villages their *adat* leaders soon objected. As ascetics, the Baduy had to, and still have to, live in the *adat* land. Owning a house outside the *adat* land made their identity blurred: were they still Baduy or no longer? The leaders gave them two choices: to return to the *adat* land or to leave it. Some of them returned the *adat* land and most of them remained in the resettlement villages. Accordingly, those who remained in the resettlement villages were no longer considered by the *adat* leaders as the followers of Sunda Wiwitan. At the same time, one of the goals of the resettlement programme was to convert the isolated communities to “the monotheistic views” (a phrase which was used by the Depsos to refer to the religions recognised by the state). Facilitated by Muslim preachers and Christian missionaries, the Baduy in the resettlement villages left Sunda Wiwitan and converted to Islam or Christianity.

2. *The Politics of Religion in Indonesia and Development*

Besides the asceticism, limited *adat* land, and increase of the population, the conversion of the Baduy is also influenced very much by the politics of religion and development policies. They tried to make the Baduy and other followers of local beliefs in Indonesia religious and developed.

a. *Religions and Belief Systems in Indonesian Politics*

In Indonesia religion is regulated by the Constitution and various laws. The problem is that local religions are not considered as religions. They are only labelled as belief systems or *kepercayaan* and managed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, not by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA). Article 29 of the Constitution asserts that (point 1) “the state is based on the belief in the one and only God” and (point 2) “The state guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace his religion and to worship according to his religion and belief”. Here two vague terms appear: *agama* (religion) and *kepercayaan* (belief systems). From various laws and regulations which appeared later, it becomes clear that *agama* refers to major religions and *kepercayaan* covers religious sects, local religions, religious and cultural mysticisms, shamanisms, magical-traditional healing, astrology, and Chinese beliefs (Kementerian Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Asdep Kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa 2005: 31-32).

Afterwards, from the category “religion” appears the term “religions recognised by the state” which is wrongly based on Law No. 1 /1965 on the Prevention of the Abuse or the Blasphemy of Religion. In fact, as admitted by the Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin (2014 - 2019), there are no laws and regulations which mention that certain religions are recognised by the state and the others are not. Regardless of the absence of laws that give privileges to certain religions as “religions recognised by the state”, in practice, it has become a common understanding that Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are religions recognised by the state and are managed by the MORA.

Different from the six recognised religions, local religions are not only not recognised but also not considered by the government as religion. They are grouped into the category of *kepercayaan*. The reason is that they do not fulfil the conditions to be called religion. By relying too much on the characteristics of Islam and Christianity, a religion in Indonesia should have a God, a prophet, a holy book, and a house of worship. Afterwards, Decision No. IV/MPR/1978 states that *kepercayaan* are not religion and the government has to prevent them from becoming religions. This decision has become the path for the adherents of the religions recognised by the state to do proselytization. Not to mention the MORA also issued Decisions No. 70/1978 and No. 77/1978 which were then merged by the MORA and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) into a joint regulation No. 1/1979. The decisions No. 70/1978, No. 77/1978, and No. 1/1979 which have more or less the same articles, for example, prohibit people to propagate religion to those who already embrace a religion. Because local religions are not considered as religion, it means the government facilitates the adherents of religions recognised by the state to invite the followers of local beliefs to their religions.

Moreover, in 1994 the Attorney General of Indonesia issued Decision No. KEP-004/J.A/01/1994 through which the government formed a body named The Surveillance over Belief Streams (*Pengawasan Aliran Kepercayaan*/ Pakem). Consisting of various departments, including the Department of Religious Affairs, the Indonesian Army, the National Intelligence Board (BIN), and the Indonesian Republic Police (Polri) this body oversaw the followers of *kepercayaan* (Sihombing et al. 2008). The peak of discrimination experienced by the followers of local religions began to happen when the government issued Laws No. 23/2006 on the Administration of Population and No. 24/2013 on the Change of the Law No. 23/2006. These two laws ordered the government not to fill in the column of religion in family certificates of the followers of local religions and not-recognised religions. In fact, a family certificate is the source of the issuance of

an identity card. Because the column of religion in the family certificate was not filled in, the same column in the identity card would also be empty.

These laws and regulations on religion have huge implications for the followers of local religions, including the Baduy. Because of these various discriminations, many followers of local religions stopped following their religions and changed with religions which are recognised by the state (see the Decision of the Constitutional Court No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016).

- b. *Development Policies: Developing Adat Communities and Making Them Religious*
After local beliefs were excluded from the state's definition of religion, not recognised, prevented from becoming a religion, overseen and not allowed to be printed on the family certificates and identity cards, their followers (who are mostly from *adat* communities) are considered backward, undeveloped, and not in line with the government's policies. The government characterises *adat* communities, or at that time they were called the isolated communities, as groups of people who are isolated, scattered, dependent on nature, stagnant, less differentiated, illiterate, undeveloped, and not yet religious. They are spread in West Java (Banten), South Sumatra, Jambi, West Sumatra, Riau, East Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, South-East Sulawesi, and Papua.

The effort to progress such groups has been initiated since 1951. In a larger scale, the programme was run in 1964 in West Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, Jambi, Riau, and South Sumatra. Afterwards, the government formalised the programme by issuing Law No. 6/1974 on the Main Guidelines of Social Welfare. The purpose of this programme can be seen in article 4 (1d) of the law which states that the government has to increase the level of civilization of the isolated communities. The duty of developing the isolated groups became the responsibility of the Depsos, but in practice, it had to co-operate with other departments, including the departments of religion, agriculture, education, health, and public works. The Depsos then created the Programme of the Development of Isolated Communities (*Program Pembinaan Masyarakat Terasing*) which for 3-7 years.¹

The Baduy community was an example of how an *adat* community was “developed”, “modernised”, and converted to Islam and Christianity through

¹ Besides being targeted by the resettlement programme, the *adat* communities were also affected by other development policies, including Law No. 5/1974 on the local government, Law No. 5/1979 on the *desa* government, Law No. 5/1960 on agrarian affairs, Law No. 5/1967 on forestry, and Law No. 11/1967 on mining.

the development programme from the 1970s – 1990s. Consequently, all Baduy who joined the resettlement programme have converted either to Islam or Christianity. Other *adat* communities in Indonesia also faced more or less the same challenges. Even indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia and other parts of the globe had common issues. In Southeast Asia, the governments run development programmes to make them developed, connected to the wider world, and modern (Ghee and Gomes (eds.) 1999, Duncan 2004). “These [Southeast Asian] governments want to bring indigenous ethnic minorities into the modern age, to move from more traditional or “tradition-bound” local worlds into larger national and regional networks” (Duncan 2004: 3). On the international level, the annual publication of the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) provides a good overview of various issues faced by indigenous peoples around the world. In line with the government’s programmes, religious organisations and individuals visited the *adat* or indigenous peoples to invite them to their religions (Duncan 1998, Connolly 2003).

3. *Islamic and Christian Missions: Tension, Contestation and Violence*

Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism get many benefits from the politics of religion such as their religions are categorised and recognised by the government as “religion” (whereas local religions are categorised as “belief”), the teachings of their religions are thought from basic schools to universities², the development of their religions is supported by the government³, and more importantly they are allowed to spread their religions to the followers of beliefs⁴.

Islam and Christianity that have missionary characteristics undoubtedly benefit the most. As a piece of evidence, Muslims and Christians in the resettlement villages of the Baduy followed the state’s definition of religion by which they do not consider Sunda Wiwitan as a religion. Because of it, Muslims and Christians did missionary activities among the Baduys in the resettlement villages. The fact that the Baduy declare the *shahāda*, and therefore according to Islamic theology they are Muslims, does not make the Muslims believe that the Baduy are Muslims. They base their argument on the fact that the Baduy do not perform the other four pillars of Islam and on the fact the government labels the Baduy, as

² The Decision of the MPR No. XXVII/MPRS/1966 on Religion, Education and Culture.

³ The Joint Decision between the MORA and MOHA No. NO. 01/BER/MDN-MAG/1969 on the Application of the Government Officials’ Duties in Guaranteeing the Order and Flow of Religious Development and Worship.

⁴ The Decision of the MORA No. 70/ 1978 on the Guideline of Religious Proselytization and the Joint Regulation between the MORA and MOHA No. 1/ 1979 on the Manual of the Application of Religious Proselytization and International Aids to Religious Organisations in Indonesia.

seen in the yearly statistic books issued by the government, as the followers of “a belief” (see Leuwidamar Dalam Angka 2018).

Islamic *da'wa* activities among the Baduy in the resettlement villages were conducted by the preachers of Muhammadiyah, Mathla'ul Anwar, Jamaah Tabligh, Al Washliyah, and Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia, and by Muslim individuals who could be associated culturally to Nahdlatul Ulama. These activities were not only as a manifestation of the teaching of Islam but also as a response to the invitation of the government as written in the manual of the resettlement programme. Even for *da'wa* activities among the isolated communities, Muhammadiyah and Al Washliyah had, respectively, the Special *Da'wa* Body (*Lembaga Dakwah Khusus/LDK*) and the Body of *Da'wa* and Communication (*Majlis Dakwah dan Komunikasi/MDK*). Both organisations sent their preachers to resettlement villages in many areas in Indonesia, including to the resettlement villages of the Baduy. In the resettlement villages they founded mosques and schools. In running its *da'wa* programme some of the Muslim groups got funding, besides from their Indonesian members, also from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya.

Moreover, the decision of most of the Baduy to choose Islam was influenced by the proximity of Sunda Wiwitan to Islam and the power of Islamic *da'wa*. The first has been the result of a long encounter between Muslims and the Baduy since the 16th century. This started to happen after Hasanuddin founded the sultanate of Banten in 1526, replacing the Sundanese power in the region. Afterwards, Hasanuddin or his successors sent a religious official (*āmil*) to whom the outer Baduy declare the *shahāda* when they will marry. As a result of this long encounter between the Baduy and Muslims, Sunda Wiwitan teaches about the existence of prophets like Abraham, Solomon, and Muhammad. In family law the Baduy use the Islamic concepts of *'idda*, *junub* and *ngipas* (*nifas*). Some Baduy also recite Arabic prayers which are commonly recited by Muslims. The Baduy calendar also names the years in a *windu* (eight years) in Arabic such as *alif*, *ha*, *dal*, etc. More importantly, their religion gets an extra word “Slam” from “Islam”. So, according to the *jaro pamarentah* Saija, the full name of the Baduy's religion is Slam Sunda Wiwitan (see also Kurnia and Sihabudin 2010: 138-143, 161). The addition of “Slam” in front of “Sunda Wiwitan” must have existed no earlier than the 16th century.

Unlike Islam which has made a contact with the Baduy community in the 16th century, Christianity just made a contact with the Baduy in the late 19th century through the Dutch missionary F.L. Anthing and his local cadres such as Stepanus, Sondjat, and Petrus. Stepanus succeeded in converting a Baduy family consisting of Kamat, his wife and their children (Pennings 1902: 370-386, Ali 2009: 131-

133). In 1961 the effort to Christianize the Baduy was done by the Indonesian Bible Institute. Headed by Detmar Scheunemann, the mission, however, did not succeed (Sikitari 1997: 9). Moreover, more than a hundred Baduy converted to Christianity when Christian missionaries came to the resettlement villages. Among the most remembered missionaries were Ismail Amaloh from East Timor and his friend Yudistira. Both were members of Youth With A Mission (YWAM), an evangelical interdenominational organization based in the US.

Other Christian missionaries were Anturi and Kharel Budiman Silitonga. People heard that Anturi was a student from Universitas Advent Indonesia in Bandung. Coming from Medan, Silitonga came to Pandeglang first in August 1978 to learn Sundanese. Afterwards, he visited the Baduy land and converted Muslims and the Baduy to Christianity (Silitonga 1998). Some pastors and Christians from Jakarta, Tangerang, and Cianjur sometimes also came to the resettlement villages of the Baduy. In the meantime, the religious matters of the Christian Baduy are managed by the Baduy pastor Windu Nurgojali who got his bachelor and master degrees from Universitas Advent Indonesia.

From the perspective of the Muslims, Christians, government and converts, conversion from Sunda Wiwitan means freedom, development and modernity. After conversion, they could send their children to school, wear fashionable clothes, and have electronic devices and vehicles. Although in the meantime some of them cannot do so, they have the possibility to do so because they are no longer bound by the *adat* and taboos. For the prominent figures of the first converts to Islam in the 1980s and 1990s, a conversion could also mean going to Mecca for the pilgrimage. Conversely, from the perspective of the Baduy, conversion means to become impure. The ex-Baduy who want to return to the Baduy land or revert to Sunda Wiwitan have to be purified through the very expensive ritual of *talibokta* or *ngabokor*. A Baduy can be impure as well when he has extensive contacts with the non-Baduy. For instance, the *jaro pamarentah* is considered impure and because of it, he may not visit the sanctuaries.

The fact that some Baduy and Muslims converted to Christianity made the Muslim preachers develop the definition of *da'wa*. Initially, *da'wa* means an invitation to Muslim fellows to become better Muslims. By the existence of Christian missionary activities, the meaning of *da'wa* was developed to an invitation to non-Muslims (the Baduy) and to the counter to Christianisation. To counter the Christian missionary activities, the Muslim preachers used two sources: (1) the narrative of the agreement between the ancestors of the Baduy and the sultanate of Banten and (2) the regulations on proselytization and the foundation of worship places.

The narrative of the agreement between the ancestors of the Baduy and the

sultanate of Banten refers to the existence of a Muslim village in the Baduy land: Cicakal Girang. This is the only village in the Baduy land which is inhabited fully by Muslims. Both Baduy and Muslims believe that the existence of this village goes back to the period of the sultanate of Banten. They state that Cicakal Girang is a piece of land on which the ancestors of the Baduy and the sultanate of Banten made an agreement. The vice-*jaro* of Cibeo Mursid, the *jaro* of Cibeo Sami, and the *jaro pamarentah* Dainah state that the Baduy leaders in the past asked the sultan of Banten to send a religious official (*‘amil*) to whom the outer Baduy would declare the *shahāda* when they would marry. The *‘amil* was then asked to live in Cicakal Girang to guide the outer Baduy to declare the *shahāda*. Because of this agreement, the Muslim preachers stated that it was the right of Muslims to convert the Baduy, or it was Islam the religion which the Baduy should choose when they would leave Sunda Wiwitan. The Muslim preachers stated that the *shahāda*, circumcision and the word “Slam” in front of “Sunda Wiwitan” (Slam Sunda Wiwitan) were the signs of the relation between Muslims and the Baduy.

A tension which was followed by violence happened, for example, when the missionary Silitonga (1998) targeted Muslims in Wanasalam. Around 56 Muslims in the village converted to Christianity. They even built a church in 1982 which sparked a conflict between the Muslims and Christians. To halt the development of Christianity and the foundation of the church, the Muslims used the government officials, the police and the military (Anggraeni 2000: 120) and the regulations on preaching and the foundation of worship places such as the Decision No. 01/Ber/Mdn-Mag/1969⁵, the Decision No. 70/1978⁶, the Decision No 77/1978⁷, the Joint Decision No. 1/ 1979⁸, the Joint Decision No. 8 and No. 9/ 2006⁹. Some Muslim preachers believed that the Christian Baduy would not be able to build a worship house because their number was less than 90 people.¹⁰ The Christian Baduy were aware of the fact that the Muslims would not let them have a worship house because their number was less than was required by the regulation. Nowadays, they have a small house which they use regularly for a

⁵ The joint regulation between the MORA and MOHA No. 01/Ber/Mdn-Mag/1969 on the Application of the Government Officials in Guaranteeing the Order of the Religious Development and Worship.

⁶ The Decision of the MORA No. 70/1978 on Religious Proselytization.

⁷ The Decision of the MORA No 77/1978 on International Aids to Religious Organisations in Indonesia.

⁸ The Joint Decision between the MORA and MOHA No. 1/ 1979 on Religious Proselytization and International Aids to Religious Organisations in Indonesia.

⁹ The Joint Decision No 8 and No 9/ 2006 on the Manual of the Application of the Duties of Regent/ Mayor in Maintaining Religious Harmony, the Empowerment of the Forum of Religious Harmony and the Foundation of Worship Places.

¹⁰ A document called “Peristiwa 24 September [19]95 di Kubang Embe Wanasalam” or “An Incident of 24 September [19]95 in Kubang Embe Wanasalam” and interviews with An Aliyah on 2 April 2017, Engkos Yusroni on 10 April 2017, and Lilis Hulaela on 29 April 2017.

religious service, but they are reluctant to call it a worship house.

In the context of the relation between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, Ismatu Ropi (2000) states the relation is fragile, filled with “mutual distrust and hostility”. Ropi (2000) and Mujiburahman (2006) explain further that Indonesian Muslims fear for Christianisation, while the Christians fear for the establishment of the Islamic State of Indonesia. Alwi Sihab (1995) even argues that one of the main reasons for the emergence of Muhammadiyah was to counter Christianisation. Afterwards, this organisation formed the *Lembaga Dakwah Khusus* and its preachers report how they encounter with the Christian mission in various parts of Indonesia (Burhanuddin et al. 1990, Zubir and Siandes 1999). Like Ropi, Mujiburahman (2006) shows a negative image of the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, but both of them see the emergence of dialogue between the Muslims and Christians.

In fact, a contestation occurred not only between the Muslims and the Christians but also among the Muslims themselves. The religious setting of Lebak, or Banten in general, which can be associated with traditional Islam or Nahdlatul Ulama, was challenged by modern Islam brought by Muhammadiyah. Al Washliyah that practised the same socio-religious ceremonies such as *tahlilan* and *yasinan* experienced less pressure. Because of this difference, Muhammadiyah and also Jamaah Tabligh were not quite acceptable by the locals. Jamaah Tabligh which practises *khuruj*, leaving houses for certain days for a religious purpose, was and is still deemed by some Muslim locals to deviate from Islam. Its followers were once driven away from a village. Meuleman (2011: 262) has noticed this phenomenon and says that *da'wa* organisations in Indonesia are “characterized by competition for authority and power.” But this contestation becomes less significant when they are faced to the common issue of the Christianisation of the Baduy.

C. The Baduy’s Response to the Politics of Religion, Religious Missions, and Internal Problems

To respond to the politics of religion and religious missions the Baduy have changed their views about themselves from merely as ascetics to citizens. By becoming citizens they supported the government to conduct general elections in the *adat* land and encouraged their people to participate in them. In return, they demanded the state and government to recognise and protect them.

The *jaro pamarentah* Nakiwin was sent as a special envoy of the Baduy to the palace to meet President Soeharto on 27 Mei 1985 (Djoewisno MS 1987: 153,

Persoon 1989: 1, Van Zanten 1995: 518). The Baduy also sent Haji Kasmin to represent the Baduy community in the People's Consultative Assembly (*Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat* /MPR). Haji Kasmin claimed that he fought for the Baduy's interest, especially for their land rights. The issue was then brought to the local government and became the local regulation No. 32/2001 on the protection of the *adat* right of the Baduy society. The *adat* leaders also conveyed their will through the yearly *Seba* to be recognised and protected.

The Muslim Baduy Haji Kasmin and Haji Sarmedi also joined the political party Golkar, they claimed among others, to help the Baduy community. In 2013 Haji Kasmin became a candidate of the vice-regent of Lebak. In the campaign period, his ethnicity was attacked and humiliated by Mulyadi Jayabaya the regent of Lebak at that time. Eventually, Haji Kasmin failed to become a vice-regent of Lebak. Even he was jailed because he was silent when knowing the bribe case conducted by his team. Haji Sarmedi who proposed to become a member of the parliament of Lebak also failed in the 2014 and 2019 elections. What the Baduy community is doing today, like what is voiced by the Indigenous Peoples' Alliance of the Archipelago (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*/ AMAN), is to demand the government to legalise the draft of Adat Law which will empower the political position of the *adat* societies. If their efforts succeed, let us say their belief systems are recognised as religions and equated with the six religions, regulations that permit missionary activities which target the followers of local religions will become automatically invalid.

Besides, to lessen the problem of access to land and the increase of the population the Baduy also have opened their villages as a tourist destination since 1990. The secretary of the *desa* of Kanekes, Jusen (1988 - 1992), asked the *adat* leaders whether or not he was allowed to invite tourists to visit the Baduy land. They permitted him as long as the tourists could respect the *adat* of the Baduy. Jusen then went to the Agency of Tourism of Lebak to discuss the idea. Afterwards, he and the government organised a meeting with the leaders of the Baduy which resulted in the agreement that the Baduy community would be a tourist destination. A statue of a Baduy family, in the welcoming posture, was erected in Ciboleger to sign the opening of the *adat* land as a tourist destination. In the meantime, the Baduy land is visited by hundreds of people every month. The number of visitors could even reach a thousand in the year-end. The government of Lebak even believes that the Baduy community can be a world tourist destination because the Baduy community 'preserves their customs and rejects modernity'.

D. The Future of the Baduy and Other *Adat* Communities in Indonesia

After knowing that more than a thousand Baduy have left the *adat* land and converted to Islam or Christianity, and besides that, the Baduy who remain in the *adat* land also have changed, one may ask: what will happen to the Baduy and other *adat* communities in Indonesia in the future? Because humans have the capacity to choose a decision and their life is influenced by almost unlimited variables, predicting the future of humans will almost be impossible. But our knowledge about what happened in the past could give us some insight into what might happen in the future if and only if the current conditions still exist and other new developments do not emerge.

Let us look at least at two existing situations: local religions are not deemed by the state as religion and Muslims and Christians have an interest in converting the followers of beliefs to their religions. In addition, embracing a local religion is also considered backward and not-yet religious or irreligious. To make them developed and religious, the government designed a resettlement programme and permitted the adherents of the recognised religions to do missionary activities among the followers of local religions. In 2006 and 2013 the government even issued laws No. 23/2006 on Civil Registry and its amendment No. 24/2013 which forbade the names of beliefs to be printed on family certificates and identity cards. (In the case of the Baduy, before 2006 the government of Lebak allowed ‘Sunda Wiwitan’ to be printed on the identity cards of the Baduy). This politics of religion which has excluded local religions from the state’s definition of religion has forced many followers of local religions to convert to the religions recognised by the state.

Adat communities have tried to strengthen themselves politically by forming AMAN in 1999. They, assisted by other organisations, have succeeded in revoking some laws. As individuals, four adherents of beliefs have succeeded in suing Law No. 23/2006 and Law No. 24/2013 in the Constitutional Court (*Mahkamah Konstitusi* MK). In 2017 the MK, through its decision No. 97/PUU-XIV/2016¹¹ resolved that the word “*agama*” (religion) in the laws “does not have legal power” and the laws are against the Constitution. The revocation of the laws by the MK, therefore, has guaranteed the civil rights of the followers of beliefs. However, the decision is still discriminative because, unlike the religions recognised by the state, the names of beliefs may not be printed on their identity cards.

¹¹ Although the year of the letter number is 2016, the decision was decided on 18 October 2017 and read by the MK for public on 7 November 2017.

In fact, when the state defended the rights of the followers of beliefs there were still pros and cons. The MUI, the United Development Party (PPP), and Muhammadiyah have expressed that they objected with the decision of the MK. Even after the MK issued its decision, these Muslim groups still tried to influence the follow-up of the decision. Based on the proposal of the MUI, the word “*agama*” on the identity cards of the followers of beliefs is removed and changed with “*kepercayaan*” (belief). Afterwards, the content of the column “*kepercayaan*” is “*kepercayaan Terhadap Tuhan Yang Maha Esa*” or “Belief in the One and Only God”.¹² Different from the Muslim groups, the Christians, as represented by the *Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Indonesia* (PGI), appreciated the MK’s decision and asked the government to implement it soon.

Although the Muslim and Christian groups have a different stance on the MK’s decision, in the field both of them are still active and do missionary activities among the followers of local religions. In other words, even when the followers of local religions already got their political and legal rights, in the field they are still targeted by *da’wa* and missionary activities. On the one hand, the followers of local religions cannot control and escape from these *da’wa* and missionary activities which are inherent in Islam and Christianity. Many publications (e.g. Burhanuddin 1990, Duncan 1998, and Zubir and Siandes 1999) have shown how Muslims and Christians come to remote areas to introduce their religions and if possible to convert them. And on the other hand, the followers of local religions do not do the same thing because their belief systems, like Sunda Wiwitan, do not have a missionary characteristic.

From these two existing situations, the choices for the *adat* communities are limited. For Persoon (1994) who studied the Baduy, the Orang Rimba, and the Mentawaians, the choices for the *adat* communities were two: to escape (*vluchten*) or to change (*veranderen*). With the current situations, in my view, the choice is only one: to change. And that choice is what is taken by the Baduy. Since the 1950s researchers have noticed that the Baduy were changing, although it was not yet much. In the 1970s and 1980s, more than a thousand of the Baduy decided to leave the *adat* land by converting to Islam or Christianity. The Baduy who remained in the *adat* land also change by breaking many taboos. One of the many is to have smartphones from which they, for example, watch videos on YouTube. So, if no extraordinary political changes happen in the future, such as the state’s recognition of local religion as religion, conversion to the major religions, fast or gradually, is inevitable.

¹² <https://tirto.id/kelumit-kisah-penghayat-sebelum-kepercayaan-dicatat-di-ktp-dhTF>, accessed on 22 November 2019.

The Baduy themselves have realised that they cannot resist changes. They believe in a prophecy which says that in the future there will be a war between the Baduy and non-Baduy and the Baduy will be defeated (the magazine *Pesat* 31 August 1954: 21). When I did my fieldwork a Muslim Baduy also accounted this prophecy. Being defeated means that they cannot be purely hermits. They have to adopt some changes. Commenting about all changes experienced by the Baduy, a Muslim Baduy Musa said that the Baduy were already politically defeated by the government through the development programme. Their conversion to Islam or Christianity, he said, is another piece of evidence that the Baduy are defeated. Many people in the field said that the Baduy were no longer unique. “They are already the same as us!” they said. A Muslim Baduy was even pessimistic that the Baduy community would cease in the next fifty years. His worry is probably exaggerated. But the fact that the Baduy, like other *adat* communities, are changing is an undeniable reality.

E. My Impression of Doing This Research

Finally, from my experience of doing research on the conversion of the Baduy I get the impression that religion is like a shop: people will remain in the shop or come to it if the shop can provide what the people need. Otherwise, if the shop cannot provide what the people need, they will leave it. By this impression, I do not mean that the Baduy’s conversion is not sincere, but various elements have certainly influenced their decision and the motives for the conversion were not always religious. In other words, this is far from the common belief that conversion happens because of the divine guidance (*hidaya*) where converts do not have a decision, but they are chosen by God. In fact, the marketplace where religions exist is influenced by various elements such as the politics of religion, the teachings of the religions, the proselytisers, the adherents of the religions, and the missionary activities—just to mention a few. In a different context, conversion is like what Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (2013) calls as “forum shopping” where people choose what legal institution fits them best.

By looking at the abandoned religions, such as Sunda Wiwitan, I could say that a religion will last as long as it can provide what people need. What people need, in fact, varies from one person to another person, from place to place, and from time to time. Therefore, to last longer a religion must have a capability to grasp this spectrum. Sunda Wiwitan is left by some of its followers because this religion is very strict. For example, this religion forbids its followers to develop agricultural techniques and tools. In reality, their land is limited and

the population increases. For those who do not have access to land, leaving the religion seems to be a rational choice. This also happens in the West where society experiences secularisation: people put religion as a personal matter or even leave it because they think that religion cannot answer their problems anymore (Dogan 2002: 144, Kauffman et al. 2011, Berger 2014, Franck and Iannaccone 2014).